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Using Visual Voices To Examine Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Experiences Among Transgender And Nonbinary Survivors Of IPV

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TransPride YOUning Health & Wellness Conference

25 October 2024

Need support? Trans Lifeline 877-565-8860 | National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 | Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988

Before we get started...

Content disclaimer:

- I will be discussing intimate partner violence. This includes descriptions of abuse, depictions of abuse through art, and the impacts of abuse. Additionally, I will be discussing more broadly the societal and structural violence that transgender and nonbinary people experience daily. Please practice self-care and prioritize your emotional well-being. Intimate partner violence and structural violence impact us all in different ways. If this isn't a space you have the capacity to be in, I understand and there is no need to explain.

This is a safe space:

- Please come into this space with compassion and an open mind. Hate is not welcome and will not be tolerated. I am always happy to engage in conversation which comes from a place of kindness, genuine curiosity, and desire to learn. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out!

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Local and National Resources

Intimate Partner Violence/Sexual Violence



Women's Center and Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh (WC&S)
412-687-8005
wcpittsburgh.org



Pittsburgh Action
Against Rape (PAAR)
1-866-363-7273
paar.net



Crisis Center North
412-364-5556
crisiscenternorth.org



Center for Victims
1-866-644-2882
centerforvictims.org



love is respect
1-866-331-9474
loveisrespect.org



The National Domestic
Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233
thehotline.org

TLGBQIA+



QMNTY
qmntycenter.org



LGBT National Help Center
Hotline
1-888-843-4564
lgbthotline.org



Trans Lifeline
877-565-8860
translifeline.org



Hugh Lane Wellness
Foundation
hughlane.org



SisTers PGH
sisterspgh.org



Trevor Lifeline
1-866-488-7386
thetrevorproject.org

Mental Health



resolve Crisis Services
1-888-796-8226
bit.ly/resolvecrisis



988 Suicide and
Crisis Lifeline
988
988lifeline.org

Positionality

- Bisexual, cisgender woman
- Family and friends who are IPV survivors
- Experience working in IPV services

Terminology

Transgender: an individual's gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth

Nonbinary: an individual does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman

- Note: Many nonbinary folks also identify as transgender, but not all do.

Cisgender: an individual's gender identity is the same as the sex assigned to them at birth

Sex: the identity given to someone at birth, usually based on external anatomy

Gender identity: how individuals perceive and name themselves. Gender is a personal identity, shaped by social norms.

(Human Rights Campaign
(HRC) Foundation, n.d.)

Terminology

Intimate Partner Violence: the use of “abusive behavior as a part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another” (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), n.d., para. 1)

Includes several types of violence, including:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological

Survivor: someone who has experienced intimate partner violence victimization



Background

- Transgender and Nonbinary (TNB) people are:
 - 1.7 times more likely to experience *any* lifetime IPV
 - 2.2 times more likely to experience physical IPV
 - 2.5 times more likely to experience sexual IPV (Peitzmeier et al., 2020)

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Categories of Identity Abuse Tactics

Safety, Outing, Disclosure

- Threatening safety and ability to choose who knows about their trans identity

Community Attitudes

- Taking advantage of the small, isolated, and oppressed nature of queer community to convince partner that staying silent about abuse will protect community

Gender Stereotypes and Transphobia

- Telling a partner that they will never truly be their gender identity; convincing them they'll never find love again because of their identity

Violating Boundaries

- Violating boundaries related to body and gender by way of physical, psychological, verbal, sexual abuse

