

## Community Research Literature Review – Intro

Our literature review approach was initially formulated by Paul Addae and myself during the initial stages of the pandemic. There was a both a cultural and research opening which led us to come together and develop a theoretical underpinning for concerns which we were aware of across South London communities for over fifteen years. We thus embarked on formulating a literature review on community research to support the theoretical foundation of Centric so as to merge academic rigour with consideration of unheard voices within the urban locale. This approach was about also ensuring that research within disadvantages communities is not simply about tokenistic gestures and the exploitative use of black data gatherers, it was built based on the learning and lived experience of individuals themselves who have faced a barrage of obstacles as black people in the system.

These individuals embarked on traversing a landscape fraught with disadvantage and rejection and compounded by an apprehension of incorporating local people into research processes due to the uncomfortable findings which community research often reveals. Our collaborative research ethos ensures the community is an equal partner conducting the research and not outside the room as only participants. Centric has developed a rigorous, robust and logical continuum model for research developed alongside researchers from the community, 'developed by the community for the community'. We have been able to extrapolate insights from data, which without the analysis from community researchers, would not be immediately interpreted or identified. Insights which would not necessarily be comfortable for institutional researchers.

The four key areas of the literature review cover:

### **Extractive approaches and 'parachute' models of research**

Referring to the arrival of professional researchers into communities to conduct research and then take back to institutions with little or no input or follow-up with those communities. This is what Gaudry (2011) coins as the 'extraction model of research'. Herein, local insight and localised knowledge is taken from communities with neither culturally competent protocol nor establishing any commitment whatsoever to the communities over whom the research is relevant or will impact.

This is also referred to as the ***parachute model of research*** where researchers are dropped in from outside, data gathered and analysed, findings reached and then researcher disappeared with no long-term change resulting for the communities in question. This then contributes to **research fatigue and initiative fatigue** among communities, who also become cynical and distrustful.

### **Mapping of existing community research models and programmes**

We conducted a mapping and scoping of projects run by both large-scale research institutions, and grassroots organisations across the UK, that work with or employ citizen scientists, peer or community researchers, research champions and others.

### **Rethinking Research Ethics**

We noted that inequalities can be reproduced within fieldwork research ethics and this is often unbeknown due to 'ethics creep'. There is an unequal system of how knowledge is generated and data collected, and hence cultural competence in this context needs to be reinforced. Secondly, Western-derived values become shoe-horned into specific contexts with a preconceived notion that they are entirely universal. Hence, we opine that there is a need to problematise the imposition of *a priori* and philosophical theorising to research ethics issues.

This was our initial thinking about **rethinking research ethics** and bringing voice to theory, in that the concerns of the community were listened to and then a model was developed wherein communities play a role in how research ethics should look like when research impacts their communities and localities.

We have an array of initiatives which we have developed via the method of listening, ideating, conveying and continuous looping. Such as the COVID-19 insights work, air pollution and communities, medical scepticism and others.

### **The 'Inbetweener' Research Approach**

When conducting research within communities, particularly when there are sensitivities and distrust, there has been a discussion within the literature as to whether a dispassionate and distant positionality, assumed to be more objective, should be adopted by researchers; or whether an insider approach which extols credibility due to the proximity and familiarity of the researcher to a community or cultural group under research should be adopted?

We highlighted that the 'insider/outsider' dichotomy can be remedied by an '**inbetweener**' **approach**. Herein, a researcher can place themselves *in between*, and this is even more relevant in cross-cultural research, as it helps build trust and develop knowledge co-production in an equitable format.