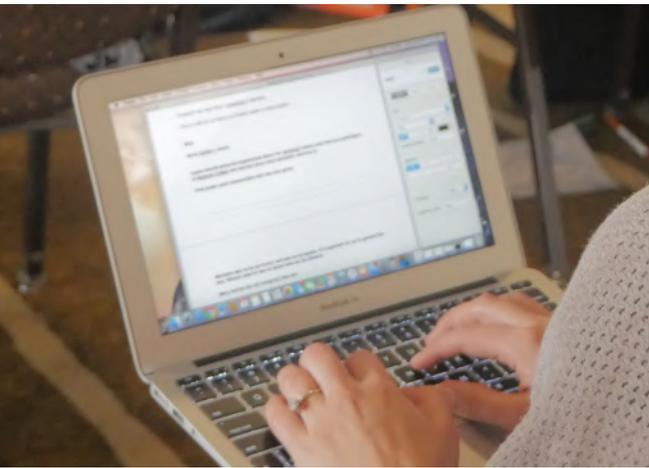




Survivor-Centered Advocacy in Culturally Specific Communities

A Community-Based Participatory Research Project

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Field Research Projects

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The Survivor-Centered Advocacy Project, or “SCA Project,” was proposed to BSCF with a very deliberate vision for “research justice” that sought to:

1. Explicitly address the imbalances of power and privilege in traditional research relationships and dominant positivist frameworks determining what counts as “legitimate” knowledge production;
2. Operate from a strengths-based perspective that recognizes the assets that exist in all individuals and communities;
3. Honor and center the voices and lived experiences of impacted communities as adding critical and diverse voices to knowledge production; and
4. Pursue engaged social justice scholarship in such a way that will ultimately benefit the lived experiences of our communities.



Over the course of fifteen months, the SCA Project Team and their Community Partners engaged in deep reflexive inquiry with historically marginalized culturally-specific communities, in order to cultivate the wisdom metabolized in the margins that can inform how the anti-violence field can better practice survivor-centered advocacy. A more in-depth discussion about the SCA Project’s research process and research findings can be found in the report titled, “Survivor-Centered Advocacy in Culturally-Specific Communities: A Community-Based Participatory Research Project.” The pages that follow highlight critical aspects of the SCA Project that represent places of radical possibilities for braiding together how we *study* the world and how we *change* it, rethinking our ethical relations of responsibility toward all others, and for unsettling truth claims that have upheld Whiteness and the unequal power relations of past and present colonialisms.



Section I:

Democratizing Knowledge

"You know something, value it. Believe that you know it. Think about what you know... go home one night and go, 'wow, I know something really special! That's fantastic! Let's have a glass of wine over it! I'm going to tell my grandchildren... I know, I'm a knowing person. I know something about my experience, my world; and no one else knows that."

Smith, 2015, p. 208

Among those truth claims is the idea that only certain forms of knowledge are legitimate, and only certain people are the bearers of 'legitimate' knowledge. We have been led to believe that 'legitimate' knowledge is produced as the result of "high-end inquiries" that meet strict standards of scientific rigor, a privilege of those in capital intensive settings such as academia or other knowledge-based institutions (Appadurai, 2006). We have been led to believe that those of us from "primitive" societies are less than human; that our low graduation rates mean that we are not deserving of investment; that the researcher represents "the expert" who enters marginalized communities to mine for data and research *on* marginalized groups. These are but a few of the ways in which 'research' has produced false, victim-blaming knowledge that reproduces classed, raced, gendered hierarchies, as it serves to naturalize and justify our dispossession.

The SCA Project works to discredit and delegitimize these stories that we have been led to believe about ourselves. Following Paulo Freire's understanding of critical consciousness (*conscientizacao*), it sought to tap into and engage *local knowledge systems* toward emancipatory practices. At its core is the conviction that "expertise is widely distributed even if legitimacy is not" (Fine, 2015, p. 200). By recognizing that we are all experts of our own lives and experiences, they dismantle the idea of "expert" as the exclusive purview of the knowledge-elite, liberating "expertise" from the "ivory tower" and redistribute its power and authority to ordinary people.

The SCA Project serves to democratize knowledge by positioning community practitioners as agentive possessors and constructors of knowledge, with the capacity to make meaning of their experiences, conduct original research, and take action against social issues that directly affect their lives and their communities.

This shows up in the SCA Project's conceptualization of "cultural intelligence":

"In the context of the SCA Project, cultural intelligence is a type of knowledge that is based upon lived experience within a particular community setting as one identifying with that community. It includes embeddedness and social positioning within the community; deep knowledge of the community's culture, norms, priorities, history, and legacies of trauma; fluency in the primary language(s) spoken by the community, including jargon and slang; critical analysis of inequitable and oppressive practices and structures, particularly as they impact their community; emotional intelligence and empathy; and shared identity and lived experiences with other community members around the research topic of interest. It can also include understanding and using modes of communication and preserving meaning that are intrinsic to the community, such as oral or narrative traditions, like creation stories."

Ghanbarpour et al., 2018, p. 530

We see how the SCA Project deeply values and explicitly recognizes the meaning-making and insights gathered through embodied experience and other forms of knowing, that are metabolized and cultivated by members of communities that have been most impacted by marginalization, and are expressed in diverse ways.

Its privileging of community and alternative wisdoms is what leads to SCA participants' engagement in "bi-directional learning":

"The external researchers possessed valuable knowledge and skills about research processes and methods, which they shared in various formats with the community-based research teams. In turn, the community-based researchers brought a plethora of equally valuable research-related knowledge and skills to the table, including expertise in the historical harms of research and forms of research oppression."

Ghanbarpour et al., 2018, p. 532

Their process held significant reverence for the particular contribution that community-based practitioners brought to understanding their and their communities' everyday lives, and emphasized mutual dependence on one another's skills, perspectives and efforts towards the purposeful gathering of information and the thoughtful distillation of meaning, in order to generate original knowledge for their own communities and to diverse outside audiences.



Section II:

Community-Led Research

Participatory approaches have been widely adopted among researchers and applied for a range of purposes. However, “participation” can become co-opted and commodified, broadly applied by different corporate, institutional and individual actors in narrow, tokenizing, and/or top down ways that contradict the radical origins and philosophical roots of the approach. Not all research utilizing participatory praxis necessarily offer a critique or analysis of the broader societal structures of power, and perhaps fewer signal a challenge to the power inequities in the research process or evince a commitment to the transformational significance of co-construction of knowledge with communities.

To say the least, “there was something in the subtle shift from communities ‘participating’ in research, to leading it, that merited attention” (Ghanbarpour et al., 2018). Following in the footsteps of critical pedagogy, the SCA Project is grounded in the idea that *all* people -- irrespective of geographic location, race, ability, gender or socio-economic status, have the “right to conduct research” (Appadurai, 2006) – the right to name their world views and apply them to define themselves, and to be heard.

In other words, the “people who know in their bellies the pain, the resilience, and the strength of what it takes to live in injustice deserve the right to shape the research questions about and for their communities” (Fine, 2015, p. 200). It engages a practice of “re-membling” exclusions – the bodies, cultures, languages, and ways of knowing that have historically been excluded from research (Fine and Torre, 2004). In the SCA Project, rather than being the objects of research, community-based practitioners are positioned as co-researchers as they identify the priority issues affecting their communities, frame the questions that they investigate, and drive decisions at every stage of the process -- from research methods and analysis, to who uses and controls the data, who gets to speak for the work, and what goes public.



This represents a shift in the fundamental relationship of the research process – from one based upon unequal power relations between researchers and the “researched,” to one based on mutuality, respect, and “radical love” among research partners (Jolivet, 2015, p. 8). It’s not about involvement on *equal* terms, but about actively resisting dominant notions of the objective, neutral observer; acknowledging and tending to the historicity and dynamics of larger structures of oppression; as well as consciously renegotiating and rebalancing the power accorded to our relative positions with a feminist praxis of care and solidarity by *supporting communities to lead*.



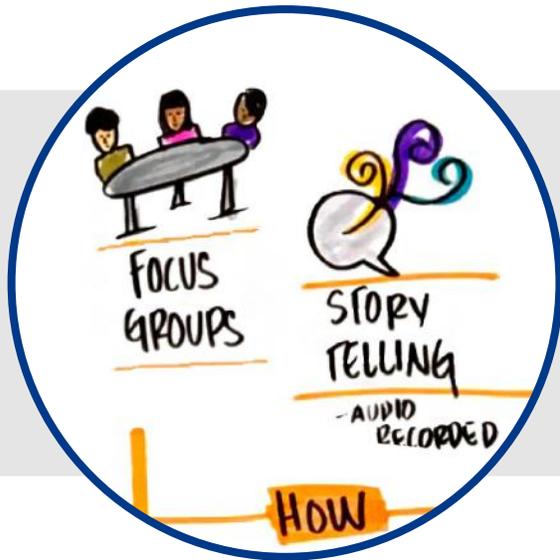
Section III:

Relational Accountability

The SCA Project Team engaged in critical praxis, operating from a commitment to challenging prevailing power inequities at multiple levels, within and beyond the research project. It is work that is both political *and* personal, which can make grappling with the responsibilities, challenges, and joys of social inquiry feel more emotionally engaging and exhausting. At different points, they had to critically interrogate the assumption they bring to the topic, to the methodological possibilities they offer, and to the research practices they engage in, as well as their role as gatekeepers of resources.