Restricting Access

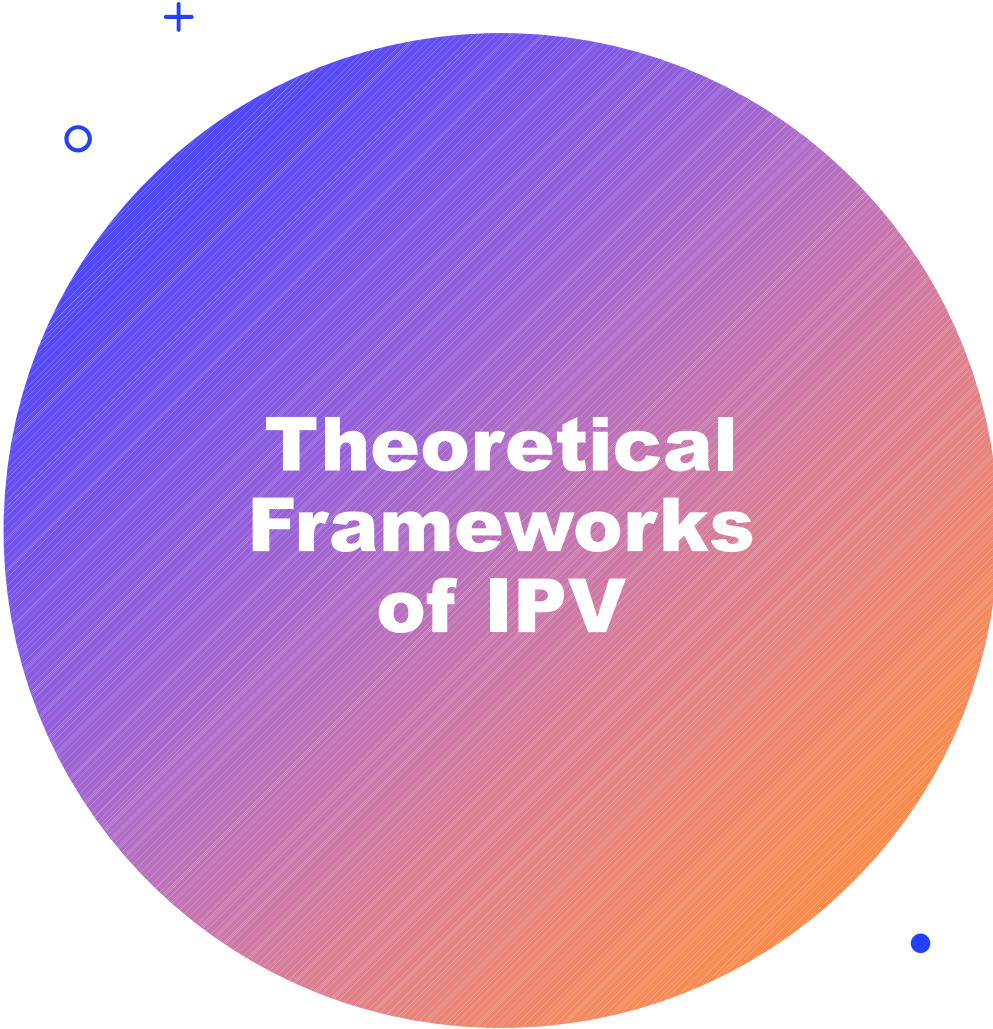
- Restricting access to physical or social transition (includes destroying HRT, throwing away affirming clothing)

Using or Undermining Identity

- Perpetuating gender dysphoria by deadnaming, misgender, or insulting identity

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(Dolan & Conroy, 2021)



Theoretical Frameworks of IPV

Dominant Framework:

- A single-issue feminist framework which views IPV within a gender-imbalanced system with the patriarchy as the sole drive of violence

Intersectional Framework:

- Recognizes and investigates interlocking forms of systemic oppression

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(Calton et al., 2016; Dolan & Conroy, 2021; Erbaugh, 2007; Everhart & Hunnicutt, 2013; Guadalupe-Diaz, 2013; Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski, 2017; Jordan et al., 2020; Kurdyla, 2017, 2021)

Intersectional Framework

Crenshaw (1991)

Argued against the single-issue feminist framework which dominated the early “Battered Women’s Movement”

Speaks to the position of a Black woman who, because of her location at the intersection of race and gender, experiences IPV much differently than a White woman

Intersectional Framework

Collins (1998)

Argued the violence is a site of intersectional hierarchical power

Violence is defined by those in power, thus violence is conceptualized in a way that maintains hierarchical power

Because Black women have been left out of positions of power, their experiences of violence have been erased from public discourse

Intersectional Framework



Dolan and Conroy (2021)

Argued for an intersectional theoretical framework in place of the single-issue feminist approach to IPV

An intersectional approach would capture the interlocking systems of oppression faced by transgender survivors

Specifically, they call out White supremacist cisheteropatriarchal power

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Overview of Research Study

Purpose: To explore IPV victimization experiences among TNB individuals

Objectives:

- To engage TNB survivors in an arts-based project exploring IPV experiences among TNB people
- To deepen our current understanding of IPV among TNB survivors

Method: Visual Voices

- A participatory, arts-based research method to facilitate discussion between academic researchers and community members about public health issues important to community




METHODS

Visual Voices:

- Involves several group meetings in which community members paint, draw, write, and discuss topics related to community health.
- Participants collage all the pieces together into one group art piece.

