

**An Exploratory Qualitative Research Study on Resilience and Healing for Asian, Pacific
Islander & South Asian Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**

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Abstract

An Exploratory Qualitative Research Study on Resilience and Healing for Asian, Pacific Islander
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This exploratory study explores the lived experiences of healing and resilience for Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian adult survivors of child sexual abuse in hopes of better informing services supporting survivors. This research project used qualitative methods interviewing 6 interviewees who identify as Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or South Asian, identify as an adult survivor of child sexual abuse, and is 21 years old or older. Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes. The results of this research includes four global themes: the interconnection of survivorship as resilience; the conflicting role of the importance of family as both resilience and a barrier to healing; humanity for the abuser; and societal oppression can impact the survivor's access to healing. Implications for providers and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Introduction

Child Sexual Abuse continues to be a complex and pervasive issue in our society today. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, approximately one in four girls and one in six boy will be sexually abused before the age of 18 in the United States (Bein, 2011). It is important that those working in the helping profession are well equipped to support survivors. Broadly, the issue of child sexual abuse has been a thoroughly researched topic for decades with a lot of the research focusing on the impacts of child sexual abuse (Manigilo R., 2009). However, there is a lack of research that focuses on the issue of child sexual abuse within the Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian Community. The impact of child sexual abuse can vary depending on pre-determined variables such as race, gender, age, and/or sexuality (Futa, Hsu, & Hansen, 2001). It is essential that the racial and cultural considerations that can impact healing for an adult survivor of child sexual abuse are being researched to better inform services for survivors.

The unique barriers and aspects of resiliency that Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or South Asian (API) survivors of child sexual abuse face are important to consider. Singh, Hays, Chung, & Watson's (2010) qualitative study on resilience and healing for South Asian immigrant adult women who are survivors of child sexual abuse found a strong connection between cultural identity and the meaning of resilience strategies for the survivors, the study concluded that "resilience based processes are best understood when considering the salience of multiple identities" (p. 454). Cultural factors have also been found to create additional barriers for disclosures within Asian and Pacific Islander communities (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006; Xiao & Smith-Prince, 2016).

The complexities of how one's cultural identity can impact their survivorship is an important consideration that is essential to ensuring services to Asian, Pacific Islander, & South Asian (APISA) survivors are competent. Through a partnership with API Chaya, a community based organization that provides advocacy based services for APISA survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and all survivors of human trafficking, this exploratory study aims to explore with APISA adult survivors of child sexual abuse their lived experiences of healing and resilience, with the hope of better informing services that support survivors. This study is based on the idea that recipients of services have an important and unique perspective on current strengths and gaps in services for APISA adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Asian, Pacific Islander, & South Asian Communities, Child Sexual Abuse, & Resilience

Child Sexual Abuse and the API Community

Currently, there is very little literature that focuses on the ways the Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or South Asian (APISA) community within the United States is impacted by child sexual abuse. Futa et al. (2001) identifies this research gap in their literature review that focuses on how cultural issues within the Asian American community impact prevalence, identification, and treatment. The authors share, "an understanding of culturally specific abuse-related issues in Asian American populations is important in providing culturally sensitive assessment and treatment services to this population" (190). In order for social service providers to adequately serve and support individuals of Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or South Asian descent who have been impacted by child sexual abuse, there needs to be a stronger understanding of how APISA's are impacted by this issue.

While research is limited, there are a variety of cultural issues that were identified by Futa et al. (2001) as potentially impacting the prevalence, identification and treatment of child sexual abuse within the Asian American community. Some of the issues discussed are lower disclosure rates, particularly by the primary caretaker of the household, and a higher prevalence of Asian American victims that were abused by a male relative, including the father, when compared to other ethnicities. Another prominent cultural factor is the value of “harmony with the environment.” In many Asian American cultures, identity is often rooted in the community or group the individual belongs to. “Given this concept of collective orientation, the behaviors of an individual reflect not only on the individual but also on the nuclear family, extended family, and family ancestors, and they will influence future generations” (p. 194). This suggests that there is often a priority of family harmony and the reputation of the family over any individual needs. This also may imply Asian American families may be more reluctant to disclose sexual abuse to authorities due to the importance of harmony within the family. This finding is prevalent in a qualitative study by Singh et al. (2010) that focuses on South Asian immigrant women who have survived child sexual abuse. In their study, they share, “[the survivor’s] South Asian families valued primacy of the family over individual members and wanted to maintain a positive image of the family” (451), essentially impacting the disclosure of sexual abuse from the survivor to their family.

The value of prioritizing the family over the individual needs of the survivor was found to be a factor in impacting disclosure in Xiao & Smith-Prince’s (2016) qualitative study on disclosure patterns among Pacific Islander adult survivors of child sexual abuse. “Aspects such as the small size of the Pacific Islander community and the pressures to maintain harmonious

family affected disclosure decisions” (377). Similar findings were prevalent in Gilligan & Akhtar’s (2006) research on cultural barriers to the disclosure of Child Sexual Abuse in Britain’s Asian Communities. Gilligan & Akhtar discuss a Hindi concept called “*Izzat*” which loosely translates into English as ‘honour’ or ‘respect.’ This concept was discussed by multiple interviewees as a barrier, due to the honor or respect within a family given priority over the “care and happiness of children” (1369).

What does Resilience mean?