At its core, critical inquiry is a *relational* project at the intersections of power and vulnerability. It is at these "participatory contact zones," where we work across power differentials and divergent experiences, that we contend with questions of relative power, privilege, and proximity to Whiteness (Torre, 2005). Yet, these borderlands are the necessary interstitial spaces where we can practice democratic theorizing, collective meaning-making, and imagining what should and could be. The project Co-Leads brought deep self-reflection, humility and transparency (elements of the SCA Project's Community-Based Participatory Research Principles and Agreements) to chronicling the messiness, the stumbles, the unforeseen hurdles, and points of impossibility they encountered in the research process, which they humbly admit was not unmarked by missteps and mistakes.

But such is the raw, unabashed reality of engaging in and with communities in social inquiry. It is work that prompts us to engage in the deeply personal, deeply internal work of transformation that may be in itself a form of activism. Learning from indigenous methodologies, it is important to acknowledge that our knowing is inseparable from our relationships – "with family and other people and with everything around us—our environment, our cosmos—and with abstractions and ideas" (Wilson and Wilson, 2013, p. 350).



Section IV:

The Field Research Projects

The research findings of the SCA Project about survivor-centered advocacy, arrived at collectively and critically, from multiple forms of expertise at the margins, and situated in social historical contexts and structural conditions [1] allow us to think and act expansively with regard to community needs, assets and aspiration; and [2] offer invaluable insights about community-generated alternatives to mainstream service-provision programs. For more specific information about the methods and findings from each Field Research team, please refer to the Appendix.

Avellaka

Avellaka's Field Research project explores the circuits of 'coming out' by LGBTQ/2Spirit people who are a part of the La Jolla band of Luiseño Indians in San Diego County, as they travelled away from and back to their tribe, navigating complex, shifting relationships to safety and belonging against the broader context of settler colonialism. The project speaks to the grave loss of a specific cultural history where those of varying gender and sexual expressions once had a revered cultural role within indigenous traditions, culture and spirituality, that has long been lost because of colonization. Avellaka's research findings point to the devastating effects of colonization as directly connected to conditions that make coming out in the tribe – their place and community of home – feel fraught and full of risk. Participants reported feeling the need to "move away to be yourself," and yet, while they were away, they faced other forms of non-belonging and alienation, which are also tied to a larger historical and social context of colonization. Adding one more nuance to their multilayered experiences, research participants found power in coming back to the reservation and owning one's holistic self-definition.

DeafHope

DeafHope's Field Research project makes several important interventions. First, it challenges the one-size-fits-all assumptions of mainstream domestic violence advocacy, by inquiring about the experiences of Deaf survivors of domestic and sexual violence, to highlight the ways in which mainstream approaches may miss the mark when it comes to serving the Deaf community. Second, it tries to address the dearth of studies that inquire about the experiences of Deaf survivors by cultivating their own knowledge. Third, it tries to ameliorate the even greater rarity of studies conducted about Deaf people being conducted and led by Deaf *researchers*. This work poses the question of what may be gained when research about Deaf people is led by Deaf people themselves. That this project was intentionally and explicitly designed and implemented "from the perspective of Deaf researchers" is hugely significant because it frames the inquiry to be grounded in a positive, shared Deaf identity – as members of Deaf culture, rather than a focus on the experience of deafness (as a deficit or disability). This research is also significant because of the primacy of data remaining in American Sign Language (ASL), a gestural/visual language. It opens up the broader critique of whether mainstream theories and research methodologies that rely on auditory/speech-based and/or print-based interpretation and translation of ASL (to make it intelligible to researchers and readers who are not users of ASL), are sufficient at all for conveying the self-expressions of Deaf individuals.

KACEDA

KACEDA's Field Research project insists on the inseparability of different forms of violence and legacies of oppression, and as such they designed their inquiry in a way that rejects asking about experiences of intimate partner violence in isolation from experiences of family violence or sexual violence; examining homophobia and transphobia in isolation from sexism in the context of colonization; and understanding activism for Korean queer and trans people's rights in isolation from efforts to maintain Korea's fragile democracy. To do research at these dense intersections, it was critical to have members of the LGBTQ Korean community design the research instrument. KACEDA's sensitivity to the power of language and words reminds us of the ways in which our understandings of queerness, sexuality, gender, conflict and violence, conveyed through language, are highly complex, contextual, and political.

Sikh Family Center

Given their invisibility in most national, regional, or statewide statistics, independently gathering evidence of community needs has been an important component of the work of Sikh Family Center (SFC) for years. SFC had already conducted a “Needs Assessment Survey of the Sikh American Community” but sought to deepen their learning by collecting qualitative data from community members as well. This kind of data creates conditions for the organization to think through fundamental questions of what do we do, why we do it, why it matters, to whom it matters, and how it can make a better difference in community members’ lives. SFC’s research findings address concerns shared by many survivors from cultural minority communities, such as deeply embedded patriarchy, the primacy of the well-being of the group or community at the expense of well-being of individual women survivors, and the need for strengthening the capacity of community institutions to support survivors and families. While these findings in and of themselves are not new, what will be novel and important are the strategies to address these challenges that emerge from and will resonate with the Sikh community. One critical element to these strategies is the prerogative to strengthen community resilience based on positive group identity, and to empower both Sikh men and women in their private and public lives.

Mujeres Unidas y Activas

Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) creatively applied the narrative approaches of participatory research to their program evaluation. MUA and their members are unique to begin with, as an organization that holds a *doble misión* (dual mission) based on addressing both individual and collective needs for transformation as equally important aspects of the struggle for social justice for immigrant women. Rather than seeing the women they work with as ‘service recipients,’ they are *members* on a journey of politicization, which entails supporting members’ individual transformation, such as addressing the effects of domestic violence and sexual assault, through developing *autoestima*, achieved through peer support and dialogue. Their value of democratic participation runs deep and shows up in everything they do. The program that they sought to evaluate too is unique, as a culturally-responsive, survivor-centered effort to support the mental health and healing of survivors of domestic violence. Using community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods, they sought to understand the degree to which their mental health services program was relevant and meaningful to their members. To do so, they created spaces for members’ voices to be heard so that their lived experience can be taken into account in the development of future program strategies. It is an exercise of intentional and systematic deep listening that few nonprofit organizations have the luxury of doing.



Section V:

A Vibrant Thriving Ecosystem

The research findings from the SCA Project sheds light on aspects of survivor-centered advocacy that are often invisible from the perspective of dominant paradigms. When we shift our point of view in ways that allow us to look from the sightlines of those located at the margins of mainstream society, we may notice things we had not noticed before, such as the uneven, in-between spaces typically inaccessible from the narrow perimeters of the view from the center. What we learn from when we *see differently*, by looking from diverse standpoints, has the potential to radically transform how we support *all* survivors. When we recognize where dominant paradigms fall short, fail to reach those most vulnerable (or those who are vulnerable in different ways), or reproduce the oppressive tendencies that we purport to be against, only then we can begin to *practice differently*, in ways that can take seriously the real diversity of lived experiences of survivors as well as the histories and structures that shape them.

The authors of the SCA report are clear that their approach to CBPR and their research findings are not intended to serve as a “model in a box,” nor does it offer how-to instructions on becoming (more) survivor-centered, because “by its very nature, survivor-centered advocacy is always changing, always adapting” (“Survivor-Centered Advocacy in Culturally-Specific Communities”). Similarly, the authors do not assert that research must meet the ‘gold standard’ of community participation in order to be valuable or valid. Instead, they offer a more complex set of alternative ideas to employ in practice -- different ways of engaging in research and in anti-violence advocacy for survivors of violence, that exist in the world, and that are emerging and evolving constantly. These alternatives may be less obvious and more fluid and thus are positioned unequally in our current systems of value – and that needs to be corrected, but it is not about advancing one approach at the expense of others.

Shifting away from the polarization of “either/or” binaries -- of culturally-specific organizations *or* mainstream services, researcher *or* community member, that privilege separateness and competition, the SCA Project recognizes our *interconnectedness*

within the anti-violence movement as part of a complex, living system. And as observed in the natural world, living systems *thrive* when conditions are abundant and diverse, creating more possibilities for life. Indeed, as our individual, collective, and planetary survival depend upon it, so do our social movements:

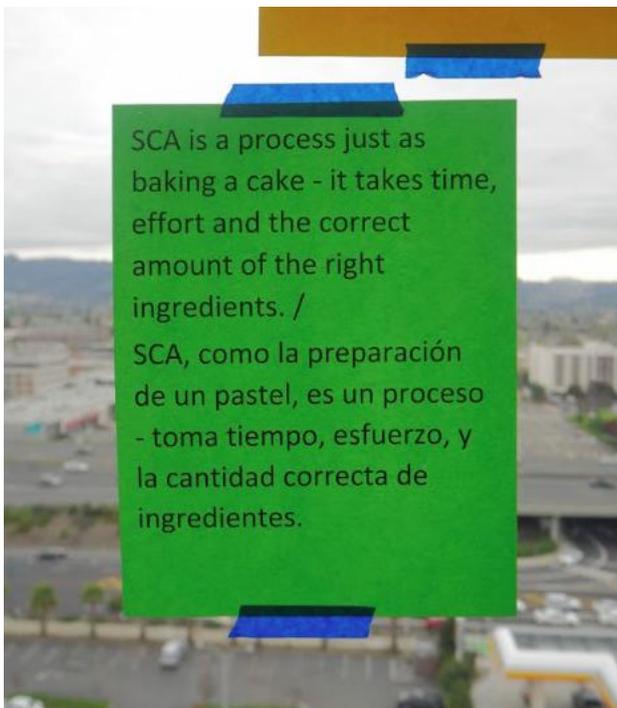
"If Mama Nature teaches us nothing else, she teaches us that diversity is absolutely necessary for survival. Now, she doesn't mean some surface diversity, but a system where every single being is doing their part, pulling their weight. A homogenous, 'gentrified' eco-system would quickly die. If we are committed to organizing sustainable and liberating social movements they must be diverse, pulling especially from those who are the most impacted instead of suppressing their voices or using them as props."