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(Ochtera et al., 2014;
Yonas et al., 2013)



Participants

- Self-selected
- Seven adults in Allegheny County, PA between the ages of 18-34 years who identify as transgender or nonbinary and who identify as survivors of IPV participated in the research study.

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Demographics	n	%
Age		
18-24	2	28.6%
24-34	5	71.4%
Gender identity (self-described)		
Nonbinary	2	28.6%
Trans man	2	28.6%
Trans woman, femme	1	14.3%
Trans nonbinary	1	14.3%
Agender	1	14.3%
Race and ethnicity (self-described)		
White*	5	71.4%
Latine	1	14.3%
Other	1	14.3%
Sexual Orientation (self-described)		
Queer	3	42.9%
Pansexual (Pan)	2	28.6%
Bisexual (Bi)	1	14.3%
Straight	1	14.3%

*includes one participant who identified as "Polish/Irish"

Overview of Sessions

Location of sessions:
Irma Freeman Center for Imagination, a local art organization



Painting on 3' x 4' brown craft paper about:

- Love in queer relationships
- What a healthy relationship looks like

Discussion:

- How it felt to paint with one another, how it felt to paint about these prompts, other reflections

“Critique”:

- What are your thoughts about the painting?
- What do you like about the piece? (color, design, composition, images)
- What do you think the message of the painting is?

Artist Statement:

- Tell me about what you painted.
- How did the prompts motivate what you created? *
- Anything else you want to share?

Group discussion:

- How do your identities shape your experiences in relationships?

Session One: Painting



Discussion:

- Concerns about being in a violent relationship
- Support while in a violent relationship

Drawing/writing on 8.5" x 11" white printer paper.

- Participants focused these on the discussion

Artist Statement

- Tell me about what you created
- Group Discussion

- How have your identities shaped how you understand your experiences in a violent relationship?

Session Two: Drawing and Writing

At the end of Sessions One and Two, I asked participants if they would donate their art. All participants agreed to donate.



Participants worked together to construct the Visual Voice.*

Discussion:

- How was your experience working with one another to decide the placement of your individual creations to make the group's Visual Voice?
- **What does the Visual Voice of our group say to you?**

Participants identified themes in the Visual Voice using sticky notes.

I held Sessions Two and Three 3x each due to participant availability.

Session Three: Visual Voice Construction

(Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2023; King, 2012; DeCarlo, 2019)

Coding team:

Sarah Scott, MPH;
Rachel Wasilko, BA;
Jamie Martina, BA

Thematic Analysis

Open Coding

- Each coder read through their respective transcripts, identified possible patterns and ideas for codes.

Generate Initial Codes

- Each coder generated a list of initial codes and matched them to excerpts from the transcripts.
- A priori codes included: identity abuse, isolation abuse, help seeking practices, intersecting identities, and other victimization

Codebook generation

- The coding team met to discuss the codes we identified and created a final codebook.
- We organized the codes into broader themes. We reviewed and revised codes and definitions.
- Incorporated participant-generated codes into the codebook.
- We dropped isolation abuse from the codebook because it did not appear in the transcript.

Focused coding:

- We each coded our respective transcripts once more with the final codebook.
- We adjudicated the codes by comparing coded transcripts side-by-side to resolve any differences in coding.

Themes

Coding team:

Sarah Scott, MPH;
Rachel Wasilko, MPH;
Jamie Martina, MPH



IPV Victimization

Safety and
Protection

Forms of
Support and
Barriers to Help
Seeking

Lived
Experiences and
Additional
Victimization

Love and
Healthy
Relationships

Personal Identity
and Growth

THEME 1: IPV VICTIMIZATION

As I sit + watch the snow lay
& sparkle, I can't help but think of you.

Your eyes twinkle the way the snowflakes
shimmer.

I can see you waltzing through the living room
like the specs dance around the trees.

I can see your hair blowing in the wind
between the branches.

I hear your laugh in the distant wind.

But as the wind approaches, I realize
it's not a laugh, but a scream.

