



# ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

Fall 2020 LAC: looking *back* on overlapping projects

- ClimateQUAL (fall 2019)
- a strategic framework process (assessment concluded fall 2019)

Fall 2022 LAC: looking back at CQ-informed assessments

- Summer '21 informal 'return to work' survey
- Fall '21 formal "alternative work arrangement" survey
- Winter '21 – Spring '22 "Teams & Teamwork" project
- Winter '22 "Pandemic Reflection" (Services & Work) survey

# “CLIMATEQUAL-INFORMED”

Transitioning to lockdown & post-lockdown with CQ on our minds:

- How are challenges related to “psychological empowerment,” “organizational withdrawal” and “structural facilitation of teamwork” manifesting in our workplace?
- How can we build on valuing diversity and strong task and team-level engagement?

(not yet articulated: How can we sustain these in a fractured environment?)

(not yet articulated: How might these be exacerbated by remote work?)

# ASSESSMENT ON (LOCAL) PAUSE: LOGISTICS IS ALL

Enter the era of plexi-glass, disinfecting wipes and & limited hours

- Of online meeting etiquette
- Of virtual & curated backgrounds, of “to blur or not to blur”
- Of shaky connections and improvised workstations

and

- Of fear & anxiety about working/returning onsite
- Of before-unfathomed equity issues (define: “front line worker”)
- Of new vulnerabilities surrounding “work” and “workplace” (on top of the old ones)

























# BUT DOES THIS ADD UP TO “EMPOWERMENT”?

This presentation purports to make a case about “giving voice” to library staff in the pandemic *through assessments* – that is, that the act of assessment itself was empowering to staff.

Empowerment – and “psychological empowerment” – are complex terms with long histories.

For decades, social researchers have been theorizing and enacting “empowering” techniques. In most cases, these techniques are

- Active (reflective, experiential, participatory) (Berg and others) (think “photovoice” projects as a great example!)
- Relational (intersection individual power & community/political action)

# THE PANDEMIC NECESSITATED EXTRAORDINARY CARE FOR INDIVIDUALS

The surveys/investigations we conducted with library staff during the pandemic invited staff to share with us aspects of “their state” at a vulnerable time. Despite that:

- Staff were generally very responsive (e.g. 78 of approx. 100 staff responded to the fall AWA survey)
- Staff shared very personal reflection on often “loaded” topics (effectiveness of working from home, thoughts about “bad team” experiences)
- Staff expressed (anecdotally) gratitude for the data – for the “self-reflection” of a community

# POST ASSESSMENT REFLECTIONS ON REFLECTIONS

Initial informal conversations about this “year” (or so) of staff assessment has generated some insights into the degree to which, if not fully-realized “action research,” what we did was perhaps as much as we *could* do by way of empowering the voices of our staff:

Paraphrasing some reflections:

- We could never have done something as “invasive” as a photovoice-style project during those months (of the pandemic) – people were still experimenting with blurring/not blurring and (un)muting their cameras. Can you imagine asking them to “take pictures of your work space at home”?
- The assessments went beyond what was required to be ethical and were also gentle and kind and supportive (the process was informed by empathy)

# THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

Other so-far informal reflections from staff on this series of assessments focused on how they had been generative for our organization:

Again paraphrased:

- We often do surveys and the data goes “on the shelf” – we didn’t use (publish externally, break confidentiality) data, but the results have already acted as a springboard to other work, like a study of communication in the library
- We used survey (and other) data as the impetus for launching other studies focused on empowerment and engaging staff
- We empowered staff through transparency – and through action that followed (outcomes)