Nia Eshu Robinson (qtd. in Brown, 2017)

There is a lesson to learn from nature's abundance: life is constantly creating options. In the anti-violence movement ecosystem, we need both mainstream strategies *and* we need culturally-specific strategies. We need all of us who can contribute diverse ways of knowing to work together.



Conclusion



SCA is a process just as baking a cake - it takes time, effort and the correct amount of the right ingredients. /

SCA, como la preparación de un pastel, es un proceso - toma tiempo, esfuerzo, y la cantidad correcta de ingredientes.

As the Project Team, we recognize that we are allies in the work, navigating our individual and collective identities, social locations and relationships to the field and to our Community Partners. We still operated from within dominant culture paradigms in conscious and unconscious ways, even as we tried to resist by incorporating multiple ways of knowing and collaborative knowledge production. Our practice of research ethics that is feminist, caring, holistic, respectful, mutual, sacred, and ecologically sound, is still aspirational and imperfect (Lincoln and Denzin, 2008, p. 569). We made our best efforts to establish a foundation of critical, deep, and authentic connections, which became a lifeline that we tapped into for support and resilience when we made mistakes. *Liberation is a mutual endeavor*, and such are the risks. In this political

moment of pervasive, normalized ontological violence targeting marginalized communities, there is urgent need for civic courage and we are committed to taking a stand and learning as we go, because we feel we cannot wait for the perfect path forward, the 'perfect' theory or method, before we act.

The SCA Project represents a step in the process towards co-creating ethical knowing spaces that are not only emancipatory and culturally-sustaining, but also producing knowledge and actions that can improve the lived experiences of those most vulnerable survivors in our communities. Hopefully, such a generative approach to liberatory collective knowledge production, one that uplifts the legitimacy of previously marginalized knowledges, can be undertaken more often, with more resources, and with greater ease, eventually becoming the norm.

Appendix:

Field Research Project Descriptions and Summaries

The five Field Research teams were widely diverse in terms of community represented, primary language, research questions, research method, number and type of research participants, and experience level of Field Researchers.

Four of the five projects were situated in the San Francisco Bay Area, but two of those projects recruited participants from outside of the Bay Area. One of the projects was in San Diego County.

Map of Field Research Teams in California



Overview of Five Field Research Projects

Field Research Team and Location	Avellaka La Jolla Reservation in San Diego	DeafHope Oakland	KACEDA/QYUL Oakland	Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) San Francisco & Oakland	Sikh Family Center Bay Area
Primary Community of Team	La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians	Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Korean American	Latinx	Sikh American
Scope of Research	La Jolla Reservation & surrounding tribes	Bay Area	National	Bay Area	Bay Area
Research Method	Focus Group	Interviews (in-person and video phone)	Surveys (online); focus group	Storytelling circle & focus group	Focus groups & interviews (in-person)
Prior Research Experience of Field Researchers	None	None to very limited	Very limited	None	Moderate
Primary Participant Characteristics	LGBTQ/2Spirit from La Jolla Band or surrounding tribes	Deaf survivors of DV	LGBTQ Korean American	Latina survivors of DV - at least 1 year at MUA, used mental health services	Sikh women survivors of DV, and/or community members who support DV survivors (through SFC or not)
Number of Participants	4	8	155	8	10



Each of the five Field Research projects presented on their process and findings at Convening 2



Research Project

Avellaka of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians

Rainbow of Truth is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project uplifting the experiences of LGBTQ/2Spirit people who are part of the La Jolla band of Luiseño Indians in San Diego County.

Field Researcher: Wendy Schlater, Program Director of Avellaka

Research Liaison: Alvina Rosales



Historical and Cultural Factors

Traditionally, in Native American culture, Native LGBTQ/2Spirit people were recognized and respected. Indigenous legends share examples of holding safe space, honor and respect within indigenous societies, clans, and Moieties. Within cultural traditions, it was understood and often embraced that those with varying sexual orientations and/or gender expressions occupied a social and spiritual position somewhere in between “male and female.” Communities were not preoccupied with binary views of gender. European explorers and missionaries brought with them stigmatizing and condemning views from European culture, imposing them on Native American communities.

Research Purpose

Given traditional acceptance and respect for all life and for Native LGBTQ/2Spirit life, in particular, this research aims to reclaim safety and security for Native LGBTQ/2Spirit people by raising awareness, intervention, prevention and the importance of understanding the incredible effects of colonization that has disrupted our cultural customs and traditions that as Native people, respects all life. Violence is not traditional.

Research Questions

1. What was your experience coming out?
2. How did you feel safe coming out?
3. What would have made your coming out a more positive and safe experience?

Background

Avellaka is a domestic violence program which works closely with the La Jolla Native Women’s Advisory Committee (NWAC). The mission, which resonates with survivor centeredness, is to educate and organize for social change upholding the Tribe’s authority as a sovereign Indian nation to protect its women citizens and create the laws, policies, protocols and services addressing violence against Native women crimes on the Reservation.



San Diego County has the highest number of federally recognized tribes. For La Jolla people, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) protections have

been recently written into the Tribal law or code. But protections for Native LGBTQ/2Spirit people have not. In fact, out of 567 federally recognized tribes, only 11 recognized Native LGBTQ/2Spirit marriages in their Tribal codes.

Methods

Focus group. 4 participants.

Research Justice

Very little research on Native American/Indian people in the U.S. is carried out by Native American/Indian people. Due to a long history of colonial research practices, Avellaka considers an important part of their research is to make sure that all collaborators outside of tribal communities are introduced and informed of their history and their uniqueness as a culture and a people.

Project Staff and Research Liaison were all invited to take part in an event, Return to the Ocean, held in Oceanside, CA as an introduction to the La Jolla people as well as an opportunity for the La Jolla people to get familiar and build trust with their new collaborative partners.



Participants

Avellaka recruited 12 Native LGBTQ/2Spirit people to participate in the focus group. The initial recruits were enthusiastic. However, due to multiple factors including a series of deaths in the community spanning from August to November 2016,

the final number of participants reduced to 4 individuals from 3 related tribal groups, two participants who identify as gay men, one who identifies as a woman and one participant who identifies as gender non-conforming.

Focus Group Demographics (n=4)

	n	%
Gender		
Female	1	25
Male	2	50
Gender Non-Conforming	1	25
Sexual Orientation		
Native LGBTQ/2Spirit	4	100
Heterosexual	0	0
Relationship to Reservation		
Left to Come Out	4	100
Returned	4	100

Analysis

The focus group was recorded and professionally transcribed. The Research Liaison, Alvina Rosales, shared technical assistance on conducting focus groups and analyzing focus group results. Using thematic analysis, both Field Researcher and Research Liaison reviewed the transcripts. These researchers used qualitative research analysis methods including consideration of their own personal experience in relationship to the research; memoing to record thoughts, feelings and reflections; comparison of their interpretations; and, finally, reaching saturation, that is, analyzing results until they were satisfied that any further analysis would not yield additional information.

Themes/Findings

• *Staying on the reservation felt unsafe* •

| "You pretty much have to move away to be yourself."

This quote from Green¹ captured the conditions that each respondent faced as they made their choice to move away from the reservation. All left the reservation

• *Leaving the reservation to "come out" is not safe either* •

"I moved as far away as possible from San Diego to do the Gay thing. I was in New York because I had a feeling [coming out in the tribe] it was not going to be good, I went through that white coming out process. There was no 'Indian way' to come out."

As Red states, participants shared that they felt no choice but to follow the "white" pathway to coming out. To them, the "white way of coming out" included "unwanted sexual experiences, drugs, circuit parties, isolation, depression and suicide attempts."

• *Finding 2Spirit communities was a pathway to safety* •

Despite the need to move away, all participants found their way back to 2Spirit communities at least in urban settings as they got older and found a way to return to their people.

• *Returning to the reservation and making a contribution* •

All participants voiced a desire to return to the reservation and "come home." They were ready to make a positive contribution and reconnect with cultural traditions regarding Native LGBTQ/2Spirit people. They all took advantage of the educational system as a buffer and a way to balance their lives. They had all also returned to a positive leadership position including Tribal Leader, Gaming Commissioner, educator and small business owner. They all viewed their participation in Rainbow of Truth as an example of ways that they could give back to the community and made plans to continue meeting beyond the scope of this research project.

¹To keep confidentiality, focus group participants decided to choose colors as pseudonyms

Limitations and Responses

Despite the small size of the focus group, the participants felt that it was a solid and positive step towards further solidarity and community activism. Understanding the lack of research on LGBTQ/2Spirit people, in general, and in tribal communities of San Diego County, in particular, led to a desire to continue building upon the group's research success.