And that's when I realize the snow
will only lay on the ground, + not lay it's
hands on me... The snow is prettier than

Identity Abuse Experienced by Participants

Community Attitudes

“I think there were a lot of barriers to telling someone. Because of being queer... Yeah, and at the time, I was dating a lesbian. And I was presenting as a lesbian, and there’s the stereotype of the like aggressive lesbian that I just didn’t wanna feed into by disclosing anything.” (P3)

Gender Stereotypes and Transphobia

“I’ve been broken up with and someone went on Twitter sayin’ you know, ‘you’re not man enough, you’re a knock off, you’re this, you’re that,’ like they took my biggest fears and put them in the public” (P7)

Restricting access

“...she demanded that I be a woman, when I wasn’t for so long and I was willing to do that just to be in a relationship with her... Like I postponed my transition two years for that... Tried very hard to be a woman. Did not work.” (P3)

Using or Undermining identity

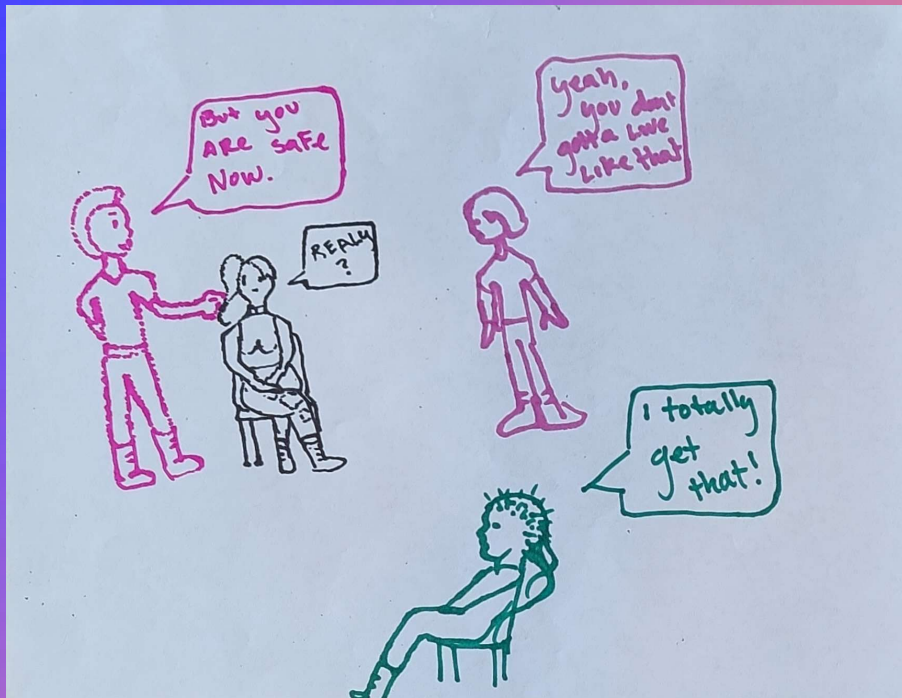
“I’ve had partners get mad at me. And they would use my dead name to scream at me. Like my full dead name. First, middle, last name. And my first and last name are very feminine, very...” (P7)

(Dolan & Conroy, 2021)



THEME 2: SAFETY AND PROTECTION

“...if you’re separating yourself from that person, it’s like, are you gonna run into them, are they gonna fuckin’ have any ulterior motives, are they gonna send people out to get revenge on you for something, you know? ...I mean I’ve also experienced being stalked...” (P6)



THEME 3: FORMS OF SUPPORT AND BARRIERS TO HELP SEEKING

“And it’s just conversation, a safe space. Just a quick doodle, but that’s how I was feeling is **more safe spaces, more people talking about certain issues about abuse, about violence**, maybe, violence in the country we also live in... things that are really current events and **individual traumas that we all process together**. And I think more safe spaces nationwide would look like that. Cause I’ve been in some states where that’s like, it don’t exist. Like, no there’s no trans or queer empowerment anything.” (P4)

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THEME 3: FORMS OF SUPPORT AND BARRIERS TO HELP SEEKING

“A lot of the resources for people in that situation is very heavily gendered... I don’t remember specifically what it was like when I was in that relationship, but my current roommate works for [rape crisis center] and she does have trans clients, trans both ways, but it’s still very gendered as a woman’s concern. It doesn’t feel as accessible.” (P3)

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THEME 3: FORMS OF SUPPORT AND BARRIERS TO HELP SEEKING

“...Or you know, just a place where that was easily accessible for me cause also **at the time I didn't have like insurance** or anything, so that was, it was tough to try to manifest that -- a good therapist. **I think the options were like, Student Health, or like you know, try to find someone online that's cheap.**” (P2)

