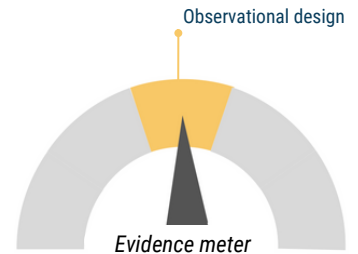


## Involving Young People with Lived Experiences of Problematic Sexual Behaviors in Research



### Key Findings

- Community advisory boards help connect researchers with the community.
- Youth with problematic sexual behaviors (PSB) are open to discussing sensitive topics and are not harmed by conversations on child sexual abuse prevention. They can provide consent to participate.
- Key themes from the data include confidentiality, creative communication, and clear boundaries.

**Background:** When conducting research, engaging the focal research participants in the study design and interpretation of findings are key to successful community-based participatory research.

Engaging with youth for interventions on sensitive or taboo topics (e.g., child sexual abuse) or with stigmatized populations (e.g., youth who may cause sexual harm), outside of clinical settings, may be the “perfect storm” of challenges for community-based participatory research. In the current study, The Center team asked:

**How can we ensure that research on youth with concerns about their sexual thoughts, interests, or behaviors is informed by the youth themselves?**

**Approach:** We interviewed 16 youth with concerns about their sexual interests or behaviors; eight joined an advisory board, and an additional six provided survey feedback.

**Limitations:** This study reflects the responses of youth with questions about their sexual interests who are willing to speak to researchers.

**Summary:** This study shows that community advisory boards help researchers ethically engage youth with PSB, who support the research, discuss sensitive topics safely, and prioritize privacy.

**85%** reported that survey questions about CSA did not upset them

**90%** rated this research as very or extremely important

### Motivations to participate in research

Youth participated because they felt their privacy was protected and study procedures were clear. Many wanted to help others and contribute to “something bigger”, some joined for compensation, and a few valued the surveys for self-reflection.



I felt really upset with myself because of the thoughts I was having. I noticed there was a chance that people could get research from this and that there’s a possibility that in the future people won’t have to deal with this alone.



### What researchers should know

Researchers should know that youth are open to discussing sensitive and stigmatized topics without experiencing significant distress. They view PSB research as important and value contributing to broader conversations on these issues.



...Thank you for doing this research and engaging with youth in a way that isn’t demonizing or disparaging. We really are looking for help.



### Ways to cultivate trust

Trust grows when researchers minimize identifying information, waive name requirements on consent forms, and do not require parental permission. Clear communication and balanced reassurance help participants feel safe.



I would definitely say that the best way to earn our trust is making it blatantly obvious that sharing these feelings will not be disclosed anywhere, and most certainly not our inf... (unless of course there is someone in danger).



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