Within the literature, there is a lack of consensus around how resilience should be conceptualized (Domhardt, Münzer, Fergert, & Goldbeck, 2015; Hyman & Williams, 2001; Elm, Lewis, Walters, & Self, 2016). In a systemic literature review on resilience in survivors of child sexual abuse, Domhardt, Münzer, Fergert, & Goldbeck (2015) share that there is a “growing consensus to consider resilience as a two-dimensional construct that encompasses both aspects of victims’ life circumstances and evidence of positive adaptation” (476). Findings in their systematic literature have identified four top characteristics that contribute to a child sexual abuse survivor’s resilience: educational engagement, self-esteem and law abiding behavior, emotional and interpersonal competence, and a sense of optimism and hope (488). In a literature review conducted by Hyman & Williams (2001) on resilience among women survivors of child sexual abuse, it was found that “highly resilient women benefited from growing up in more stable homes, characterized by fewer moves and less parental drug abuse, were less likely to have experienced incest or severe physical abuse, and were more likely to have graduated from high school” (214). In a qualitative study by Anderson (2006) on resilience for survivors of incest, the author discusses the limitations of the ways in which resilience is often related to

the ability of an individual to function effectively in their environment. Anderson further shares, “the focus on assessing overall functioning and competence limits a much-needed contextual understanding of the effects of and resistance to adversity” (411). This lack of critique can overlook contextual factors, such as oppression, that can impact the survivor. Contextual factors are important to consider and are explored in Singh, Hays, Chung & Watson’s (2010) research. The authors discuss how “the South Asian context of child sexual abuse not only influences the meaning of their experience of child sexual abuse but also influences both the salience and selection of their resilience strategies points to the intricacies involved in trauma work with South Asian women (p. 454). The importance of context is further reiterated in a qualitative study by Singh, Garnett, & Williams (2012) on resilience strategies of African American women survivors of child sexual abuse. The authors share, “it is impossible to understand the full context of the resilience of African American women survivors’ without an understanding of the ways that racism and sexism (among other oppressions) influence their lives” (1113). They further emphasize the importance for providers to understand how societal oppression can influence a survivor’s wellbeing and healing.

Cultural considerations of resilience strategies for APISA survivors of child sexual abuse need to be considered when supporting survivors. This research will be exploring, within the context of healing and resilience, what are the lived experiences of Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islander adult survivors of child sexual abuse? This research will also be exploring, how can service providers best support Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islander adult survivors of child sexual abuse? The hope is for this research to contribute to current literature on resilience for survivors of child sexual abuse.

Methodology

This is an exploratory research study, utilizing a phenomenological framework (Starks, 2007) to learn about the lived experiences of Asian, South Asian, and/or Pacific Islander (ASAPI) adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse in regard to their healing and resilience. Broad in focus, exploratory research seeks to explore a specific phenomenon that has not been thoroughly researched in hopes of gaining a better understanding of its existence without necessarily looking for answers (Royse, 2011). This framework is most appropriate for this research study due to the lack of current research on resilience and healing in APISA adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

This research study explores the resilience and healing for APISA adult survivors through a phenomenological framework. The phenomenological framework seeks to explore how meaning is processed through the experiences of individuals. “The truth of the event, as an abstract entity, is subjective and knowable only through embodied perception; we create meaning through the experience of moving through space and across time” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1374). A phenomenological framework is the best fit for this research due not only to the lack of existing research, but also to its broad focus centering on the lived experiences and perception of the survivors who have experienced healing and resilience. The goal of this study is not to create generalizations around what resilience and healing looks like for APISA adult survivors of sexual abuse, but to offer a starting point with the hope of leading us to more questions and recommendations for future research.

Participant

Participants for this qualitative study were invited to participate through the partnering organization, API Chaya, through solicitation flyers. An electronic flyer was circulated widely through API Chaya. API Chaya sent out the electronic flyer on their email list serve of 3,000 community members that consisted of (but is not limited to) former clients, former staff and volunteers, community supporters, donors and partnering organizations. Paper flyers were also posted within the organization's bathrooms. The flyer included a description of the research, inclusion criteria and contact information. (see Appendix A)

The inclusion criteria for the study were as follows: 1) participant self identify as Asian, South Asian, and/or Pacific Islander; 2) participant self identify as an adult survivor of child sexual abuse; 3) participant be 21 years or older. Potentially interested participants responding to the flyer contacted the researcher. There was a preliminary email conversation to discuss the intent, goals, and expectations of the interview. Some of the participants had questions about qualifications for the study, one participant asked if she qualified even though her sexual abuse happened outside of the United States. The researcher answered any questions the potential participant had. After the initial discussion, the potential participant let the researcher know if they are still interested in participating after the initial conversation. Six potential interviewees reached out to the researcher and all six agreed to participate in the study.

Participants consisted of 6 Asian, South Asian, and/or Pacific Islander adults between the age of 26 and 54 years old, with a mean age of 37.5. Five of the participants identified as a woman, 1 participant identified as a man. Four of the participants were born in the United States, and 2 of the participants had immigrated into the United States. Participants ethnically

identified as Indian, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Korean, and Filipino. 3 of the participants have children. Five of the participants pursued an undergraduate college degree with 3 participants pursuing a Master's level education. Two participants identified as queer and 4 identified as heterosexual. While the study did not specifically intend to focus on incest, all participants were survivors of incest.

Data Collection

Within qualitative phenomenological research, the goal of the interview is to “elicit the participant’s story”; in other words, uncover their perception, understanding, and meaning of the events that they directly experienced. A semi-structured and open-ended interview format was used to elicit the interviewee’s story around resilience and healing. “The researcher/interviewer presents herself as the listener and asks participants to give accounts of their experience of the phenomenon.” Each interview began with the open-ended question of, “Within the context of your survivorship, what does resilience & healing mean to you?” During the interview, the interviewer asked probing follow up questions that encouraged the participant to elaborate on details to “achieve clarity and to stay close to the lived experience.” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, pp. 1375)

Interviews were conducted by the primary researcher in a private room at a King County or Seattle Public Library. Each interview began with an introduction detailing all intentions, goals, and hopes of the research, as well as a review of the consent form (see Appendix B). Interviews lasted about 60 - 90 minutes. After the interview, participants were given a generic thank you note that included: 1) Thank you note for participating in the study; 2) general trauma self-care tips; 3) Local and national resources; and 4) a self care note (see Appendix C).