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THEME 4: LIVED EXPERIENCES AND ADDITIONAL VICTIMIZATION

“...as **being a person on the street, or houseless**, or whatever, people assume you’re willing to do wild things for them for like \$10 or something. You know? And will harass you, and I don’t know, you know what I’m saying? That’s a whole flavor that I don’t think everyone has to deal with. Or, say that you’re spanging people for money... let’s say someone gives you 5, 10 dollars, and **they feel like they own you**, you know, or that you owe them something, **and then you’re like ungrateful or a terrible person if you don’t do something for them** and then suddenly it escalates into a violent situation, you know? Had that happen.” (P6)

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THEME 5: LOVE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

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In response to: “**How did it feel to paint about queer and trans relationships?**”

“I also find that question in itself by nature **causes a separation from other healthy love**. Therefore, there is a **prime example of a cisheteronormative supremacy** that, you know, this is the norm, and to try to understand trans or queer love, it is love. It’s staying, **I don’t go up and ask, ‘Hey can you explain to me more about hetero straight love?’** It’s a unique kind of love... everybody’s understanding of love is different. It’s individual to individual, not by gender or identity or nonconforming or no gender. It has nothing to do with any of that. **It’s just love.**” (P4)



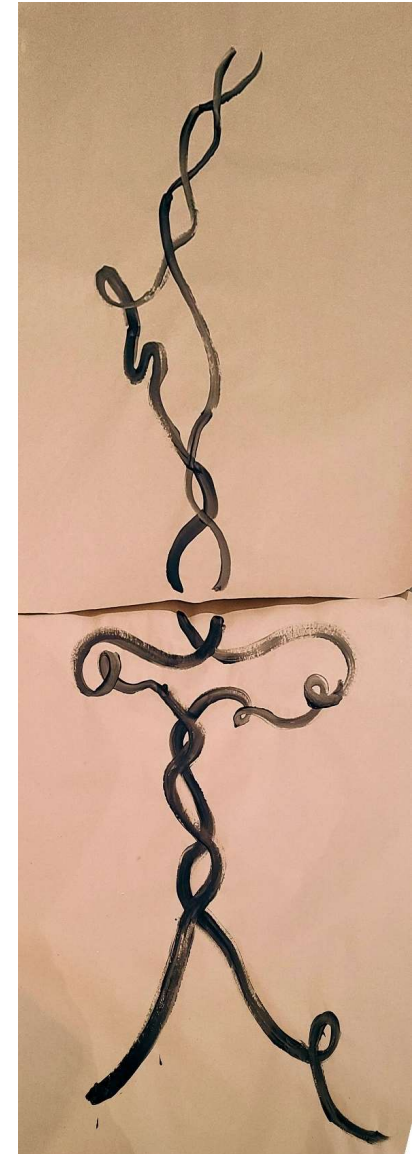
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THEME 5: LOVE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

“I had one relationship that’s ever made me feel safe and comfortable. It didn’t work out. But... [the rain is] only targeting them. **No matter who you are in the community, you have a target.** It doesn’t matter. And sometimes that target feels like a downpour... I said how I choose to live my life and usually that can create a conflict for somebody that has never been in or familiar with relationships like ours. So that’s actually why I do have it hitting both because, you know, I still have to hear ‘That’s still a girl, that’s still this, that’s still that.’ But while she still has to hear the ‘Are you gay, are you this, are you that, how are you going to have kids, how are you going to do that.’” (P7)

