

EXPLORING RESILIENCE AFTER TRAUMA WITH PHOTOVOICE

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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Arts

In

Communication Studies

by

Sue Lockyer

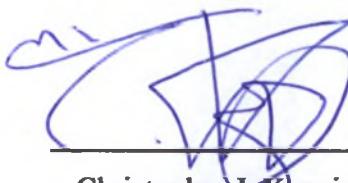
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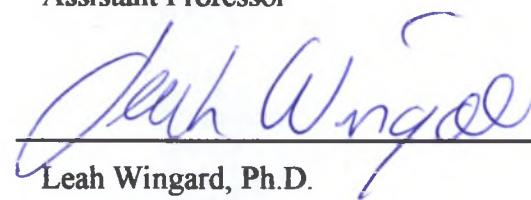
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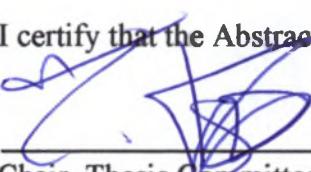
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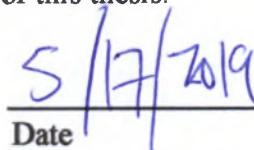
EXPLORING RESILIENCE AFTER TRAUMA WITH PHOTOVOICE

Sue Lockyer
San Francisco, California
2019

A crucial aspect of healing from trauma is the capacity to cope with, reintegrate and bounce back from painful and disruptive life experiences. Resilience is the process by which a person overcomes and flourishes after experiencing traumatic emotional and/or physical pain. This study examines resilience in the lives of survivors of human trafficking taking a communicative approach, which acknowledges that resilience is an unfolding process that is constituted and sustained through discourse. The methodology employed is Photovoice, a participatory photography research approach that promotes and makes available participants' insights. Through analysis of interviews with trafficking survivors, the analysis identified two major themes of how participants understand resilience. The first, *valuing relationships*, describes how participants value and positively orient to relationships with others and with themselves. The second theme, *strategies for engaging with reality*, discusses how participants make sense of and engage with past traumatic memories and present realities. Results also suggest that participants experienced enhanced self-awareness of the role of resilience in their lives by participating in a Photovoice research project.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.


Chair, Thesis Committee


Date

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A crucial aspect of healing from trauma is the capacity to cope with, reintegrate and bounce back from severely painful and disruptive life experiences. Resilience is the process by which a person overcomes and flourishes after experiencing extreme emotional and/or physical pain. This study takes a communicative approach, which acknowledges that resilience is an unfolding process that is constituted and sustained through discourse, to examine resilience in the lives of survivors of human trafficking.

Defined as the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor, the crime of human trafficking results in devastating physical, emotional and psychological consequences for its victims. Survivors of human trafficking are often members of vulnerable populations such as children who have been involved in the foster care or justice system, runaway and homeless youth; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer individuals, and low-wage workers (Hardison Walters et al., 2017). In the past, very few studies have examined the perspectives of survivors of human trafficking (Macy & Johns, 2011; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Slowly, that trend is beginning to change as survivors, scholars and advocates argue for the necessity of survivor perspectives and knowledge to inform anti-trafficking efforts.

In order to gain access to survivor understandings about the role of resilience in their lives, this study uses the Photovoice methodology. A participatory photography research methodology, Photovoice promotes and makes available participants' insights on ways they experience resilience after experiences of adversity. Participants are

positioned as co-researchers who contribute to research design, data collection and initial analysis.

