



Use of a Novel Visual Metaphor Measure (PRISM) to Evaluate School Children's Perceptions of Natural Hazards, Sources of Hazard Information, Hazard Mitigation Organizations, and the Effectiveness of Future Hazard Education Programs in Dominica, Eastern Caribbean

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This project aims to study the development of understanding of natural hazards (and of hazard mitigation) from the age of 11 to the age of 15 in secondary school children from 5 geographically and socially different schools on Dominica, through repeated interviews with the students and their teachers. These interviews will be coupled with a structured course of hazard education in the Geography syllabus; the students not taking Geography will form a control group. To avoid distortion of our results arising from the developing verbalization and literacy skills of the students over the 5 years of the project, we have adapted the PRISM tool used in clinical practice to assess patient perceptions of illness and treatment (Buchi & Sensky, 1999). This novel measure is essentially non-verbal, and uses spatial positions of moveable markers ("object" markers) on a board, relative to a fixed marker that represents the subject's "self", as a visual metaphor for the importance of the object to the subject. The subjects also explain their reasons for placing the markers as they have, to provide additional qualitative information. The PRISM method thus produces data on the perceptions measured on the board that can be subjected to statistical analysis, and also succinct qualitative data about each subject. Our study will gather data on participants' perceptions of different natural hazards, different sources of information about these, and organizations or individuals to whom they would go for help in a disaster, and investigate how these vary with geographical and social factors. To illustrate the method, which is generalisable, we present results from our initial interviews of the cohort of 11 year olds whom we will follow through their secondary school education.

Büchi, S., & Sensky, T. (1999). PRISM: Pictorial Representation of Illness and Self Measure: a brief nonverbal measure of illness impact and therapeutic aid in psychosomatic medicine. *Psychosomatics*, 40(4), 314-320.