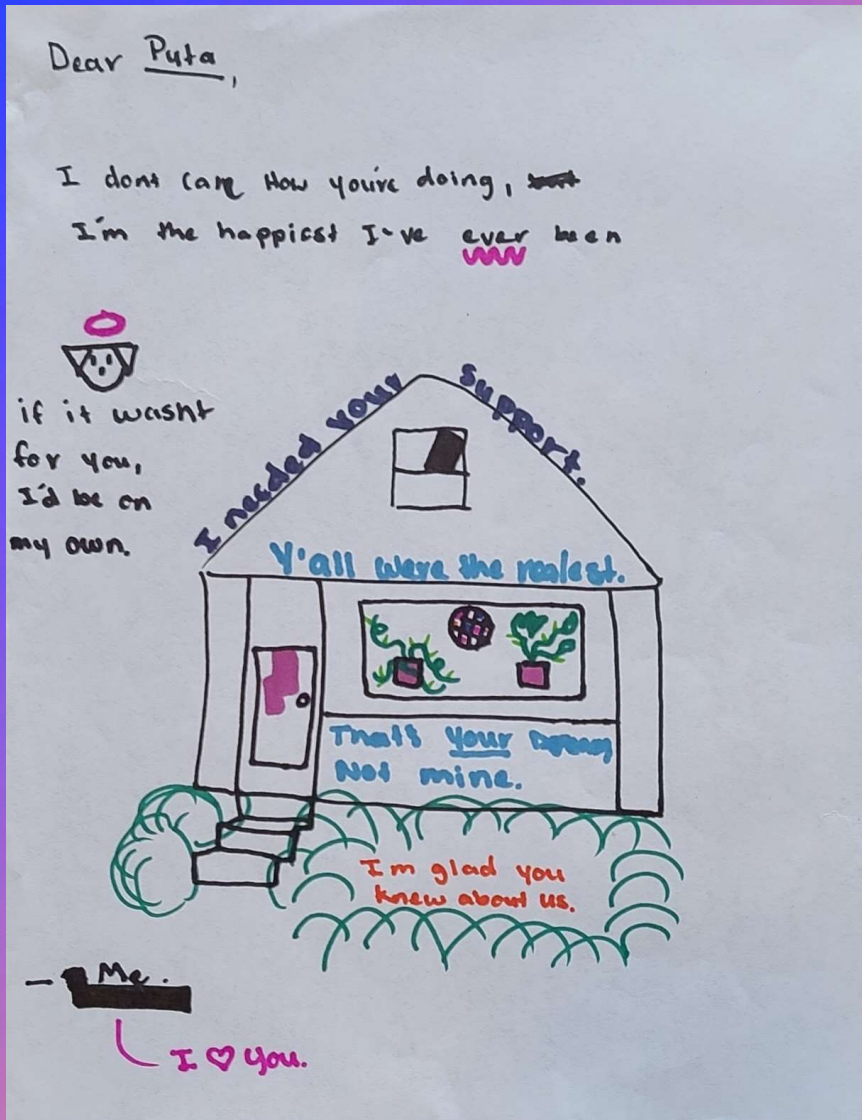
THEME 5 (CONT'D): LOVE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

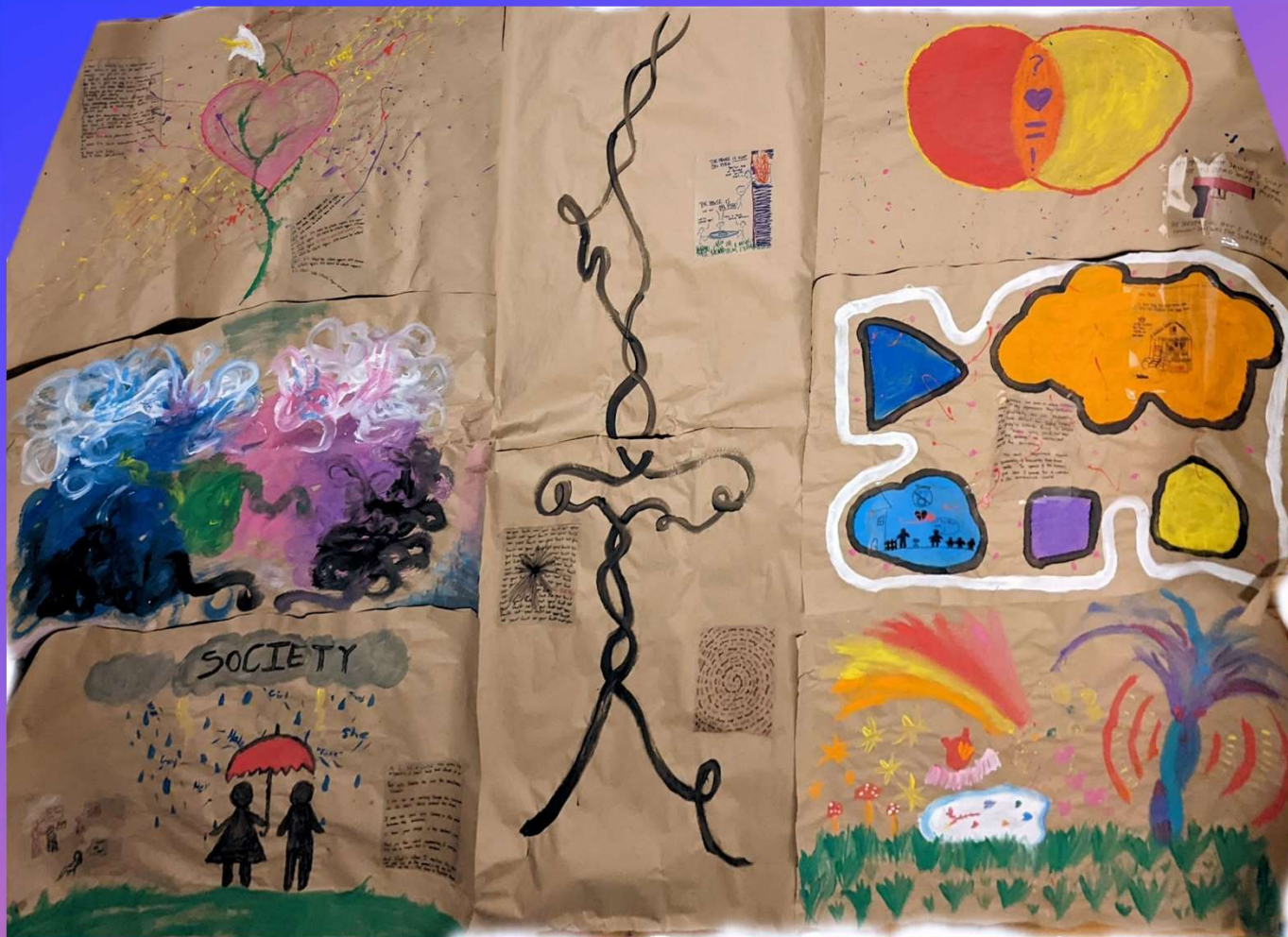
“I basically painted the simplest representation I thought I could of a healthy relationship between, each strand is supposed to be an individual... it's like **each individual is retaining their own identity, like sometimes going on their own paths...** they split ways there and there, but I think **the whole relationship part is like choosing to intertwine the paths over time. I think that's a consensual, conscious choice** and as a person who travels a lot, sometimes it's really literal and sometimes it's more like a spiritual type thing. Like, different individuals that are in a relationship have to go on different journeys. And then I was thinking about... after I painted this, that really you could see this as part of a way huger tapestry of, like, **I don't think relationships are just like between partners, right? I think community is really important, too.** But people who are partners become more intertwined in their paths. So, there could be more threads weaving in and out, like perhaps going in slightly different directions, intersecting at certain parts and it's kind of like the web of life in a way.” (P6)