A hand-made thank you card with a personalized note was mailed to the participant at a later date. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, with all identifiable information removed from the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The researcher approached the analysis of the interviews utilizing thematic networks. A thematic networks approach to qualitative research “seeks to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, pp. 387). Within a thematic network analysis, the researcher normally begins with “lowest-order premises evident in the text,” also known as “Basic Themes.” After extracting these from the text, Basic Themes are categorized into “Organizing Themes,” which “are basic themes grouped together to summarize more abstract principles.” Organizing Themes are then categorized into “Global Themes,” “superordinate themes encapsulating the principal metaphors in the text as a whole.” This process assists the researcher in breaking up the text into themes and exploring their implied significance. (Attride-Stirling, 2001)

The researcher began the analysis process by transcribing all six interviews. Two coders were recruited to assist in the initial coding phase leading to the identification of basic themes. The coders and the researcher individually read through the transcripts of the interviews and extracted important themes. After all interviews had been coded, the coders and researchers met to debrief and compare their codes, working collaboratively to summarize the important themes from the text that would inform the basic themes. Collaborating with the coders in

identifying and summarizing important themes from the transcripts is an important step due to bias the researcher engages in when analyzing the data.

A phenomenological method believes strongly in understanding the ways the researcher's own biases can impact the analysis of data. "In phenomenology, researchers engage in the self-reflective process of 'bracketing,' whereby they recognize and set aside (but do not abandon) their priori knowledge and assumptions with the analytic goal of attending to the participants' account with an open mind" (Starks, 2007, p. 1376). The analysis is grounded in this idea that the researcher must self-reflective of their own set of assumptions and biases. The main researcher used notes from all the codes the researcher and coders created to begin forming themes that would lead into the creation of basic themes. The main researcher then organized the basic themes into organizing themes and further categorized them into global themes. After the themes were organized into the different thematic categories, the researcher debriefed with both advisors to discuss potential bias that may have impacted the analysis process. This practice is recommended in phenomenological qualitative research to increase awareness around the bias of the researcher, Stark (2007) shares, "additional reflexive practices include consulting with colleagues and mentors and writing memos throughout the analysis to help analysts examine how their thoughts and ideas evolve as they engage more deeply with the data" (p. 1376).

Data Results

The results of this research study reveals the lived experiences of healing and resilience for the six APISA adult survivors of child sexual abuse that were interviewed. There were four global themes that were identified in the interviews as important aspects of the survivor's lived experience of resilience and healing, (1) The interconnection of survivorship as resilience, (2) The conflicting role of the importance of family as both resilience and a barrier to healing, (3) Humanity for the abuser, and (4) Societal oppression impacts the survivor's access to healing and connection. Each global theme is described below and includes descriptions of the basic and organizing themes that informs the global theme.

The Interconnection of Survivorship as Resilience

The importance of connection with other survivors was a prominent theme that was expressed in all of the interviews. In the quote below, an interviewee shares about why connection with others was important for her healing process:

Hearing other people share their experiences is really powerful as a survivor. Because it's such an, I mean it [CSA] is an individual, as much as it is shaped and impacted by a larger context, it's a really isolating experience, especially if you hold onto a secret for a really long time, you internalize a lot. So to be able to talk to other people is really powerful.

Many other interviewees also shared about how increasing connections with other survivors decreases their sense of isolation. Some survivors also shared about their passion to advocate for other survivors as part of their healing process, being informed by their own experiences of healing, they didn't want anyone to suffer in the ways that they have.

Strong identification with a survivor identity for healing and connection was also a prevalent theme for most of the interviewees. Interviewees shared that identifying as a survivor has allowed for the connection with other survivors. For some of the interviewees, speaking publicly as a survivor also led to the public acknowledgement of their survivorship and connection to a collective identity of a survivor, which leads to feelings of validation. One interviewee shares about the importance of her own ownership of an identity as a survivor, and how that actually functioned as a catalyst for healing:

I think there was a lot of this ownership of an identity as a survivor. Like, it's a thing. It's a thing and that's who I am. There's just something really powerful about that. And then of course just

understanding that so many experience this, so many people. That also helped, just understanding that it's something that happens to almost everyone. It is going to be important to heal, and you know, that kind of thing. It was also around the time I was like really afraid of being sexual, and like starting to also experience that. So a lot of that work started to happen to.

For some of the interviewees, their healing was also intrinsically connected to the healing of their community and ancestors as well. The interviewee below shares about the importance of collective healing as part of their resilience, they share a concept in their language, Tagalog, that speaks to this, *Kapwa*.

But it's not really just healing myself, because I see healing as something that extends beyond myself, because of *Kapwa*, so I see it also as healing my ancestors, healing my community, and healing my descendants too, which is really heavy, you know. But it's also really powerful in that way too.

The Conflicting Role of the Importance of Family as Both Resilience and a Barrier to Healing

All interviewees expressed conflicting feelings around the role family played in their journey of healing. For most of the survivors interviewed, the value of family played an important role in building resilience in the healing process. One interviewee shares about how the closeness of her family contributed to her healing process.