Possible Next Steps

Wendy Schlater of Avellaka connected with Hyejin Shim, Field Researcher from the KACEDA/QYUL project, in order to get a copy of the survey they developed for the Korean American LGBTQ community. Next steps may include a search for additional funding for a national survey for Native LGBTQ/2Spirit people.

rainbow of truth

RESEARCH STUDY

Background

AVELLAKA PROGRAM for SOCIAL JUSTICE

- ESTABLISHED IN 2005
- SOVEREIGNTY as FOUNDATION



2% INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN N.A. 2050

DECLINE of POP. POPULATIONS
- GENOCIDE
- DISEASE
- NATIVE LIFE DISRUPTION



NEED FOR TRIBAL SPECIFIC PROGRAMS/SUPPORT

RAISE AWARENESS OF EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION FOR PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

EXERCISE TRIBAL JURISDICTION

GOVERNED BY OUR LEGENDS RECONNECT w/ THEM

ALL LIFE WAS SAFE PRE COLONIZATION

LIFE-UNSAFE POST COLONIZATION

OUR RESEARCH findings

METHOD

COLLABORATION
KNOWING EACH OTHER & BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

3 MEN - 2 identify GAY
FOCUS GROUPS

"MOVE AWAY TO BE YOURSELF"

NO "INDIAN WAY" TO COME OUT

FELT UNSAFE AT RESERVATION
CHRISTIAN VIEWS IMPOSED
CONTINUED SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION

DO THE STATUS QVO
- TO HAVE CHILDREN
- BE PROTECTED
- HAVE MEN ON THE SIDE

WANT TO HELP PEOPLE IN THE RESERVATION

VALUABLE MEMBERS THAT CAN HELP OTHERS COME OUT

RECONNECTING CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

WORK WILL CONTINUE COMMUNITY HAS ORGANIZED & WILL CONTINUE

Drawn By: Claudia Lopez | On The Right Mind 2017

Research Project

DeafHope

Safety and Support for Deaf Survivors of Violence

is a community-based participatory research project (CBPR) documenting the experiences of Deaf survivors of domestic and sexual violence who have sought support from formal and informal resources.

Field Researchers: Aracelia Aguilar, Amber Hodson & Tara Holcomb, Empowerment Directors

Research Liaisons: Mimi Kim & Susan Ghanbarpour



Research Purpose

The purpose of this community-based participatory research is to gain knowledge about Deaf survivor experiences of violence from the perspective of Deaf researchers.

Research Questions

1. Where/Who do Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Disabled survivors of domestic and sexual violence go to for support?
2. How do Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Disabled survivors of domestic and sexual violence measure their sense of safety and success after seeking support? What's working, what's not?
3. How often do Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Disabled survivors of domestic and sexual violence survivors seek support from service providers, especially those from "traditional" mainstream nonprofit organizations, including DeafHope? If they do seek support from nonprofit service providers, what are their experiences like?
4. If Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Disabled survivors of domestic and sexual violence don't seek support from nonprofit service providers, where do they go and what are their experiences like?

Background

DeafHope's mission is to end domestic and sexual violence in Deaf communities through empowerment, education and services. Because American Sign Language (ASL) is a gestural/visual language, much of the information related to the experiences of Deaf people and to this project, more specifically, are available in ASL. Please refer to YouTube links for more detailed information in ASL.

See DeafHope's Mission at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXk9milUZWo>

See DeafHope's Philosophy at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z3I-rBYdoU>

Historical and Cultural Factors

Deaf survivors experience domestic and sexual violence at rates significantly higher than non-Deaf populations in the U.S. However, little is known about their experience of violence nor of their use of support services. **Safety and Support for Deaf Survivors of Violence** is one of the few studies of Deaf survivors of gender-based violence and may be the only study conducted by Deaf researchers.

Methods

In-person interviews and video phone interviews.

Research Justice

The state of research by and for the Deaf community is almost non-existent. There is currently very little research on Deaf survivors of domestic and sexual violence. There is very little research of any kind actually conducted by Deaf researchers. Because American Sign Language (ASL) is a gestural/verbal language and not sound/print-based, data was collected visually in ASL via in-person interviews and videotaping. Furthermore, data analysis was carried out through thematic coding of videotaped interviews that were not translated into written English. Collaborative research partners as well as public audiences for research results must understand and respect the specific language conditions for Deaf participants and researchers. This means that research conventions for data collection, analysis and reporting that rely upon verbal or written English can be oppressive. A language justice framework must take into account the primacy of American Sign Language (ASL).

Participants

Interviews were conducted with a total of 8 survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Interviewee Demographics (n=8)

	n	%
Identified as		
Deaf	6	75.0
Blind-Deaf	2	25.0
Gender		
Female	7	87.5
Male	1	12.5
Sexual Orientation		
LGBTQ	3	37.5
Heterosexual	5	62.5
Race		
Black	3	37.5
Latinx	1	12.5
White	4	50.0

Analysis

All interviews were either in-person and video-taped or were video phone calls. All were conducted in American Sign Language (ASL). The three Field Researchers, Aracelia Aguilar, Amber Hodson and Tara Holcomb, reviewed each of the videos multiple times. After receiving a training in qualitative analysis and thematic coding from Research Liaisons, the Field Researchers coded the videotaped interviews, using a written coding template for establishing codes and linking them to time stamps on the videotapes. Review and comparison by three researchers also improved inter-rater reliability.

Themes/Findings

See this link for summary of the project and findings in ASL and English voice-over:
https://youtu.be/FAhv_qsoz14

Survivors identified an average of 7 separate experiences of seeking support and safety

- ***Positive experiences of support tended to be provided by friends*** •

Although support from friends was not uniformly positive, the type of positive support that friends offered were “unconditional support,” “no judgment,” and valued resources such as childcare and information about services.

- ***Support by Deaf domestic violence agencies*** •

Participants shared that they had also used formal support services within the Deaf community. While Deaf Unity, Deaf Overcoming Violence through Empowerment, Abused Deaf Women’s Advocacy Services, Deaf Survivor Advocates for Empowerment and DeafHope represent Deaf specific services available nationally, the participants did not specifically share which resource they used.

- ***Experience of mainstream domestic violence agencies*** •

“It felt like they were talking from a script. She was not talking from her heart. It was patronizing.”

Research participant recalling response from mainstream program

For one Black survivor, the response from a white mainstream advocate amounted to abuse:

“The cultural response was like a metal brand that burns, you feel it.”

Support from mainstream domestic violence services was mixed. The quotes above revealed the sense of disconnect and, in some cases, violation that Deaf survivors participating in the study experienced. Based upon the research, DeafHope summarized that “communication barriers, patronizing attitudes and cultural ignorance” were pervasive.

• **Police response was almost completely negative** •

In all cases, the police did not provide ASL interpretation but instead relied on ineffective and harmful communication methods that included using family members or the hearing abuser to interpret. Participants reported feeling judged and patronized. One participant said that the police told her,

"Are you sure you want him out? You will let him back. Women always let them back."

Research participant recalling response from the police

Limitations

Since ASL is not a written language, each person reviewing the data interpreted the participant's tone, body language and non-manual markers. This limitation was mitigated by the availability of three comparative perspectives and time spent reaching agreement regarding interpretations and accompanying codes. In addition, the Field Researchers were, in some cases, familiar with a participant. As an advocate, they may have received more detailed information and perhaps different information than conveyed in the interview. As Field Researchers, they had to filter out the additional knowledge in order to base their analysis more narrowly on the evidence provided through the data collection process.

Possible Next Steps

DeafHope will produce American Sign Language (ASL) video report of the research findings specifically for the Deaf community. This research serves as a pilot for further public research that will expand the scope of outreach and services. DeafHope will incorporate findings into trainings and consultation, including work as a national technical assistance provider for OVW.

SAFETY & SUPPORT FOR DEAF SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

DEAF HOPE RESEARCH STUDY

76% DEAF COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCED CHILD HOOD TRAUMA
 WE THINK IT'S MORE THAN THAT

HOW ARE THEY CONDUCTING IT? SIGN LANGUAGE?
 "LIMITED" SO MANY GAPS
 WHERE IS IT COMING FROM
 WHO IS DOING RESEARCH

OUR QUESTIONS & VIEWS ON RESEARCH NOW
 RESEARCHER
 SAVIOR MENTALITY

METHOD



SUPPORT - WHERE DO YOU GO FOR SUPPORT
 RESEARCH QUESTIONS
 EXPERIENCE?
 WHAT FACTORS MADE IT SO?

ALL CONDUCTED IN SIGN LANGUAGE

PROCESS OF BEING w/ THEIR STORIES

NOT AS COUNSELLORS BUT AS DATA COLLECTORS



KEEP IT ACCESSIBLE TO OUR COMMUNITY

HOW DO WE CODE A VISUAL SPACIAL LANGUAGE INTO ENGLISH?
 - IT'S VERY DIFFERENT THERE ARE NO EQUIVALENTS

HAD 100s OF CONVOs WITH IN TEAM TO ENSURE ITS SURVIVOR CENTERED

NOTHING HAS COME BACK TO BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY

RESEARCH PROCESS

OUR LIVED EXPERIENCE

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

FINDINGS

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES



LACK OF CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AT AGENCIES

ALL LEGAL DOCS IN ENGLISH

ENCOUNTERS w/ POLICE
 PATRONIZING NO INTERPRETERS

INTERACTION SHAPED BY PEOPLES IDENTITIES

FEELING VALIDATED

HAVING ACCESS to INFORMATION

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

LESSONS LEARNED

- IMPORTANCE of NON JUDGEMENT
- SURVIVORS NEED A SPACE TO TELL THEIR STORIES



AVAILABLE TO SISTER AGENCY TO ENRICH their SERVICES



Drawn by: Claudia Lopez | On The Right Mind 2017

Research Project

Korean American Coalition to End Domestic Abuse (KACEDA) QYUL: Queer and Trans Workgroup

Queer and Transgender Korean American Survey on Family and Intimate Partner Violence in our Community is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project surveying LGBTQ identified Korean Americans nationally to ask about their experience of many forms of violence including family and intimate partner violence.

