W.O.W. Pod at WHOI

URGE Session 4

This is what was found and discussed about working with communities of color within the W.O.W. Pod at WHOI. **No mandatory policies were found in relation to conducting research with or working with communities of color.**

Core points from our discussion to be shared:

- Our pod is predominantly oceanographers, so we acknowledged and identified that we are often working in the open sea away from coastal communities. Similarly, many of the specific processes and work that we may conduct does not relate to water quality or food resources to any nearby community. We saw this as one of the main platforms to work with a community near our research sites.

- Much of our discussion was centered around our personal experiences in field-based classes, where we were taught 'best practices' that we would now deem not appropriate for establishing relationships with the local community. *Some examples*:
    - Methods in ecology course: During this course, we went into the field to get hands-on experience and traveled around the Pacific Northwest and into Canada to learn about the salmon fisheries. We spent no time discussing the local communities that rely on the salmon fishery, nor did we learn about the relationship or history surrounding the salmon industry and the Northwest Native peoples.
    - Environmental policy: Coursework in this class briefly touched on the whaling and fishing practices of the Native peoples in the region, but it completely skipped over the cultural component and the history. We had a guest lecture from a representative from the nearby tribe, but we were completely not prepared to discuss current policies with them because we did not understand the history.
    - Naming of new research sites: Since some of our work involves exploration of new seafloor features, we often introduce new names for the sites. These locations are generally far offshore, but we had examples of instances where researchers had a list of names from a local community (e.g. nearby port or coastal region or city). Yet, in these instances it was determined that this was an attempt to engage with the local community very minimally and more could have been done to establish a 'back-and-forth'.

- Instances of when we have worked with local communities, with mixed success:
    - Working in Tongan waters in the western Pacific, an official government observer was required to sail with us as we were working in their nation's water (we were

permitted for this). We engaged him with the naming of some seafloor sites we found, and as a result, most of the sites were given Tongan names. Otherwise there was little interaction, and it wasn't clear totally clear what the expectation (or obligation?) was for this participation.

- Working in British waters in the Caribbean, it felt very strange to invite British scientists, not individuals from the islands we were sailing from, given this colonial history. However, we did interact with individuals in Jamaica in really positive ways, both driven by individuals, not really a team effort. First, one of the scientists worked with a local scientific education non-profit to give them a ship tour, and then visited their facility after the cruise, provided them with supplies we all contributed, and spent time learning about their work and telling them about our work. Second, MIT-WHOI student Jill McDermott and Boston-based, Jamaican artist Bryan McFarlane were already working together, and she invited Bryan to the the ship for a tour, and he also gave us a talk about his work:
  https://schmidtocean.org/cruise-log-post/this-is-our-art/
  https://arts.mit.edu/a-journey-to-the-center-of-the-earth/
  https://www.southcoasttoday.com/article/20140626/ENTERTAIN/406260340

- Working in Japanese waters (again, permitted), we worked with Japanese scientists on the expedition as equal collaborators. In this expedition, we also worked in waters around the Mariana islands, which host indigenous inhabitants, the Chamorro people. This region is divided into two jurisdictions of the US- the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the territory of Guam. All of these islands, though, are named by the Spanish, who colonized the islands in the 17th century. These waters are now part of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument. Our Chief Scientist and some ship members visited the University of Guam ahead of the cruise, as well as gave a tour of the ship to students (enrolled in an oceanography class) from the university. During the cruise, we conducted interactive ship-to-shore video calls to multiple schools, teachers and classrooms in Guam, as well as did a call with visitors at the "War in the Pacific National Historical Park" in Guam.
  https://schmidtocean.org/cruise-log-post/setting-sail-hydrothermal-hunt

Building culturally competent practices:

- It should be a priority to engage with the community and establish a strong and trusting relationship - through THIS action we can work together to see how to conduct the research or project. Upon further reflection, we realize that as researchers we typically assume we need to come prepared with a powerpoint explaining everything, relating it to our audience, and have a plan of action already in place. Instead, we should focus on making personal connections and building a strong relationship first. Engagement may never reach a full-blown scientific research partnership, and that is fine too, we just do not want to continue to leave local stakeholders out of the process.

- Example action items moving forward:

- We would love to have regularly held engagements with the Wampanoag Tribe (People of the First Light). One idea we have is to screen the movie *Mashpee Nine: A Story of Cultural Justice* (we already have screening rights through the MIT-WHOI library), and especially encourage WHOI community members and their families to join and participate to educate everyone about the history of the land we live and work on. We hope to also get members of Wampanoag Tribe to serve on a panel and help lead discussion following the screening of the film. We think it is very important to have an educational experience like this, where we get WHOI community members and the native population engaging in these enlightening conversations yearly.
- There are other time-series projects run through WHOI (like the LTER). There is a water quality testing facility through the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head that frequently tests the beachs and waters of Martha's Vineyard. Has there ever been a local scientific conference? Exchange of ideas? Exchange of experiences and thoughts on a changing climate on the cape???
- The key here for the type of work most of us do (far from the continental US) is that engagement should begin well before you even consider working in non-US waters, or even in the "high seas" if a foreign port will be required. Just as we spend considerable time planning our science and permitting, put time into planning this interaction (see URGE tweet below!) This can be a lot of work if you don't know anyone in the country, but you can reach out to local universities, schools, museums, and non-profits to find individuals who might want to to engage in these efforts. Government officials and organizations such as environmental offices might also be a good resource, depending on the location. Social media is also a great tool to find individuals or organizations that might want to engage. Once you find a partner, treat them as a partner. THe URGE tips on these points are great, but I would like an action item to be specific for scientists who go to sea in international waters, the high seas, or use foreign ports. I recently was part of a proposal where we included some ideas for training in "Science Diplomacy & Engaging Diverse Stakeholders in Ocean Research," and we wrote example learning objectives such as: how to build relationships with diverse stakeholders that might be interested in research, and how to engage them in co-creation of knowledge; best practices for trying to recruit, retain, and promote a just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive team of collaborators; best practices for transferring knowledge and science communication for policy-makers & the public. I would love to see something like this for all of us!

Other ideas for engagement even if it's "just" a port call: Invite local schools for tours, visit a local museum to learn about the culture, or if possible, do an event from sea that engages with the local community, e.g. this is very common on OET and SOI cruises now. See notes from above.

- I'm still talking to a couple of scientists about what they would like to see an "best practices" for naming seafloor sites (one is from Costa Rica, the other from Trinidad/Tobago). *Stay tuned.*
- In addition to re-thinking how we plan field expeditions in the future, we can start NOW by acknowledging our previous sample sites. We often work with samples from these sites for years and years after visiting. We should work on language to introduce these study sites by acknowledging the local communities. This can lead to better practices in working with communities where we have already visited.