Now it feels like CSA was this huge focus in our family, once we started acknowledging it, then it just became the thing that kinda ruled our family. And we actually became a lot closer as a family, like I say I love you to my mom all the time, I know a lot of Asian families don't do. and I say I love you to my sister. We started saying that to each other, we did family therapy, all these things. And then, it just feels like a little bit has shifted.

This interviewee received support from her family after disclosure, however there was some backlash within her extended family. The interviewee further shares below about her father's reaction to the sexual abuse that was committed by her uncle, her father's brother.

My dad was actually really, really upset. He actually ended up confronting his siblings [...] and talked to all of them. He basically at this point doesn't acknowledge his brother. And he talked to all of them and they kind of refused to support him except for one brother. They were kind of like, "we don't want this news getting out about our family, that's going to affect our daughter's marriages." and things like that and so they just decided to ignore it. and my dad was like, well, fuck that, then we are not siblings. You know, then we are not in the same family, kind of thing. I have never seen him stand up for me like that

The interviewee shares about how the closeness of her immediate family was a strength, especially in the way her father stood up for her. However, when the extended family was confronted with the abuse they chose to prioritize their own needs as a family, in this case their image, over the needs of the survivor. The prioritization of other family members over the individual's survivor's need was a common theme in all the interviews. This interviewee shares about why she chose not to disclose her abuse to her family.

But it just felt like, for me to bring to light what had happened to me against my brother, it would have destroyed our whole family. And I think that is sort of related to our experience as immigrants, as South Asians, where it's like all we had was our family, you know. It just felt like we had this really small thing, and for me to sort of bring this up, it would have destroyed the small thing we had.

The interviewee shares about feeling the need to protect her family from further harm, especially witnessing her family experience hardships as immigrants living in a predominantly

white community. This interviewee further shared that her brother, who sexually abused her also suffered sexual abuse from their Uncle. Her family knew about the sexual abuse her brother suffered, so most of the family healing centered on her brother's needs. Feeling the need to protect her family from further pain, the interviewee prioritized her family's needs, particularly her brother's, over her own.

The narrative of intergenerational trauma was a common theme in many of the interviews. The interviewee that is quoted below has had a somewhat challenging relationship with her father due to her father's homophobia and refusal to accept his daughter's identity as queer. This has impacted her father's ability to support her survivorship. In the quote below the interviewee reflects on her father's survivorship and how that might have impacted his inability to accept her identity as a Queer woman.

[My dad] ended up telling me he's a survivor too, that like some Uncle of his sexually abused him and he was like, "and I just decided to not let that be, control my life. You know, look at all the things I did, you know." and he was just using it as an example of how you should just move on, kind of thing. and I was like whatever. Now I have a lot more perspective on it, I'm just kind of like oh, it might explain his homophobia.

In addition to the survivor's father's homophobia providing a barrier to his relationship with her daughter, he used his own trauma to minimize his own daughter's healing. This was a common dynamic in the interviewees that initially had a positive reaction from their parents. For these survivors, there was initial support, after that some of the interviewees shared about feeling that their parents struggled with knowing how to best support them, which sometimes led to denial, minimization, and blame. All of the interviewees are survivors of incest, which led to a

lot of the interview content to be focused on complex family dynamics. All six interviewees did not engage with the criminal justice system regarding the sexual abuse, their abusers are currently still a part of the community. This leads to the next global theme of the importance of having humanity for the abuser.

Humanity for the Abuser

None of the interviewees shared a desire for their abusers to be prosecuted through the criminal justice system. Most of the interviewees spoke about the importance of humanity or forgiveness for their survivor, as part of the healing process.

And now I'm, just talked to my parents recently and was like, look, I'm in my own process navigating my relationship with my brother, which really truly has been a part of my healing. You know, it's like, I can't explain it really, but, yeah it's been important to me. Not that I'm ever going to be close, like I said, best friends with my brother, you know, or that will ever be ok that that happened, but, forgiving him has been a big part of my process

The interviewee shares about the importance of forgiveness as part of her healing process, but also an acceptance that her and her brother, her abuser, will never be close. There was also a sense of loss and grief for that relationship she expressed during the interview as part of her healing process as well. The sense of loss within the family was also a common theme among all six interviews. There was some kind of family disconnection as a result of the family response to the sexual abuse that impacted the survivor to experience a sense of loss and grief for the disconnection that occurred within the family. Sometimes this loss exists within the relationship with the abuser, sometimes it exists within the loss of the relationship with other family

members that have chosen not to believe or accept the abuse occurred. The interviewee below shares about her conflicting feelings of wanting to confront her abuser, her Uncle, but also feeling humanity for her Uncle's health problems.

There are definitely options, there are definitely options to confront. And actually my mom was visiting me over the summer here this year, and I did, very briefly, talk to her about, I didn't talk very explicitly about confronting, but I think I mentioned something like that, and her reaction was, just let it go, he's dying, I mean he literally is dying, he's sick with something. And she's like, he's suffering through right now, so just let it go. And, I decided to let it go for now.

Societal Oppression Impacting the Survivor's Access to Healing and Connection

Most of the survivors interviewed spoke about struggling in finding social service providers that could acknowledge the ways the different aspects of their identities impacted their survivorship. Healing in an environment where all aspects of their survivorship were acknowledged, particularly in the way their survivorship was impacted by different aspects of their identity, was essential for the healing process. Below, a survivor shares about the ways in which her survivorship was connected to her identity as a transnational adoptee, particularly around the dynamic of being the only Asian person in a white family.