THEME 6: PERSONAL IDENTITY AND GROWTH

“Yeah, I guess I like took it as writing a letter. I start off at ‘Dear Puta,’ which in Spanish means, ‘Hey Bitch,’ which was, you know, addressed to my ex. I just wrote, **‘I don’t care how you’re doing, I’m the happiest I’ve ever been.’** ...I also drew my house cause **I’m really proud that I own land**, which I didn’t think would be possible for me, but here we are. And, you know, it’s just something a lot of people held over my head, or like I wouldn’t achieve. So I did, so take that... And then, ‘from me.’ ...And like yeah **I love myself**. I didn’t then. But **I’m really proud of my accomplishments**, where I’m at, and just really proud to have healthy relationships, not just... my relationship, but coworkers, my boss, people who I choose to be around with and who I choose to spend time with.” (P5)





“I came into this expecting it to be kind of triggering, traumatizing, and kinda of like gloomy, and instead... looking at a pretty cute, co-created art piece at the end of these three sessions, **it was almost like the opposite of what I expected.** And I thought you know because that’s how this study had been advertised, as for people who’ve experienced violence, I thought violence would be more of a constant focus. But instead it’s, I don’t know, it’s just so much more than that and I appreciate that.” (P6)

Findings



Participants experienced a range of IPV abuse tactics, including identity abuse, psychological abuse, and physical abuse.

Participants mostly sought support from friends and mental health services. Participants wished they could have gone to family and friends weren't always helpful.

Participants wished they knew about IPV and called for more education, especially for TNB communities.

Participants emphasized the importance of community, social network support, and safe spaces.

The pressures of White supremacist cisheteropatriarchy imposed by society also impacted *healthy* relationships for participants.

Participants demonstrated resilience.

