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Peer Involvement

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CAB Meetings and Participation

We held a total of ten Community Advisory Board (CAB) Meetings between June 2016 and May 2018. From June 2016 through March 2018, meetings were held quarterly. We then had monthly meetings the last two months. Attendance varied, with three meetings fully attended by all members, six meetings with one person missing, and the remaining two meetings missing two and three people respectively.

We started the project with eight CAB members, two of whom were also Research Assistants (RA). One RA left the program early on as she needed full time employment and her position with this project was only part time. We had seven CAB members from September 2016 – March 2017. Two CAB members left in March 2017, and one new CAB member joined in December 2017. Although by December 2017, we had six CAB members signed up, one member stopped attending in January 2018, with the intention of staying engaged remotely, but was not able to fulfill that intention. We ended the project with six CAB members. The fluctuation in individual participation and CAB size was due to challenges such as competing work priorities, as well as standard changes in life situation, such as a promotion in work or pursuit of higher education.

All CAB members identified as cis- or transwomen who experienced trafficking in the commercial sex industry. We found it challenging to recruit cis- and transmen, as well as people who experienced trafficking outside of the sex industry. This was likely because both Co-PIs had professional and personal connections with people who experienced exploitation in the sex industry. It may also be attributable to the limited language capacity of the co-PIs. We were not able to structure meetings that would be accessible to non-English speakers.

The content of CAB meetings fell into three broad categories: community building, research updates, and project activities. Community building consisted of general well-being check-ins, eating food with another, discussing other professional and personal endeavors, and sharing about common experiences in the anti-trafficking movement. Research updates took different formats at CAB meetings. At times, our Research Assistants presented about progress on data collection or their initial findings and interpretations. Most times, Co-PIs presented progress and plans for data collection and analysis, emerging findings and interpretations, or plans for dissemination of findings.

CAB meetings that focused on research project activities included soliciting feedback on measurement tools, interview guides, and data interpretation. Many of these activities required CAB members to review materials prior to meetings. Since their time outside of meetings was not paid for, it was difficult for members to make this commitment and for

Co-PIs to require preparatory work. As a result, the meeting time intended for feedback and discussion decreased, due to time spent explaining materials and allowing members to read. CAB members also indicated that the heavy use of email to send documents and communicate with members was challenging.

CAB Interviews

After the first CAB meeting, we recognized the need to have in-depth interviews with CAB members to better understand their experience of the project and to solicit feedback about the project infrastructure. We intended to conduct a maximum of four interviews per person, one at the start of the project, and one at the end of each year they participated on the CAB. We were able to conduct complete first interviews with six of the seven starting CAB members, and a partial interview with the seventh member. We also conducted a first interview with the CAB member who joined in the second program year. Completing the successive interviews proved very difficult. We were only able to conduct two complete second interviews, and one complete third interview. Challenges in interviews were due to Co-PI Dang's limited visits to the U.S. after moving to the UK for a PhD program. If interviews were scheduled and then postponed, rescheduling interviews was complicated by the time zone difference. Additionally, CAB members indicated that although they wanted to participate in the interviews, busy life schedules and the offer of \$20 for time and travel were not enough to warrant the inconvenience of the interview. Given the challenges with completing interviews in rounds two and three, we focused our analysis on data collected during the first interview.

Significant insights and findings emerged from the initial interview. We utilized a participatory analysis process. One of the CAB members, with approval from the other members, worked with Co-PI Dang to review de-identified CAB transcripts for Interview #1 and develop a coding scheme for the data. The CAB Member, along with Co-PI Lutnick reviewed Co-PI Dang's final coding. Co-PI Dang presented findings to CAB members and asked for their responses and interpretations, and then shared her interpretations of the data, allowing CAB members to verify or challenge interpretations. A full manuscript with findings about the peer-involvement part of this project is currently being drafted for publication. Key findings to highlight in this report are as follows:

1. CAB members joined the project because they believed in the importance of survivor voice and the research question, were curious about the project, wanted personal and professional development, were interested in a community of survivors, and felt empowered through participating.
2. CAB members' identification with the term "Survivor of Human Trafficking" is not discrete or stagnant. Only two people identified with this entire phrase and raised no

issues about any part of the phrase. One of those two, started with naming her experience as domestic violence before she came to define it as trafficking. Three people stated that they do not identify with the term at all. The remaining three people are still in process with the phrase or identify with it sometimes for strategic reasons. People who do not identify with the term said that it is because the phrase is inaccurate to their experience, that there are public misconceptions about the term, or expect negative consequences when identifying themselves as a survivor of human trafficking.

3. CAB members found their experience on the project to be overall a positive one. They largely attributed this to the Co-PIs making the project relevant to their interests and responsive to their feedback. They also named that the Co-PIs showed respect through listening, and by valuing survivors' professional identities as demonstrated by the stipend they received for each meeting (\$75/hour). CAB members found the experience educational and that over the course of the project it resulted in a caring community. They also stated that it was important that the project was co-led by a survivor. The experience was not without challenges, namely scheduling child care and finding the work more triggering of past trauma than expected.
4. CAB members had individual desires for being heard, respected, and finding personal meaning; but also wanted to make sure to hear and support others, and ensure that the project would have real impact.

CAB Publications

In the final months of the project, CAB members initiated the development of two publications: (1) Tips for Survivor Leaders Working in the Anti-Trafficking Movement (2) Tips for Anti-Trafficking Professionals When Working with Survivor Leaders. These two publications are pragmatic outputs that we hope will have immediate impact on the anti-trafficking field. Throughout previous CAB meetings, we observed our members' interest in on-the-ground changes and improvements in anti-trafficking efforts. Their concern was often about how our project could improve the work of the Task Force and its members to better serve survivors. Since one of the key goals of this project was to set up a research infrastructure to support involvement of survivors of human trafficking, we wanted to share our CAB members' input on what works well when working with survivor leaders.

Opportunities for training and professional development

Throughout the project, professional development was inherent in the introduction of research processes to CAB members. However, RAs received additional professional training

through one-on-one supervision and mentoring from Co-PI Lutnick. CAB members received annual professional development funds. These funds were used for child care during CAB meetings, development of a professional website, payment of school fees, attending retreats relevant to their work, as well as items needed for their professional work (such as a personal planner notebook, and professional interview clothing). Two CAB members attended the Freedom Network Conference in Denver, Colorado. Co-PIs Dang and Lutnick supported CAB members in the process, including identifying workshops to attend, coordinating logistics, and providing opportunities to reflect on content of the conference. As mentioned above, one CAB member took on a strong role in data analysis. Co-PI Lutnick provided ongoing support for Co-PI Dang primarily related to how to navigate research project responsibilities, trauma activations, and her transition to a PhD program.

Recommendations for peer-research with people who experienced trafficking

- 1.** *Build in time for general education on research (i.e. Research 101).* Due to limited previous exposure to research, it wasn't until the end that members began to grasp the research question and processes.
- 2.** *Prioritize stipends that account for child care costs and meeting preparation time.* CAB members wanted to take on additional project work but could only do so if paid and/or able to step away from child care duties.
- 3.** *Develop a strategy for peer-researchers to receive emotional support from external support structures.* Although Co-PIs were clear about the boundaries of their role as it pertained to providing emotional support, they were still available for CAB members to discuss their experiences, positive or negative. However, there were times when topics or meetings were more upsetting to members than Co-PIs or even members themselves could anticipate.
- 4.** *Study the impact of CAB members' participation on mental health outcomes.* If CAB members stated that the experience was positive, but it was more triggering than intended, what was the impact of the project on their overall mental health and wellbeing? We hoped that Interviews #2 and #3 would provide some findings on this question, but we could not collect enough data. Future work is needed to explore in more detail the benefits and challenges of peer involvement.