Field Researcher: Hyejin Shim, Coordinator of Queer and Trans Services at Asian Women's Shelter and member of Korean American Coalition to End Domestic Abuse (KACEDA)

Research Liaison: Orchid Pusey

Background

KACEDA is a volunteer-based organization started in 1997 in the San Francisco Bay Area to address domestic violence in the Korean American community. QYUL² is the Queer and Trans workgroup within KACEDA that launched the survey project.

²QYUL is an acronym for Queer and Trans Koreans Yearning for Unity and Liberation; it is also a homonym for the Korean word for tangerine - hence, the logo.

See <http://www.kaceda.org/our-work/qyul-queertrans-workgroup/> for more information



Historical and Cultural Factors

Korean American survivors first started domestic violence services in the U.S. as early as 1979 in Takoma, Washington. Since then, a number of Korean American anti-violence organizations started in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and the Bay Area, with the organizations in Chicago and KACEDA with ties to pro-democracy movements in Korea and social justice movements in the U.S. Sexism, homophobia and transphobia remain anchors within much of Korean and Korean American society with homophobic attitudes and activism aggressively promoted by sectors of the Korean and Korean American communities, particularly those rooted in conservative Christian institutions. QYUL developed as a Queer and Trans workgroup within KACEDA is organizing to bring more specific attention to the lives, experiences and struggles of LGBTQ Korean survivors of violence.

"Within Korean communities, violence is so rampant but never talked about. It's a similar silence towards queer & trans Korean identities... it's important for us to make our experiences visible so that we can start the healing process and break these cycles of violence."

—queer korean community member on
bringing our stories together

bit.ly/qyulsurvey

Research Purpose

For LGBTQ Koreans in the U.S., the effects of family violence, intimate partner violence and sexual violence are deeply interconnected with those of homophobia, transphobia and racism. However, while the traumatic impacts of these intersections are deeply felt within the community, there is no available data for better understanding the needs of LGBTQ Korean survivors of violence.

Research Questions

1. What forms of violence are queer and transgender Koreans experiencing (directly or as secondary victims)?
2. What types of resources are queer and transgender Koreans utilizing when violence happens? What are those experiences like?
3. What types of resources do queer and transgender Korean, particularly survivors want (but do not have) addressing violence?

Methods

Survey (online, Survey Monkey)
quantitative and qualitative (short answer);
focus group.

Research Justice/Cultural Rigor

This is the first research study of any kind with Korean or Korean American LGBTQ community members around the issue of family and intimate partner violence. The distribution of the research study served both as recruitment for participants/respondents and also as a social media campaign to highlight both the visibility of LGBTQ people within the Korean American community and the importance of the issue of violence in their lives. Because the Field Researcher and KACEDA/QYUL members are members of the LGBTQ Korean American community, they were able to ask questions that were both relevant to the community and were worded in a way that would be culturally appropriate. They were also familiar with LGBTQ networks and were able to quickly create a thorough dissemination strategy. Finally, the Field Researcher and KACEDA/QYUL members were known and trusted or were familiar enough to key community members to legitimize the research effort as one that was initiated by and important to the community. Within one week of initiation, over 100 people responded to the survey. By the time of Convening 2,155 people had responded.

Participants

Survey respondents self-identified as LGBTQ Korean Americans.

Survey Respondent Demographics (n=155)

	n	%
Gender Identity (Total = 147)		
Transgender woman	3	2.22
Transgender man	11	8.15
Gender queer/non-binary	39	28.89
Cisgender woman	73	54.07
Cisgender man	11	8.15
Other	10	7.41
Sexual Orientation (Total = 213)		
Gay	24	17.78
Lesbian	27	20
Bisexual	35	25.93
Queer	90	66.67
Asexual	9	6.67
Pansexual	20	14.81
Other	8	5.93
Generation (Total = 134)		
1st	5	3.73
1.5	40	29.85
2nd	70	52.24
3rd or more	6	4.48
Adoptee	13	9.70
Age (Total = 135)		
18-24	40	29.62
25-30	42	31.11
31-40	40	29.62
41-50	11	8.14
50-62	2	1.48

Focus group respondents self-identified as LGBTQ Korean Americans and consisted largely of KACEDA/QYUL members. KACEDA/QYUL members are community representatives as well as organizers of the research project. However, research data has not been collected from this group of organizers. The focus group was seen as a good opportunity to gather information from KACEDA/QYUL members and to use this as the initial step for a follow-up series of focus groups to triangulate with the survey data.



Analysis

The survey was both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data was analyzed using excel. Qualitative data was compiled and thematically coded. Focus group results were recorded and professionally transcribed. The transcriptions were thematically coded by the Field Researcher and the Research Liaison.

Findings

• *Depression, Anxiety, and Suicidality* •

Korean American LGBTQ survey respondents have experienced very high levels of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts and actions:

- ❖ **67% have experienced depression in the past 1 year**
- ❖ **73% have experienced anxiety in the past 1 year**
- ❖ **37% have had serious suicidal urges in the past 1 year**
- ❖ **23% have attempted suicide**

• *Family Violence, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence* •

Respondents have experienced significant levels of family, domestic, and sexual violence:

- ❖ **Approximately 60% know another queer/trans Korean who is a survivor of sexual or domestic violence**

Respondents witnessed abuse between family members as a child (85% emotional abuse; 88% verbal abuse; 73% physical abuse), and also themselves experienced abuse as children

- ❖ **71% report at least one incident of physical abuse**
- ❖ **25% report at least one incident of sexual violence**

"It's incredibly important to tell our community what abuse looks like. Growing up, I was told that so many of the problematic things in my family were just 'Korean parenting.' That's just not true."

Survey respondent

• *Coming Out and Violence* •

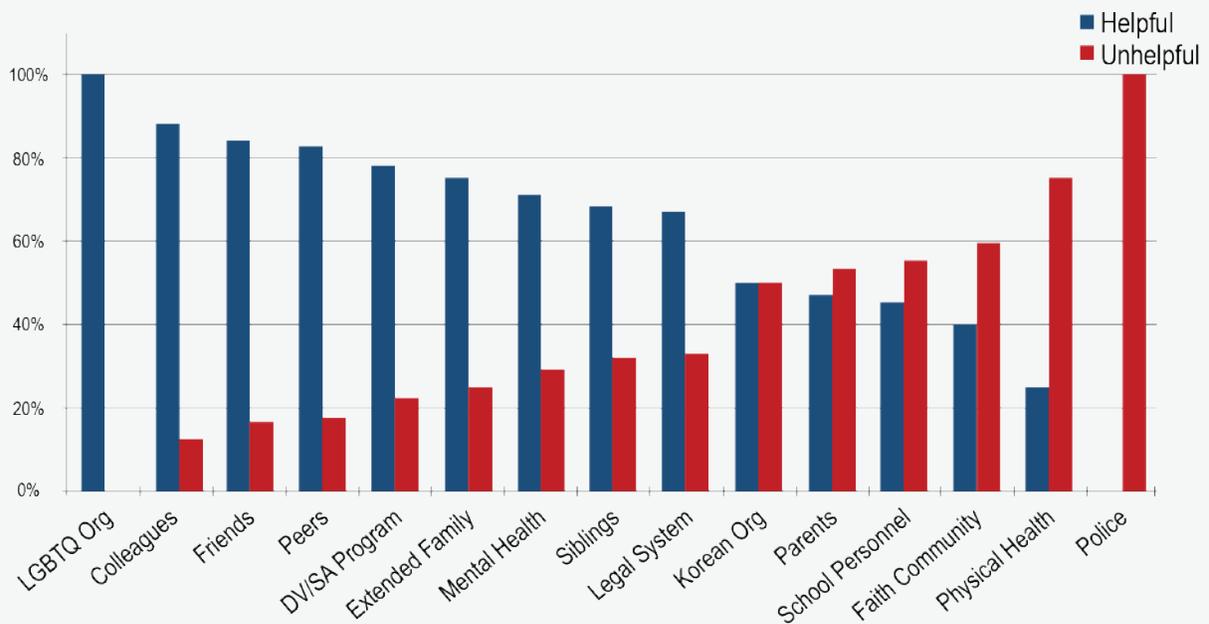
Korean American LGBTQ community members face violence or the threat of violence for "coming out" as queer or trans. Survey respondents had a relatively low rate of "coming out":

- ❖ **Only 13% are out as queer or trans to supportive parents**
- ❖ **40% of queer respondents and 54% of trans respondents are not out to their parents**
- ❖ **67% have experienced violence in coming out as queer**
- ❖ **70% of trans respondents have experienced violence in coming out as trans**

• Help Seeking •

Of all the survey respondents who are Korean American LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence, only 50% sought any support. Of those who sought support, most confided in friends (31%), in contrast to family members (siblings 9%; parents 7%). The most popular formal service they accessed was mental health providers (27%), whereas very few sought out support from either domestic violence/ sexual assault programs (4%) or LGBTQ programs (3%).