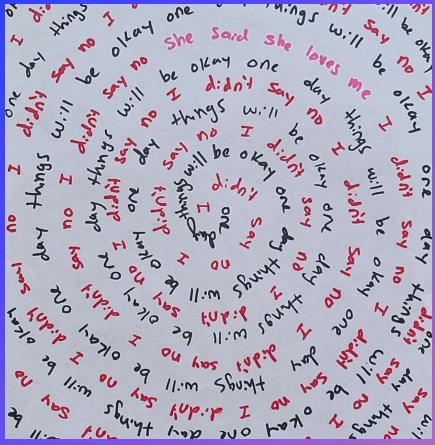
Future Research and Program Implementation

Implement and evaluate community-based, social network, and safe spaces interventions for TNB survivors.

Investigate the ways structures of oppression impact intimate relationships across the spectrum, from healthy to violent.

Implement more TLGBQ+ focused IPV prevention education and outreach, led by TLGBQ+ people.

Tailor victims' services for TLGBQ+ folks, especially for TNB survivors.



me internally, not just physically. I've been abused for being trans. for being a woman. forced to believe I was Insane, gross, perverted and ~~not~~ Not enough. I've internalized a lot of the Gaslighting.

The most Important Support is Community & Networks that keep us safe. To speak & Be human, or just Seen. I wanna Be a woman in a Cis Normative world



Next Step: Exhibits

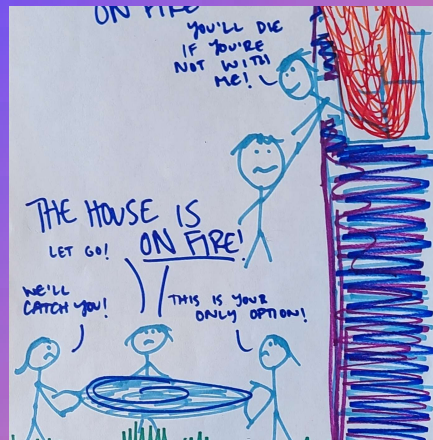
Participants are interested in exhibiting the art!

Summary of discussions with participants:

Target audience:

- Trans people, particularly trans youth
- Mental health professionals
- Victims' services / advocates
- TLGBQ+ healthcare agencies
- Police

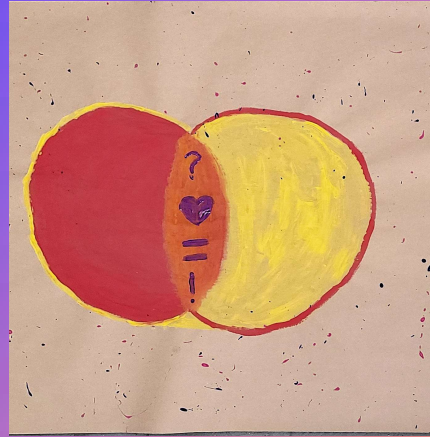
realize who you are yet.
I think it's sometimes easy to convince yourself that this is just the way it is, something you have seen many times before. It's hard to imagine you have control over anything, especially your identity.
I think it's sometimes hard to step away from something unsafe because you fear the world can be much less safer once you're out.
I think it's sometimes hard not to participate in the cycle of violence - one that you have been a victim to and now one that is proscribed onto your masculine existence.
I think it's hard sometimes to reach out.
I think it's hard sometimes to come out.



Next Step: Exhibits

Where:

- Community organizations
- Universities/colleges
- Other places?? 😊




Next Step: Exhibits

Goals for exhibition:

- Normalization
- Representation

Other considerations for exhibition:

- Have an artist statement to explain the project, the artists, and the research study
- Audience should know what they're getting into – content warnings
- Include educational materials & resource packet



09.30.2023

**Irma Freeman Center for
Imagination**

“Opening” exhibit

Included quotes, art, and resources

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| [Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988](tel:988)

10.07.2023

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CONFERENCE

Using Visual Voices to Examine Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Experiences Among Transgender and Nonbinary Survivors of IPV

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM at Zoom 4

BEHAVIORAL

COMMUNITY

MEDICAL

SOCIAL WORK

ALL ATTENDEES



Kayla Ortiz (she/her)

SPEAKER

Research Assistant
University of Pittsburgh
Department of Pediatrics

[Speaker's Page](#)



Sarah Scott

SPEAKER

Graduate Student Researcher
University of Pittsburgh

[Speaker's Page](#)

BY THE WAY...



2024

TransPride YOUniting

Health & Wellness Conference

Thursday Nov. 7, to Saturday Nov. 9, 2024

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE LIVE STREAMED VIA WHOVA



https://whova.com/portal/registration/tyhc_202410/



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Mid-Atlantic Regional
PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING CENTER

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THANK YOU!

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QUESTIONS

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