Well I think being an adoptee is part of my identity, I identify as a transnational adoptee, and I think that's a really big part of it, especially because the abuse happened within my adoptive family, that was just a really huge part of it, for me of not disclosing and feeling like, you know, as a kid it was like ok my brother, you know, there's this huge thing about belonging, right, that I think is really, is really big. As the only person of color in my family, as the only Asian person in my family, and already kind of

feeling isolated, a sense of not really belonging in that family, you know, it like further isolated me, the abuse, so I think there was that, a part of my identity.

This interviewee further shares how it would have been beneficial for her if her therapist had an anti-oppression lens in thinking about how race may have impacted her survivorship being the only Asian person in an all white family.

She didn't talk about, the ways in which we're socialized, as women, you know, based on our race, things like that. Which I felt like was really important, that was just really important for me to be able to process along with my abuse, along with what that meant to me to be like a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, you know an Asian woman, and how, you know just all of that is really important. And maybe, I think it was more like, I don't want to say she kept it simple, but maybe yeah in some ways she kept it pretty simple of you know like, perpetrator, victim.

Another interviewee shares about how migration and language has impacted how he conceptualizes healing.

When we migrate over here, I think there tends to be this kind of shift in ideologies. In our home countries we might have an idea of what it means to survive collectively, through this term of *Kapwa*, when we immigrate over here there becomes a shift in how we perceive survival. Where survival is no longer contingent off of how we collectively heal and how we collectively process, it's based more on capitalism, because we live in a capitalist society, so, your survival is based off of your production as an individual.

The interviewee shares about how healing essentially is a socially constructed concept that is impacted by the social context from which the concept develops from. When migration

happens, the healing that occurs within the family is operating in a different social construct than from where the family's ancestry is from.

Discussion & Conclusion

The rich content of the interviews reveal the impactful ways the 6 APISA adult survivors of child sexual abuse experience the phenomenon of healing and resilience. Their stories offer important considerations to better inform how social service providers and communities can better support survivors.

A particularly profound finding among the interviews is the complicated family dynamics that transpire when the prevalence of intergenerational trauma and child sexual abuse occur within the context of family collectivity. Navigating difficult family dynamics is a common challenge for many incest survivors, however, results suggest that there are specific ways that APISA survivors navigated this complexity. As discussed earlier, in many Asian American communities, self is defined in relations to others, there is a strong collective identity that is prioritized over the individual (Futa et al, 2001). The behavior of an individual within the group is considered a reflection of the family, extended family, and family ancestors. This strongly supports all of the interviewee's difficulty in navigating their family's needs versus their own, often choosing to prioritize their family.

The collectivity of the family unit is complex, while it can negatively impact the support a survivor receives, as it was shared by some interviewees, it was discovered to also act as a source of resilience, which was also shared by many of the interviewees. A framework of resilience occurring within the individual, as discussed earlier, would be limiting. Many of the

survivors share that their resilience exists in connection to other survivors, family, or community. This resonates with the research that focuses on culturally specific communities (Singh et al, 2010; Singh et al, 2012). The resilience that stems from the strength of family connection for the survivor also created a dynamic where, in the context of incest, the abuser may continue to be a part of the family's lives, essentially placing the survivor in a position where they were required to interact or share the same space with their abuser. This often led to an ongoing connection with the abuser including learning about the abuser's own history of sexual abuse.

Another factor that can impact the family's response to incest is historical trauma. "Historical trauma often refers to intergenerational trauma combined with other types of trauma sustained by a group" (Hinton & Good, 2016, p. 55). Migration patterns for APISA families often occur within the global context of colonization, war, and political unrest. One interviewee, who identifies as Filipino American, shared about the ways in which this global context impacted their parents, their grandparents, and their ancestors, essentially impacting the way he conceptualizes his healing process. Generational impacts of historical trauma can include impacting family resilience, collective self-esteem, substance abuse, PTSD like symptoms, poor health outcomes, anxiety, and depression (Hinton & Good, 2016; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004; Nagata, 1991). Among groups who are impacted by historical trauma, a sense of loss and grief can also be passed through generations (Whitbeck et al., 2004). As families continue to cope with a sense of loss and grief from the unresolved trauma of previous generations, it can make it difficult to address intra-family trauma, including incest. Studies that look specifically at the impact of historical trauma on survivors of child sexual

abuse are non-existent, although research has looked at the impact of historical trauma on the family dynamic. Evans-Campbell (2008) discusses this in her article on a multilevel framework for exploring the impact of historically traumatic events. In her literature review of research that examine the ways families are impacted by historical trauma, she shares about a research study that found “many interviewees experienced a preoccupation with their parents’ trauma, which influenced their willingness to talk with their parents about their behavior in general. These children of survivors strove to be “good children” by not causing more pain in their lives” (p. 326). In Whitbeck et al. (2004), a study measuring historical trauma among American Indian People, one of the findings included “perceptions of historical losses lead to emotional responses typically associated with anger/avoidance and anxiety/depression” (p. 127).

Only one interviewee made direct connections to historical trauma, while the other interviewees focused mostly on their family dynamics. This speaks to one of the limitations in phenomenological research. The broad phenomenological framework makes it difficult to explore similar issues among the interviews. This framework allows the interviewee to bring focus where they want.

There were also limitations within the reliability of this study due to time constraints. Qualitative studies often require an elongated amount of time to ensure the highest reliability. Sufficient time is needed for many reasons, especially, triangulation, which involves “using multiple sources of information, methods, or observers to cross-check for inconsistencies or misinformation” (Royce, 2011, p. 272), and member checking. Member checking requires going back into the field with interviewees after data collection to ensure that interpretations of findings were accurate (Royce, 2011, p. 272). The researcher did not member check the

findings. Additionally, due to limited time there were only three coders enlisted to code the transcripts, one of which was the main researcher. Because the coders discussed the codes with one another, there was a risk of consensual drift among the coders to increase agreement creating collaborative bias. This study also contains a small sample size. Future research may benefit from more diverse recruitment methods, whereas this research study only recruited through the partnering organization, API Chaya, potentially limiting the outreach for participants.