Of those IPV survivors who sought support, the following resources were helpful or unhelpful. LGBTQ resources were helpful to everyone who sought assistance from them. The police were unhelpful to everyone who sought assistance from them.



"I am afraid of sharing personal details with fellow queer/trans Koreans because I worry about word getting out, judgments, and misinformation since we are a small-medium sized group where a lot of us know each other on various levels. It's probably my own trust issues, but I wonder if there's an easy way to ask for confidentiality and have folks really be accountable to that?"

Survey respondent

• Community Needs •

Over 90% of Korean LGBTQ survey respondents requested:

- ❖ Information on what abuse looks like
- ❖ Information on how to support someone who's being abused
- ❖ Information about healthy relationships
- ❖ Mental health resources

Focus group results mirrored and deepened survey information

The focus group responses were similar to the responses for overall survey respondents and who they would go to for help-seeking.

• Focus group respondents said that survivor-centered advocacy for LGBTQ communities:•

... involves community trust around domestic violence and sexual assault, Korean and LGBTQ issues

... is holistic and takes into account cultural, familial and intergenerational norms around violence

... names violence without pathologizing and condemning anyone involved

... addresses and gently names harmful dynamics without using terms like "domestic violence" unless the survivor names it first

... moves at the pace of the survivor without retaliating at them for not leaving

... understands that involving police or families of origin are not even considered options for queer and trans Korean survivors

Limitations and Responses

The Queer and Transgender Korean American Survey on Family and Intimate Partner Violence in Our Community gathered 155 responses, a remarkably high number given the presumed small total population in the U.S. and the limited resources available to this field research project. However, it is a convenience sample and is relatively small in number for statistical analysis. The focus group also relied upon the research organizers as participants, an unconventional research practice but one which made sense given the close match between survey respondents and the organizers of the research project. The focus group data was used to triangulate the survey data and offer more qualitative context to survey results. It was also a first step towards the plan for more focus groups, the results of which will increase diverse representation.

Possible Next Steps

KACEDA/QYUL plans to use this first set of responses to the survey and this first focus group to be the foundation for further research. Results from the survey will be further analyzed using chi-squared tests where feasible. KACEDA/QYUL plans to publish a research report for advocacy with practitioners, policymakers, funders and the communities represented in the research. For us, one of the most important messages to Korean LGBTQ communities came from one of our survey respondents:

We exist. You are not alone.

RESEARCH STUDY

LGBT & KOREAN EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

KOREAN AMERICAN COALITION TO END DOMESTIC ABUSE

QYUL
SURVIVOR LED-COMMUNITY

METHOD

ONLINE SURVEY

- 155 PEOPLE
- NEEDS DEMOGRAPHICS
- LESBIAN WOMEN 25%
- TRANSGENDER QUEER
- MOSTLY 2nd GENERATION
- ↑ HIGH EMOTIONAL ABUSE
- ↑ MENTAL HEALTH
- ↑ HIGH DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, SUICIDE
- 90% KNOW QUEER/TRANS EXPERIENCE EM VIOLENCE
- 70% KNOW QUEER/TRANS EXPERIENCE SEXUAL VIOLENCE
- ↑ HIGH PRESSURE FOR UNWANTED SEX
- EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE WHEN COMING OUT
- FEEL FEAR

SUGHT SUPPORT

- 50%
- MOSTLY BY FRIENDS
- SMALL # SOUGHT SUPPORT FROM AGENCIES
- NOT HELPFUL
- GOING TO POLICE

SURVIVOR FOCUS GROUP

SEEK HELP FROM:

- FRIENDS
- DV/SA ORG
- FRIEND WORKING THERE WAS INTERVIEW

FINDINGS

WE NEED SPECIFIC RESOURCES FOR US!

AFFORDABLE SUPPORT

TRAINING TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

CULTURE SPECIFIC EDUCATION ON HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

INFO = RESOURCES LACKING

RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT PROGRAMS - NON-STIGMATIZED

MORE VISIBLE COMMUNITY

TRANSLATION AVAILABILITY

ACCEPTANCE IN INSTITUTIONS CHURCH

NAMING IT WAS A BARRIER

CONFIDENTIALITY IS SO IMPORTANT

SURVIVOR CENTERED ADVOCACY

COMMUNITY TRUST

FAMILIAL
CULTURAL holistic
INTERGENERATIONAL

NO PATHOLOGIZING

MOVE AT PACE OF SURVIVOR

ACKNOWLEDGE GOING TO POLICE IS NOT AN OPTION

NEXT STEPS

- DEVELOP RESOURCES
- BUILD ROADMAP

Drawn By: Claudia Lopez | On The Right Mind 2017

Research Project

Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA)

The Impact of Offering Various Ways of Healing, Caring for and Empowering the Membership

is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project exploring the impact of integrating mental health services into a Latina domestic violence program.

Field Researchers: Juana Flores, Co-Director; Maris Jimenez, Support Services Program Director; & Maria Carrillo, East Bay Domestic Violence Program Coordinator

Research Liaison: Susan Ghanbarpour



Historical and Cultural Factors

MUA's members are predominantly recently-arrived immigrant women from Mexico and Central and South America, whose first language is Spanish. 80% have dependent children aged thirteen and under, and their families often have mixed migratory status. The majority are low-income with limited access to resources. Many of MUA's members have fled violent or traumatic situations in their home countries, experienced difficult conditions during migration, and faced discrimination, oppression, and anti-immigrant policies in the US. At least 90% of MUA's members have experienced gender-based violence, whether in their own families in the form of sexual violence, child abuse, and incest; witnessing intergenerational patterns of domestic violence; or in their intimate relationships and communities. Yet many of MUA's members put up barriers against acknowledging or revealing these histories of gendered violence, despite suffering from their traumatic effects.

Research Purpose

The intent of this research is to learn about the impact of MUA's mental health programs on the healing and empowerment of survivors of violence who have been members of MUA for at least a year.

Background

Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) was founded in 1989 by two Latina immigrants, Maria Olea and Clara Luz Navarro, who were hired as interviewers by a research team at San Francisco State University to help them learn about the conditions faced by women in their community. After documenting Latina immigrants' challenges and strengths, they transformed their learnings into action by forming MUA with a small group of participants from the study. Thus, MUA was born out of research that was translated into action by the research participants, themselves. MUA is a grassroots organization of Latina immigrant women whose identity is reflected in its language, organizational culture, politics, and values. MUA has a double mission of promoting personal transformation, and building community power for social and economic justice. More information about MUA can be found in English at <http://mujeresunidas.net/> and in Spanish at <http://mujeresunidas.net/es/>.

Research Questions

For members who have taken part in MUA's mental health programs:

1. What has changed for the members this year, and on what different levels have these changes occurred?
 - a. Personal; interpersonal; with family/ children; community; political consciousness / activism
2. Why did these changes take place? What factors influenced these changes?
 - a. What role did MUA's services and programs have in these changes?
 - b. Which external factors played a role?
3. What were the paths? What were the obstacles or barriers faced by the members in meeting their goals while they sought the path they wanted?
 - a. What could MUA have done to help eliminate or reduce some of these barriers?
 - b. What is needed, beyond what MUA can do, to eliminate or reduce these barriers?

Methods

One story circle with 8 participants and one follow-up focus group with 6 of the same participants. The story circle guide had more open-ended questions and prompts, compared to the semi-structured focus group guide, which used questions that were developed based on both the research questions and a preliminary analysis of the story circle data.

Research Justice

While MUA staff have been participants in research studies before, this is the first time they've led a research study and been in the researcher role. This is also one of the rare qualitative studies that they've been involved in, since usually they work with quantitative methods like their annual membership survey. The storytelling and focus group methods were particularly appealing to MUA because, in contrast to closed survey-type questions, these methods allow more depth. One MUA Field Researcher said,

"I wanted to show what was not measurable – it has a lot more weight than what's measurable. Numbers don't reflect the result I wanted. I wanted a substantial thing...For a woman who's changed her life, feels reborn, changed. She feels now she can help other people change their lives, heal from traumas. She feels safe. That piece was lost in the numbers. It's about dignity, going from a number to a whole person."

Because this is the first time MUA has done research, they were worried and a little embarrassed that they didn't have a clear idea what the project was going to look like at the beginning. Having a one-on-one Research Liaison and language access via interpreters and translated materials – as well as a lot of patience – was critical. But they became fascinated by the research process and how it differs from the other ways they engage with their members. For example, MUA's team has talked about how the transcripts are a tool they can come back to again and again, as information to help them strengthen their programs, or to give staff a sense of how their programs support their members. One MUA Field Researcher said, "Every time I look at [the transcripts], I learn more."

Participants

The participants were all Latina women, the overwhelming majority of whom identify as survivors of domestic violence. They have all been members of MUA for at least one year, and participated in MUA's mental health programs. They share many of the same characteristics described in the **Historical and Cultural Factors** section.

