Social Photo-Elicitation: The Use of Communal Production of Meaning to Hear a Vulnerable Population

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Outline

1. Methods

2. Social Capital

3. Justification
Outline

1. **Methods** sensitive to local conditions and power differences

2. Social Capital

3. Justification
Outline

1. Methods

2. Towards building social capital

3. Justification
Outline

1. Methods

2. Social Capital

3. Moral and ethical justification for intervention
Methods

Sensitive to the local conditions and power difference
 Trafficking Issue in Nepal

NUMBING NUMBERS

16,500
unmarried women and children were trafficked in past two years

1,233
women and children went missing in the first three months of quake

9,000-9,500
women and children were trafficked in 2013-14 and 2014-15

85 percent of trafficking victims, who were rescued, had never been to school


Anti-trafficking Organizations

- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are the primary actors:
  - preventing trafficking
  - rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors

- A typical rehabilitation and reintegration process involves:
  - sheltering survivors (sister-survivors)
  - providing training in handicrafts
  - supporting in job search or starting a small business.
Context

- Vulnerable participants
- Dependent on the NGOs
- We (researchers) are dependent on the NGOs
- NGOs are dependent on donors and influenced by regulations
Initial Observations

- Power distance between the researcher and the sister-survivors
  - Researcher addressed as “sir”
  - IRB consent process added to the distance
- Staff members answered questions that were directed to the sister-survivors
- We felt we were not clearly hearing the voices of the sister-survivors

Adapting Photo-Elicitation

Posters with newspaper cutouts adorned the walls

Two days with the camera

Physical print to convey control over the photos
No particular goal was set


Social Photo-Elicitation

Discussion as a group
Communally owned photographs

Communally negotiated statement
Social Capital
Identifying candidate sources of capital
### Capital: Crafting

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<th>Economic Possibilities</th>
<th>“For Nepali women, in cases of unemployment, this could be an employment opportunity.”</th>
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<td>Ownership</td>
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<td><strong>Dwindling Sales</strong></td>
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<td>“When you are here and like the handicrafts, you can buy them as a souvenir.”</td>
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<th><strong>Difficulty and Boredom</strong></th>
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<td>“Although it [glass beads] may seem small, the work is very hard. And it requires a lot of effort.”</td>
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Desire to Belong

“We can easily do these work sitting at home.”

Sisterhood

“With the promise that we will not share any of the secrets of our group we shake our hands. And, we hope that we all live together happily.”
### Capital: Social Support

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<td>Acceptance Difficult due to Stigma</td>
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<td>“If my face and voice are not recognizable, if they [public] can’t figure out who I am, if they can’t say that this [me] is so and so’s daughter, then I would [record my story in my own voice].”</td>
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<td>Dispersed during Reintegration</td>
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Situating within HCI

Existing literature: Life disruptions and towards a new normal

- Changing social relationships
- Vulnerability of existing infrastructure
- Dignity, privacy, and safety

From Social Photo Elicitation

Less stable baseline than implied by “life disruptions”

- Limited social connections
- Limited infrastructure
- Stigma and fear make acceptance difficult

Support Building Social Capital

Justification
Do we have sufficient standing to intervene?
Support Building Social Capital

- Building on the sister-survivors’ crafting skills
- Sustaining existing connections with the survivors in their cohort
- Support deniability and obfuscation
But ...

Our designed systems may put people at more risk

- Building on the sister-survivors’ crafting skills
- Sustaining existing connections with the survivors in their cohort
- Support deniability and obfuscation
Our Next Step

- We do not have the sufficient standing to fight and protect against stigma in case our intervention fails
  - Not intervening is a viable option
  - Inaction is difficult to accept
  - Directly targeting sister-survivors may raise suspicion
- We are cautiously moving forward:
  - makerspace for all women in the community
Take Aways

1. Sensitivity can manifest itself in the methods
   - Methodology begin with the local conditions and continue to evolve
   - Social photo-elicitation brought sociality and communality to the forefront

2. The sessions helped identify limited but valuable capital
   - Leverage to support reintegration

3. Call for deeply justifying our interventions
   - Moral and ethical justification over technological possibilities and provisions
   - Our designed systems may put people at more risk
Thank you!

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