Future research is needed to continue to think about how APISA survivors and the APISA community can be better supported. When providers are supporting survivors, it is important to consider the larger global context that may be shaping how the survivor is conceptualizing their survival, healing, and resilience. More research is needed to explore this connection. Recommendations for future research include looking at how APISA survivors experience their healing within the context of historical trauma. Additionally, this study looked at APISA broadly, future studies that focus on specific ethnicities may be beneficial to look more at global trends that may impact a survivor's healing. For example, not all countries in Asia and the Pacific have been colonized, within the global and political context, it may be beneficial to look at research that compares the experiences of healing for communities that come from a different global context. Future research may benefit also from examining more specifically about the type of trauma the survivor experienced, for example, what type of sexual abuse and for how long. There may be patterns that exist around type and occurrence of abuse and healing and resilience. In order to improve services for APISA survivors, more research is needed to examine how the APISA community and survivors are impacted by child sexual abuse.

The National Organization of Asian Pacific Islanders Ending Sexual Violence (2013) share in their listening session report that the focus of their work is to address the “lack of representation of API voices and testimonies when it came to work around sexual violence. Our stories about sexual violence went unheard, unacknowledged, or at times got subsumed into other forms of violence and were never explicitly addressed on their own” (p.2). It is essential for research to continue within and in collaboration with the Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian community around how to best support survivors of child sexual abuse. This research offers important considerations of how APISA adult survivors of child sexual abuse experience resilience and healing.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: OUTREACH FLYER FOR RESEARCH RECRUITMENT



Looking for Asian, Pacific Islander, &/or South Asian Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse to Explore What Resilience & Healing Means for Survivors

How can we improve services for Asian, Pacific Islander, & South Asian Survivors
of Child Sexual Abuse?

How can we support our communities to better support survivors?

API Chaya will be working in collaboration with a Graduate Student in the Master in Social Work program at the University of Washington in a research study exploring how Asian, Pacific Islander, & South Asian adult survivors of Child Sexual abuse can be better supported in community and by social services.

WHO

Adult (21 and Older) Survivor of Child Sexual Abuse* who identifies with the Asian &/or Pacific Islander &/or South Asian community.

WHEN

Interviews will be scheduled from December 2015 - February 2016

WHAT

60 - 90 min interviews focused on the survivor's experience with social services and other support systems. Participants of the study will not be asked any questions related to the sexual abuse, all questions will focus on their experience with various support systems in the context of healing & resilience.

This research is confidential, the identities and identifying information of those participating in the study will be kept confidential.

If you are interested in participating in this research project, or have questions please contact the Student Researcher, Sabrina for more information..

She can be reached at sabcchen@uw.edu or by phone 253-237-3591

**Child sexual abuse is any kind of unwanted sexual touching or inappropriate sexual exposure between a child and adult or if there is a three year age difference between two children. This can include (but is not limited to) obscene phone calls text messages, or digital interaction unwanted touching, exhibitionism or exposing oneself to a child or minor, masturbation in the presence of a child or minor or forcing them to masturbate, rape, producing, owning, or sharing pornographic images or movies of children, exposing a child or minor to porn, and any other sexual conduct that is harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare.*

(This definition of Child Sexual Abuse was adapted from RAINN)

If you think you may have been sexually abused as a child and are seeking support please call the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center 24-Hour Resource Line at 888-99-VOICE (6423).



APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON****CONSENT FORM****Qualitative Needs Assessment for Services that Support****Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or South Asian Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**

Researchers:

Sabrina Chen, MSW Student at the University of Washington

Jon Conte, Professor, School of Social Work at the University of Washington

Norma Timbang, Lecturer, School of Social Work at the University of Washington

Researchers' statement

We are asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether you want to participate in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to participate in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to improve current services for Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian adult survivors of child sexual abuse. We hope to gain input from survivors around what works well, and what doesn't work well from their experience.

STUDY PROCEDURES

This study will include in-person interviews. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. All audio recordings will be permanently deleted on July 1st, 2016. The consent form with your name and your contact information will be kept in a locked file separate from the transcriptions.

Interviews will take about 60 - 90 minutes.

Questions during the interview will focus on experience in accessing support through social services and non-social service resources. Questions will also focus on the your own understanding of what healing & resilience means for them, what that can look like, and barriers to accessing healing or support. **No questions will be asked directly about the sexual abuse you experienced.**

You may refuse any question that will be asked. Additionally, after our interview, if you wish for me to destroy your audio recording and not transcribe it, I will respect your request and destroy all data related to your interview.

RISKS

Due to the sensitivity of the topic of sexual abuse, there is a possibility of your feelings of trauma to reemerge during this interview. If you feel triggered or are getting upset during the interview, I ask that you tell me and we can decide if you want to proceed with the interview. Below are local resources that can support you if you were to be triggered during the interview and need additional support. Additional detailed resources will also be provided on a separate handout.

24 hour King County Sexual Assault Resource Center Hotline 888-998-6423

Local Resources

- API Chaya 206-467-9976
- Asian Counseling and Referral Services 206-695-7600
- Seattle Women's Therapy Referral Line 206-634-2682
- King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

National Hotlines

- National Sexual Assault Resource Hotline 800.656.HOPE

The audio tapes will be coded with a study number, not your name or any other personal identifiers. The audio tapes and the code linking who you are will be destroyed on July 1st, 2016.

