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POSTER TITLE: Someone Who Looks Like Me: Representation and Diversity on Clinical Research Study Teams

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### ABSTRACT

Efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in research have gained significant traction in the past decade. However, researchers have been increasingly challenged to demonstrate authentic representation in their work, so that these ideals are present in research designs, practices, and research teams themselves, and are not just limited to statements in proposals or advertising materials. For studies conducting clinical randomized controlled trials (RCTs), rooted in a tradition based on normativity and standardization, taking this sort of authenticity from theory to practice may be particularly challenging; scientific “rigor” has arguably long been equated with standardization, and reflective of a white, middle class norm. In our presentation, we share some of the ways in which team members on one RCT study, which was designed to deliver mindfulness interventions to improve mental health outcomes and wellbeing for members of underserved, primarily African-American communities, worked through the processes involved in ensuring genuine representation in study materials, team organization, and embodied intervention practices. We focus on the role of a community stakeholder group, whose presence and unique expertise ensured that perspectives of the target population informed decisions regarding participant-facing materials and intervention practices. We share specific examples of this impact, including the choice of daily inspirational quotes displayed on a smartphone app and in written materials for participant use. Stakeholders noted that certain voices typically invested with respect often have problematic roots. In retrospect, it seemed obvious that the quotes should be from inspirational people of color, but until it was pointed out, the classic (white) famous names went unquestioned. We further discuss how one stakeholder’s observation of the interventionists during a pilot session, “none of you look like me” served as a wakeup call and engendered a newly invigorated mission for the team: to look at all aspects of the study through a racial equity lens. This includes the primarily white research team members making a regular practice of critically examining gaps in voice and representation through reflexivity. Recruitment to add an interventionist team member of color was conducted, one applicant was hired and four were added to a pool of interventionists, established to mitigate burnout and fatigue, and to promote self-care within the study team which is special in and of itself. A team of two interventionists will work together with any given participant group, and the intention is for one of those interventionists to always be a person of color. Finally, we share the way that this work resulted in an intervention team that embodies and practices this theory-to-practice work in the ongoing interactions with study participants.