This introduction begins with a brief overview of the nature of the crime of human trafficking, the resulting outcomes for victims, and the state of human trafficking research as it relates to survivor perspectives. Next, I offer what a communicative approach to resilience entails, and explore the rationale for a resilience framework in research with vulnerable populations. Finally, I introduce the Photovoice methodology used in this study and describe its uses and advantages as a method of study with populations that have experienced stigmatization or traumatization.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a human rights violation of profound social concern. Defined as the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor, human trafficking is believed to be the third largest criminal activity worldwide (UNODC, 2018; FBI, 2018). An estimated 40.3 million people are trapped in modern slavery, with 4.8 million people in forced sexual exploitation, 99 percent of whom are women and girls (ILO, 2017). The existence of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the United States is well established, as is the evidence regarding the devastating physical, emotional and psychological consequences for survivors (Lederer & Wetzel, 2014; Zimmerman et al., 2008). While the extent of human trafficking in the United States is debated, research has shown that vulnerable populations including “children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems; runaway and homeless youth; victims of intimate

partner violence; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer individuals; and low-wage workers" (Hardison Walters et al., 2017, p. 1) are disproportionately affected (Clawson, Dutch, Salomon & Grace, 2009; U.S. Department of State, 2016).

Victims of trafficking may suffer myriad physical and psychological problems as well as increased susceptibility to addictions (Shiveley, Kliorys, Wheeler, & Hunt, 2012). Social outcomes for individuals who are sexually exploited can be grim, and include poverty, a lack of resources and skills and higher levels of vulnerability to abuse and manipulation (Deshpande & Nour, 2013). Survivors of sexual exploitation often have co-occurring adverse life experiences, such as childhood neglect and abuse, poverty, homelessness, addiction, and violence (Rekard, 2006; Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal & Vafa, 2015; Zimmerman, Hossain, & Watts, 2011), which made them vulnerable to exploitation.

While human trafficking research has been increasing in recent years, there are very few studies exploring the perspectives of survivors¹ (Macy & Johns, 2011; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Furthermore, scant literature exists which examines survivor input in human trafficking research.² To address this gap, scholars have proposed more

¹ Two recent exceptions to this trend are Doychak, K., & Raghavan, C. (2018). "No voice or vote:" trauma-coerced attachment in victims of sex trafficking. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1-19, and Gerassi, L., Fabbre, V., Howard, A., Edmond, T. E., & Nichols, A. (2018). How Sex Trading Identities Shape Experiences of Service Provision: Insights from Adult Women with Lived Experiences and Service Providers. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1-14.

² A 2018 study in which survivors served in a professional capacity has recently published initial findings: Dang, M., & Lutnick, A. (2018). *Peer Involvement*. Retrieved from An Evaluation of the San Francisco Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Trafficking website: https://sftaskforceeval.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/Peer-involvement_Final-Report.pdf

collaborative and participatory research approaches, which include the voices of stakeholders³ (including survivors) in human trafficking research (Hounmenou, 2018). This study seeks to build and expand on calls to examine survivor perspectives, and to include survivor voices in research.

Resilience

Resilience is valued as a topic of research across disciplines for its potential to inform policies aimed at improving the well-being of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations (Afifi, 2018; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). The American Psychological Association (2014) defines resilience as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress” (para. 4). Richardson defines resilience as “the process of reintegrating from disruptions in life” (2002, p. 309). Rather than a discrete personality trait, resilience has been conceptualized as a dynamic process of positive coping or “bouncing back” from hardship (Buzzanell, 2010; Couturier, 2002; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Richardson, 2002).

Among communication scholars, resilience is viewed as constituted and sustained in discourse, messages and narratives, with the implication that social relationships strongly influence resilience (Afifi, 2018; Brandhorst, 2018; Buzzanell, 2010; Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). A communication approach sees resilience as a dynamic and evolving process, contingent upon contexts as it is rooted in talk and interactions. Buzzanell (2010)

³ Stakeholders may include service providers, policymakers, law enforcement, funders, survivors, and community based organizations.

suggests that studying resilience from this perspective involves seeing it as an unfolding process or design aspect instead of locating the focus of study on the individual. As such, examining the communicative processes which promote resilience can provide insights into how people construct and enact resilience through talk. A communication approach to resilience can inform interventions to help those who experience trauma become more resilient.