Analysis

The story circle and focus group were both audio recorded and professionally transcribed in Spanish (primary language of participants and Field Researchers). The transcripts were also translated into English for review by the Research Liaison (a monolingual English speaker). The Research Liaison trained the Field Researchers to conduct qualitative analysis using thematic coding of the transcripts to code for themes and subthemes, and then engaging in an added level of synthesis and interpretation.

Themes/Findings

• *Moving past denial and recognizing one's true life* •

Another strong theme was about how participants might show up at MUA saying that their home life was normal or that they were ok. But after participating in the mental health programs, they realized they were in denial about the violence they experienced, and needed healing. This theme is exemplified by quotes from participants such as "I discovered things inside me that I thought were fine but in fact my life, my soul and my heart were damaged" and "It has helped me cast off these fetters and the message of thinking that it's normal."

• *"When I heal, you heal"* •

Several participants' statements support MUA's program model and approach to their dual mission, which is that members often need to undergo their own healing process before they're ready to participate in activities or political activism to help others:

"I felt destroyed and torn to pieces. I would ask myself why people harm me. But now I've arrived here thanks to the therapy, counseling and trainings. They have helped me, as people say, to 'take the bull by the horns and don't fall down,' and to think that you can support other women, to pick up those people who have been destroyed and be able to lift them up."

This was related to the idea of turning difficult situations into opportunities to survive and grow:

"I am standing up every morning and saying I have to stand up because I have a person that I'm going to support today. There is a person that I'm going to give what I experienced. There is a person that is expecting me."

• **Barriers to revealing and healing from abuse** •

This theme encompassed multiple subthemes, such as silence, judgment, and putting the welfare or comfort of others before her own. A related theme was the importance of maintaining confidentiality. One participant remarked on how she felt comfortable at MUA because she knew she wouldn't be judged or gossiped about: "No one will talk about me. No one will judge me. No one is going to point at me in the street because of what I said here." Another described needing support "to break the silence of keeping quiet, because this is a silence that does a lot of harm; it has a very negative effect." Some spoke of their role in the family: "I have found myself. I would give my daughters and my family love but I would not receive anything." Many of these subthemes relate to the specific cultural context, for example, how women are expected to put their own needs last, after their family's; or how the community tends to react to disclosing abuse.

• **Benefits of mental health programs for children** •

An unexpected theme was about how the positive impact of the mental health programs women participated in rippled out to their children. MUA's programs include discussions about "discipline with love" - not acting out of anger with their children, but learning how to talk to them. Several members talked about how their children notice a change in their behavior. For example, one member spoke about a child who told her teacher, "I see you're really sad - you should go to my grandmother's group at MUA, she comes out of there really happy!"

Limitations and Responses

MUA was not able to fully complete their analysis of the focus group data in time for this report. This was largely due to the impact of the 2016 election, and the subsequent rapid, destabilizing changes in immigration and enforcement policies and practices. MUA has needed to re-prioritize their time and resources to respond to the enormous negative consequences of these events on their community. Another issue came up related to MUA's strategic planning process. As part of that process, there was a change in the programs, which some of the members did not like. So some members said, "if you're doing research in order to take away the mental health programs, we don't want

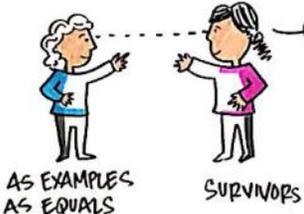
to participate!" The MUA team needed to clarify to them that this research was for a different purpose and the programs weren't going away. Once they did that, their members had the clarity and trust to participate in the research.

Possible Next Steps

MUA is planning to share these findings with other staff to consider how to use this information to improve their programs. They would like to present them to the Board as part of their strategic planning process. They would also like to share these findings back with their members, allies, funders, and others in the field.

RESEARCH STUDY MUJERES UNIDAS Y ACTIVAS

MENTAL HEALTH WORK BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCES AS SURVIVORS
- MORE THAN 10 yrs.



- 90% HAS EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE**
- IMMIGRANTS (3yrs) MAJORITY MEXICAN
 - MOTHERS (0-13 yrs) 3-5 KIDS
 - MIXED IMMIGRANT STATUS
 - LOW INCOME / WORKING WOMEN

WE ADVOCATE SO THAT SERVICES ARE ACCESSIBLE



METHOD

★ **WHAT DID OUR SERVICES HELP YOU WITH?**



WHAT'S MISSING? HOW DID MUA HELP YOU?
- NOT WANTING TO SHOW WEAKNESS

QUESTION



ANALYSIS

TO SHED LIGHT ON WHAT'S NOT BEING SAID & MAKES A DIFFERENCE

SURVEY w/ OUR COLLEAGUES

RESULTS

IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING SERVICES THAT ARE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE

WITH A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS



THIS RESEARCH STUDY

PROUD TO BE PART OF THE PROCESS

GREAT LEARNINGS

MENTAL HEALTH WAS NOT BEING ASSOCIATED w/ the EXTERNAL - VALIDATED

Drawn By: Claudia Lopez | On The Right Mind 2017

Research Project

Sikh Family Center (SFC)

Strengthening our Roots: Listening and Learning from Survivors and Supporters is a community-based participatory research project (CBPR) that excavates the feminist culture-change work being undertaken by Sikh Family Center (SFC) through focus groups and one-one-one storytelling.

Field Researchers: Mallika Kaur, Sikh Family Center Co-Founder and Board Chair; Harmit Cheema, Community Advocate (first part-time staff member) of Sikh Family Center)

Research Liaison: Mimi Kim



Historical and Cultural Factors

The development of SFC since 2009, illustrates the propagation of a culture that neither apologizes for difference nor allows itself to be employed as an excuse for any form of oppression. While Sikhs' unique identities—turbans, long hair, beards—have become targets of discrimination and even hate since 9/11, Sikhs have created powerful civil rights organizations across North America. However, as the community remains focused on post 9/11 issues, intra-community problems and concerns often proliferate in shadows. There are few dedicated social services avenues and while there are many gurdwaras (Sikh congregation centers), there are few organized attempts to focus on promoting health and safety within the Sikh home and community while being cognizant of the cultural and linguistic context. SFC's aim is to continue developing culturally sensitive resources as well as to help build trust for mainstream local institutions where help is available.

Research Purpose

The focus groups and storytelling interviews aim to deepen knowledge generated by the Needs Assessment Survey of the Sikh American Community through qualitative data collection and analysis of Sikh community members.

Background

Sikh Family Center (SFC) is a grassroots community-based initiative to provide social services through an evidence-based and empowerment-oriented approach. SFC is based upon three principles: Principle 1: Resisting Gender and Cultural Essentialism; Principle 2: Learning from Our Community; and Principle 3: Community-wide Services and Empowerment. SFC was started in 2009 and partners with broad network of volunteers, faith-based institutions, nonprofit and government agencies within and outside the Sikh community, and across the U.S. This SCA research project builds upon the foundation of research that already characterizes the important evidence-based and empowerment-oriented focus of SFC.

Research Questions

1. What kinds of community-based interventions on family violence are attempted in the Sikh community currently?
2. How can such interventions be strengthened to the benefit of survivors and their families (especially since most of the survivors Sikh Family Center works with express an interest in alternate resolutions to intervention by police, courts with public proceedings, mainstream shelters, etc.)?

Methods

Focus groups (2); 3 individual storytelling sessions/interviews (45 minutes – 1 hour each). The groups and interviews were conducted bilingually, in English and Punjabi.

Research Justice/Cultural Rigor

SFC's initiation and development has been closely tied to community-based participatory research (CBPR). SFC strives to respond to documented needs, and practices using an evidence-based methodology. Recognizing how most national, regional, or statewide statistics do not disaggregate the Asian Pacific Islander data and thus do not provide data specific to the Sikh American community, SFC has continued to conduct its own needs assessment surveys for the past few years. SFC remains committed to the ethical use of statistics collected, including reading and utilizing them in context, and with an eye to providing future services. Research participants are considered as "co-creators" of the research and are told that an introduction to their research participation.

Participants

All participants identified as Sikh women. They included survivors of gender-based violence and/or community members who work formally or informally with survivors of violence. Focus groups and storytelling sessions/interviews were held in the Bay Area with respondents from across the Bay Area.

Analysis

Focus groups were held by a facilitator and note taker. They were not recorded. The data was recorded by hand by the note taker. The storytelling sessions/interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data from the notes and transcripts were compiled and reviewed by the two Field Researchers, one of whom has experience with quantitative and qualitative data analysis and provided guidance for qualitative analysis and thematic coding.

Themes/Findings

• **Theme 1: Family violence is at once hypervisible and invisible** •

Participants recognized that family/domestic violence, although viewed very differently in every community, does not discriminate against who becomes victim to it:

"But then it happens to you and you realize that it doesn't even matter. You are vulnerable when you are in a situation that is toxic. It can happen to anybody."

"[It is] a black cloud that rains upon each woman because it's culturally acceptable."

In the Sikh American community family/domestic violence comes in every shape, but is often overlooked as the norm, to the detriment of the person being harmed (victim) and the person doing the harm (abuser).

• **Theme 2: "Image" in the community determines many unhealthy responses** •

Sikh community survivors of domestic violence recalled the power of image and shame in their experiences of abuse.

"I think the only shameful thing was that I actually hid it and I actually felt the shame and I shouldn't have. I should have been able to come out and say this is happening to me and that I need help. Or I need some sort of support, but I was so ashamed I couldn't do it. And I think that's the biggest problem. Our community has way too much shame, way too many labels."