BENEFITS

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of healing and resilience for API Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, with the hope of helping to inform and shape the adaptation of current services for survivors within an advocacy setting. We also hope that this research can also help fill current gaps in research as well as better inform service providers and the API Community around how to better support survivors.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Data will be confidential. However, if we learn that you intend to harm yourself or others, we must report that to the authorities. Additionally, if you provide information about the ongoing abuse of children or elders, we must report that to the authorities. The audio recordings of the interview will be destroyed on July 1st, 2016 and the electronic transcriptions of the interviews will be kept in a password protected file. Final findings of the research project will be shared with the advisors on this research project and the partnering organization, API Chaya. There is a possibility that the results may be publicly released, but your identity will never be shared with anyone

All of the information you provide will be confidential.

OTHER INFORMATION

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Printed name of study staff obtaining consent Signature Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, or if I have experienced undue distress by participating in this study, I can contact one of the researchers listed on the first page of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form. Also, if I have questions, comments, or complaints about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at 206-543-0098.

Printed name of subject Signature of subject Date

When subject is a minor:

Printed name of parent Signature of parent Date

When subject is not able to provide informed consent:

Printed name of representative Signature of representative Date

Relationship of representative to subject

Copies to: Researcher

 Subject

APPENDIX C: THANK YOU PACKAGE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you package for participants of this research include:

- Thank you Letter
- Self Care Tips
- Healing Handout
- Resources Handout

Thank you letter:

WE ARE POWERFUL, BECAUSE WE HAVE SURVIVED

– AUDRE LORDE

Dear _____,

I would like to express my deep gratitude to you. Thank you so much for participating in this research project and sharing your time with me. The hope of this project is to make sure Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or South Asian adult survivors of Child Sexual Abuse are receiving all the support they deserve from social services and the community. Your input as a survivor is crucial for this project, and we truly are thankful for your willingness to provide us with your wisdom and expertise. At the end of this project, we may not have all the answers, but an important starting point towards ensuring survivors are receiving the support they deserve.

Regardless of the stage of recovery or healing we are in, a lot still can come up around our experiences of sexual abuse. Thank you for your willingness to be vulnerable. If something did come up for you, I encourage you to seek out your support systems and coping strategies. If you are in need of additional support, there is a list of resources on the next page.

Self-care is also important for our healing & recovery. Attached are some tips from RAINN.org around ways to engage in self-care after trauma. It helps us keep in mind, how do we stay connected to ourselves, to our bodies, and to our emotional spirits?

And lastly in this packet, is an excerpt from Dear Sisters. Dear Sisters is an anthology of letters written from survivors of sexual violence to other survivors of sexual violence.

With Love,

Sabrina Chen

Self Care Tips:

SELF CARE

The following tips on Self Care have been taken from RAINN.org <https://rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-recovery/self-care-for-survivors>

Self-care is about taking steps to feel healthy and comfortable. Whether it happened recently or years ago, self-care can help you cope with the short- and long-term effects of a trauma like sexual assault.

Physical self-care

After trauma, it's important to keep your body healthy and strong. You may be healing from injuries or feeling emotionally drained. Good physical health can support you through this time. Think about a time when you felt physically healthy, and consider asking yourself the following questions:

- *How were you **sleeping**? Did you have a sleep ritual or nap pattern that made you feel more rested?*
- *What types of **food** were you eating? What meals made you feel healthy and strong?*
- *What types of **exercise** did you enjoy? Were there any particular activities that made you feel more energized?*
- *Did you perform certain **routines**? Were there activities you did to start the day off right or wind down at the end of the day?*

