

Reviewing the literature on the role of emotions in public involvement

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Introduction

- The idea for this conceptual review came about after an experience of high emotions during a PPI meeting
- Two things were noted; emotion seemed to strengthen the impact of what people shared, and it also seemed to bring the group closer together.
- A structured Scopus search identified 18 articles, which were then tabulated to identify recurring themes on emotion in public involvement.
- Many thanks to our public collaborators, **Phil Ruthen**, **Pamela Staunton** and **Julia Burton** for their insight which helped to shape this review



A warm-up

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Coming up



01 About the review

02 Key Themes

03 Challenges

04 Ways Forward



01

About the review



What do other disciplines say?



Sociology

Suggests that we try to regulate our feelings to fit in with the norms of a situation. Similarly, Mead and Cooley's thoughts on ***symbolic interactionism***



Literature and the arts

Lingering emotions one feels after a difficult experience transform into something impersonal, objective - experiential evidence in project settings.



Psychology

Carl Jung's 'wounded healer' theory - the researcher's own 'personal wounds' may be activated in certain situations - particularly when the researcher can relate.

02

Key themes





Emotions as liberating



Cathartic to share experiences with a group

- Simultaneously emotionally difficult to re-experience a traumatic event, it also serves as a chance to process experiences
- Improved some collaborators' relationships with their illness. Despite challenges, involvement was 'fun'.





Emotions as challenging



Managing group dynamics

- Working through information at different speeds
- “There were a lot of tears actually in that first meeting ... it was very emotional in the first two meetings”

Exposing and vulnerable

- Dredging up painful memories

Challenging, but important



What challenges have you experienced?

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03

Challenges





Sensitive topics

- Community of Practice to support PPI in sensitive research created a space to discuss challenges.
 - Lack of pragmatic guidance on facilitating involvement in sensitive research.
 - Led to a collaborative study with five public partners to explore experiences of PPI in sensitive research and develop practical principles.
 - Sensitive topics evoke strong emotions, controversy, or discomfort due to personal, cultural, or societal implications.
 - Topics may involve threats (e.g., harm, stigma, legal risks).
 - No fixed level of sensitivity—depends on context & individual experiences.
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• What else might be at play?



Experiences are invalidated



Kindness and trust



Emotional complexity



Navigating insider-outsider dynamics



04

Ways Forward





Recommendations from the literature



Supportive facilitators

1

Letting collaborators know that their contributions, emotional or not, are valuable

Record contributions

2

Recording emotional contributions in minutes helps to acknowledge the different types of knowledge shared

Comfortable environment

3

Physically comfortable, less formal meetings with flexible timeframes* help to create a relaxed and non-judgemental space

Role descriptions

4

Agreeing on a role description helps prepare everyone for the types of knowledge public members bring





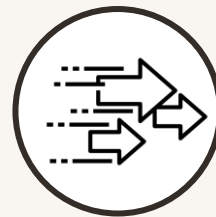
Further recommendations



Reflective practice



**Acknowledge
emotional labour &
safeguarding**



**Move at speed
of trust**





Thank You!

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Discussion

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**Who 'gets' to be emotional in
PPI meetings?**



**Who defines when emotion in
PPI meetings is 'useful/needed'
or 'harmful'?**