For the victim-survivor, maintaining her social image, while feeling shame, often takes precedence over making safe choices. On the other hand, for community members, offering assistance or support may be hindered by the mere thought of what repercussions they may face by doing so.

• **Theme 3: Gurdwara (Sikh faith center) may not be able or willing to offer support** •

The first gurdwara in the U.S. was established in 1912 in Stockton, California. It served the then fledgling Sikh immigrant community in the Central Valley. Today, gurdwaras have multiplied throughout the state and country, but participants noted that when it comes to meeting specific social needs of the community and women, the gurdwaras may lack empathy, often lack resources, and have largely gained a reputation as being places of gossip, indulgent dining, and petty politics.

"No support from gurdwaras. Whenever brought up – the tone will be to deny it, not recognize it, talk about it as a personal matter and should only be dealt with as a family issue. Not trained in supporting this area. They may show concern, but not actual action and no resources or guidance. Although there is other tabling and pamphlets distributed, there isn't any focus to have discussion about women's safety, etc."

Survivors of domestic violence recalled the refusal of the gurdwara to offer help.

"When I went to gurdwara I ended up asking the bhai sahib (who sang kirtan there) 'If someone needs to stay, are you able to help if someone needs to stay the night?' He said that it was difficult. I pressed, 'Even if it was very serious, is there any way?' He was like, 'We don't allow anyone to stay more than one night, and it's for men only and not for women.' He didn't even ask me if I'm safe or something. Or what is the concern or do you need it for yourself or do you need it for somebody else? No. It's just indifference."

• Theme 4: Individual interventions are often insufficient or unreliable •

"No one says anything. That is just how things are supposed to be."

Participants noted that counseling is generally considered as a taboo since couples are supposed to be "perfect" and counseling assumes that they are having problems.

Unfortunately, family response was also unsupportive.

"And unfortunate as it is, even the parents, even the parents, and I'm not blaming them, but it's easy to give up that responsibility because they're older, they don't know how to deal with it, they don't want the social stigma. Whatever their reasons I think even parents have failed their children, big time."

One participant found support from friends who looked for help and found it.

"My parents were not here right, so it was like they couldn't help or whatever and then I didn't have anybody here so I told one of my friends. My friend then did the google search and everything and she told me about [a South Asian domestic violence agency]. And that's where I got help."

• Theme 5: We must pave the way forward together collectively as a community •

Participants made several suggestions for the way forward in addressing family/ domestic violence. They recognized the need for change at various levels and the participation of various stakeholders. Increasing awareness seemed to be a first step.

"First of all, there needs to be an awareness. Second of all, most importantly, there needs to be an acceptance that this happens, it can happen anywhere. It happens in other communities as well."

Participants noted the importance of teaching the next generation that domestic violence is not acceptable.

"We need to focus on girls who are growing up because we want them to know, but then we also want to focus on boys who are growing up because they should know how to treat a woman right. Like how does it become ok in somebody's mind that it is ok to hit the other person? Either which way, maybe it's a girl hitting a guy right or a guy hitting a girl – how does it become ok? I think somewhere the fabric of our community needs to change... you know this whole *macho* thing that oh you know 'We have a boy in our house' etcetera."

The gurdwara, though shown to be a non-supportive resource for survivors of domestic violence, was also seen as an important site for future social change work. Participants later learnt and discussed cases where gurdwaras had worked closely with SFC, forwarding victim-survivor's safety, and going the extra mile. Suggestions for future possible points of entry were shared:

"Information should be presented or even passively shared as resources in the area. This is the first step of recognition. The gurdwara committees should serve as referral points so that it can at least become a referral (bullying, DV cases, etc.) Have 2-3 women on-site for talking (resources for: legal help, employment, food stamps, babysitters, etc.)."

"At a bare minimum let's just start educating the people who are working there. The least that a *bhai sahib* [caretakers, workers] at the gurdwara can say is, 'If you need help, these are the places or these are the women's agencies, why don't you talk to them?' We can accept that at that stage maybe a women can't talk to that *bhai sahib* but they can ask 'Do you need something? Are you upset or something?' At least a little bit of concern doesn't hurt you, right?"

Finally, SFC was recognized as an important resource for the Sikh American community. SFC could provide trainings for the community. It was also an alternative community space to the gurdwara.

"I feel like sometimes people maybe not want to come to a gurdwara or something, but if you have like a festival with food people come and having like having a segment dedicated to this. Even like a singles mixer event, but sort of attachment with some sort of opening talk. And yeah sure is it a damper, yeah probably, but it's also necessary. You know it's like you give a medicine with a spoon full of sugar."

Limitations and Responses

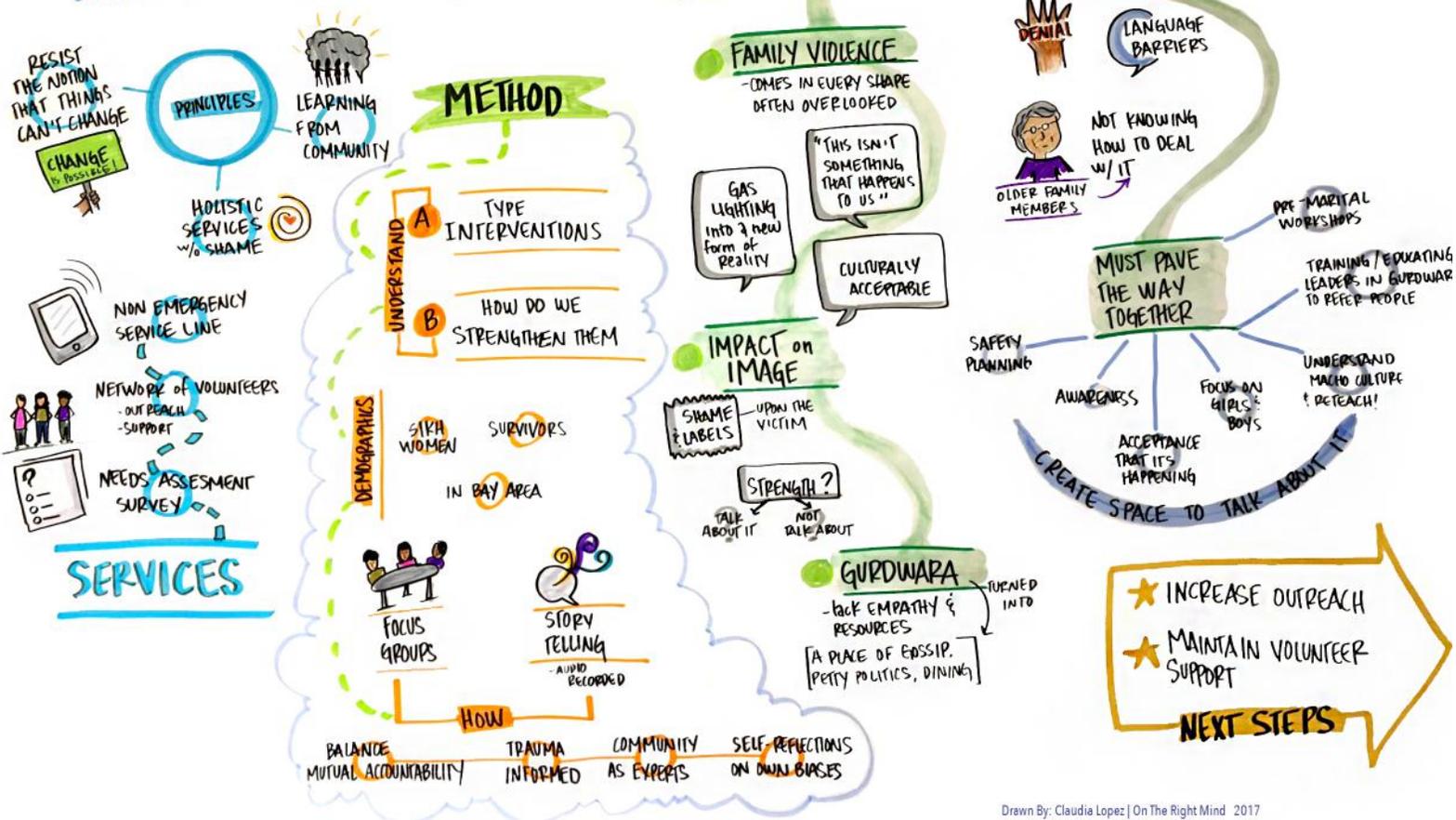
Although these focus groups were used to triangulate data already collected in SFC's prior survey research, the Field Researchers found that the focus group attendance was relatively low³. In response, the Field Researchers added the storytelling session/interviews as an additional research method, allowing them to both collect data from participants who were unable to attend the focus group and to collect more in-depth information possible through a one-on-one storytelling/interview method.

Possible Next Steps

SFC has plans to continue their strong tradition of community-based participatory research (CBPR). During the time of this research project, one of the Field Researchers, Harmit Cheema, was hired as SFC's first paid (part-time) staff. This increase in SFC resources will allow for the survivor-centered advocacy informed by the research. They will also use these report findings, translated into Punjabi, to increase education and awareness on the issue of domestic violence and leverage this for greater community participation and support.

RESEARCH STUDY BY:

SFC SIKH FAMILY CENTER



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³The first focus group received five participants; the second focus group received three participants.

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