Emotional self-care

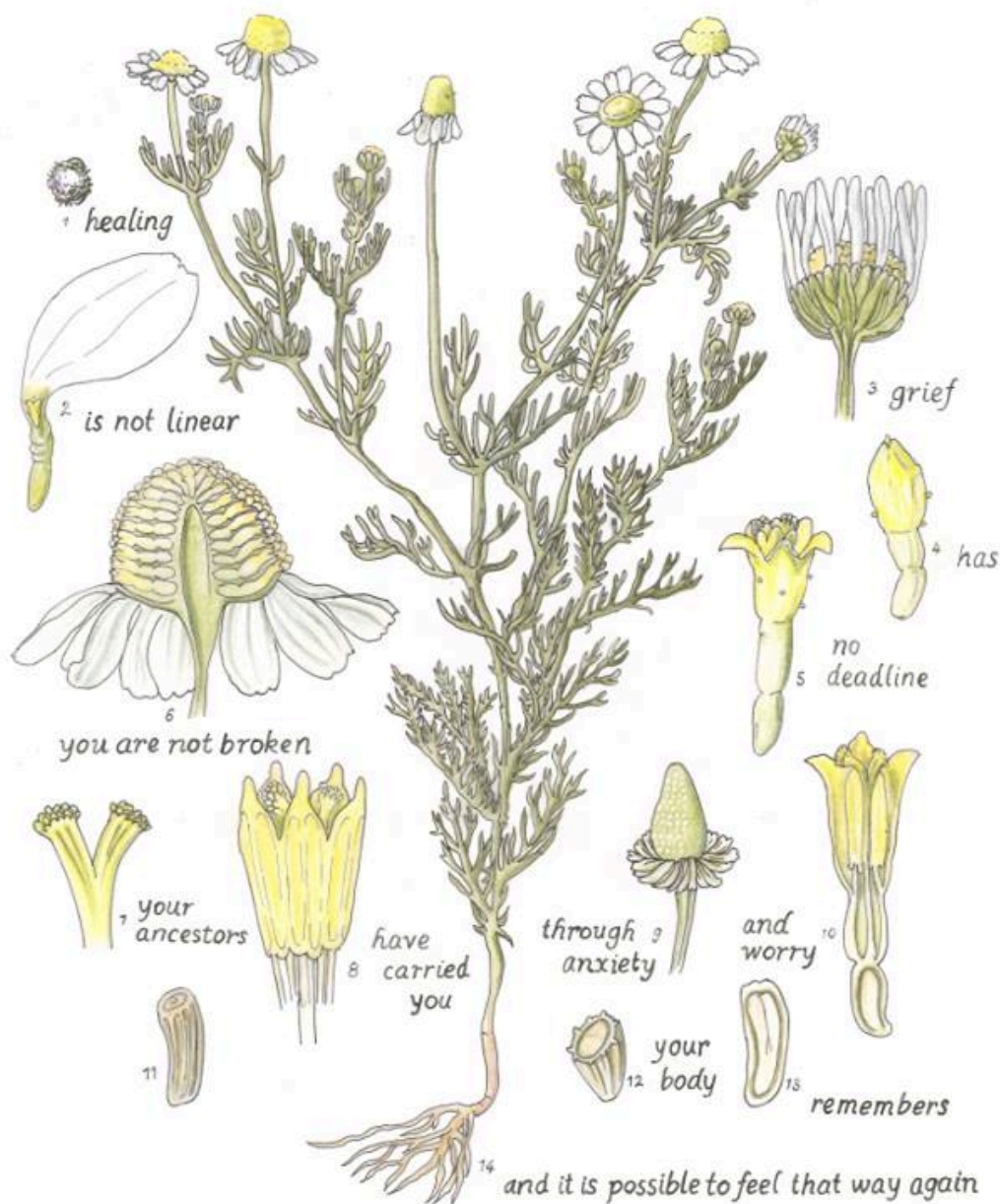
Emotional self-care means different things to different people. The key to emotional self-care is being in tune with yourself. Think about a time when you felt balanced and grounded, and consider asking yourself the following questions:

- *What **fun or leisure** activities did you enjoy? Were there events or outings that you looked forward to?*
- *Did you **write down your thoughts** in a journal or personal notebook?*
- *Were **meditation or relaxation** activities a part of your regular schedule?*
- *What **inspirational words** were you reading? Did you have a particular author or favorite website, like [RAINN's Pinterest board](#), to go to for inspiration?*
- ***Who did you spend time with?** Was there someone, or a group of people, that you felt safe and supported around?*
- ***Where did you spend your time?** Was there a special place, maybe outdoors or at a friend's house, where you felt comfortable and grounded?*

Self-care isn't always easy to take on by yourself. To speak with someone who is trained to help, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE(4673) or chat online at online.rainn.org

Healing Handout:

Reminders



*Healing Together Network Gathering, Allied Media Conference
 Detroit, MI, 2013*

words by Fabian Romero art by TextaQueen

Resources:

CRISIS RESOURCES	
If you are in immediate danger, please call 911.	
24 HOUR HOTLINE/CRISIS LINE	King County Sexual Assault Resource Center Hotline: 888.998.6423 National Sexual Assault Resource Hotline: 800.656.HOPE Washington State Crisis Line: 866.427.4747

API CHAYA	
www.apichaya.org 206-325-0325 info@apichaya.org <i>Advocacy-based organization based out of Seattle that supports Asian, Pacific Islander, & South Asian survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. All services are free and confidential.</i>	
INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY	Individual advocacy at API Chaya offers support around connecting to resources. If you'd like to speak with an advocate one on one to get support around accessing additional resources, please call API Chaya at 206-325-0325.
SUPPORT GROUP	API Chaya holds a yearly support group for Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian survivors of sexual assault (including adult survivors of child sexual abuse). This group is free and meets weekly for about 10 weeks. The group will start around March 2016. If you're interesting in hearing more about the group please contact the group facilitator, Angeli at angeli@apichaya.org or 206.467.9976 extension 304
RISE! – Survivor Art Collective	API Chaya supports a survivor art collective called RISE! RISE was formed out of the support group they hold yearly. The survivors wanted to stay connected to each other and formed Rise. Rise is a collective space where participants rotate facilitating and hosting the group. If you're interested in learning more about Rise, please contact Angeli at angeli@apichaya.org or 206.467.9976 extension 304

KING COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCE CENTER (KCSARC)	
www.kcsarc.org 425.226.5062 Main Office 1.888.99.86423 24 Hour Resource Line King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC) provides sexual assault-related services for people of all ages in King County, WA, while working toward the ultimate goal of eliminating sexual violence and abuse from our communities	
GENERAL ADVOCACY	KCSARC's Client Care Specialists provides emotional support and assistance to determine on-going needs. A Client Care Specialist will talk with you and help you to identify services KCSARC can help with, such as medical advocacy, information and referral, legal advocacy, therapy, parent support, or 24-hour support through our Resource Line. Client Care Specialists will also provide referrals to other organizations in the community that can assist you.
GROUP THERAPY	Group therapy for female adult survivors of child sexual assault is provided two times per year, once in the spring and once in the fall. This 12-week, structured, closed group is for women 21 years of age and older who have specific memories of the abuse in childhood and can articulate the impact it has had on them throughout the years. An initial assessment is required to ensure the compatibility of the group format with survivor's needs. Group fees can be met by insurance or negotiated. If you are

	interested in participating in the next group, please call for more information about the Spring 2016 group. The group will begin the first week of March and will be from 5:30-7:30pm. Call Intake at 425-226-5062.
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