Reviewer’s report

Title: Lost in the Shadows: reflections on the dark side of co-production

Version: 0 Date: 17 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Agnes Black

Reviewer's report:

I appreciate that you and your group of co-authors have scrutinized very carefully the article by Oliver et al, and indeed, you discovered and/or interpreted comments in their article differently than I did on my initial review of the article. Your manuscript is an important contribution to the ongoing dialogue about how to most meaningfully engage in co-production of research, and I appreciate your challenge to researchers, especially academic researchers, to "be more critical of the structural inequalities playing out in academia, which undermine...the importance of more participatory research approaches..." Your call to action on an approach to research that does not "prioritise the specific needs of researchers" is an important one, and will hopefully be heard loud and clear. Even those of us who are fully committed to co-production can fall prey to the tendency to prioritise our own research needs when we engage with patients/families/knowledge users.

While Oliver et al. note, "we argue that political reasons for engaging in coproducive research may be the least-discussed, yet most important rationale made by researchers" you and your team seem determined to define Oliver's approach as "technocratic" and you don't want to hear their words about how coproduction can have a profound and beneficial effect on research. I do not agree with your interpretation that Oliver and team are promoting "co-produced research without service users, patients and/or marginalised citizens" and instead I read their article as a call to be very thoughtful about how we approach co-production of research.

Fundamentally, I think your manuscript is well written, well researched, and an important contribution to the ongoing conversation and debate on this topic. I think you could make your arguments much more concisely without losing your key points.

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