Support for a resilience framework in research with vulnerable populations has been growing (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Leitch, 2017; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990, Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick & Yehuda, 2014). A resilience framework implies an attention to individuals' strengths and competences, protective factors related to positive outcomes in the face of adversity, and processes that may contribute to or account for the protective factors. Studies employing such a framework have explored resilience in individuals with HIV/AIDs (Kabel, Teti, & Zhang, 2016), youth dealing with substance abuse (Meschke & Patterson, 2003), children who have experienced chronic trauma (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990), and women exiting the sex trade (Hickle, 2017) to name a few. Research that has explored resilience in the lives of women who have been sexually exploited has found that an important contributor to resilience is emotional wellness and personal growth (Hickle, 2017; Miles & Miles, 2011).

Photovoice

Photovoice is an evidence-based, participatory action methodology that has been shown to promote and support participants' sense of empowerment, self-competence, and self-

esteem, which are critical elements of overall health and well-being (Duffy, 2011; Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, & McCann, 2005; Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000).

Participants in Photovoice projects become co-researchers as they choose photo prompts, take photos from their daily lives in response to the prompts, and in interviews narrate and explain the meaning of the photos (Wang & Burris, 1997). By stimulating dialogue in a safe and nurturing environment, Photovoice empowers participants to express themselves and begin to own their stories, an empowering process in which hardship can be reframed to resilience. Photovoice projects have been shown to facilitate dialogue around difficult or sensitive topics for traumatized or stigmatized populations, reduce self-stigma, promote proactive coping with societal stigma, and help integrate prior life experiences with participants' current lives, which can support healing and foster resilience (Duffy, 2011; Foster-Fishman et al., 2005; True et al., 2015; Russinova et al., 2014). By telling the stories through photography and narration, participants can begin to reconstruct past selves and potentially establish new, resilient identities (Countryman-Roswurm, & DiLollo, 2017).

Photovoice projects "reflect core tenets of community-based participatory research (CBPR), including a commitment to empowerment of participants and balancing research with action, and have been gaining traction as an effective means to address a variety of public health concerns" (True et al., 2015, p. 1443). The methodology represents a synthesis of scholarship and social justice that answers calls for research that includes the perspectives and understandings of those being studied, attends to "liberatory

and life-enhancing outcomes” of the research, and expresses solidarity with populations that have been stigmatized or marginalized (Burk, 2018; Huffman & Tracy, 2018, p. 1; Maguire, 1987). An oft-cited cornerstone of the methodology is its potential to promote critical consciousness for participants related to the topic of study (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006; Latz, 2017; Leibenberg, 2018; Teti, 2012; Wagner, Ellingson, & Kunkel, 2016). The concept of critical consciousness has its roots in Freire’s approach to education, which sought to gain access to community knowledge and realities. Critical consciousness requires that “individuals realize that their actions can either maintain or disrupt their social realities” (Latz, 2017, p. 40). The ability to recognize and critically consider factors (both internal and external) that contribute to resilience is a part of critical consciousness.

The Photovoice methodology leverages the synergy between the images taken by participants and the narratives of their experience to convey rich and nuanced meanings. Latz (2017) argues that including a form of art in the research process empowers participants to more fully convey the depth and nuances of their feelings and understandings than if they were limited to expressing themselves through talk alone.

Internationally and nationally, Photovoice is becoming a more commonly used participatory research method focused on recovery and wellness. The San Mateo County’s Behavioral Health and Recovery Services employs the method in community-based projects to investigate the realities of marginalized communities (Photovoice at the Youth Services Center, nd). Photovoice has frequently been used to showcase the

perspectives of marginalized populations such as individuals with HIV/AIDS (Kabel, Teti, & Zhang, 2016), single mothers (Duffy, 2011), individuals with mental illness (Russinova, Rogers, Gagne, Bloch, Drake, & Mueser, 2014), residents living in distressed neighborhoods (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, & McCann, 2005), recently returned war veterans (True et al., 2015), homeless individuals (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000), women in rural China (Wang & Burris, 1997) and more (Latz, 2017).

Study overview

This Photovoice study explores the relationship between resilience and the lived experiences of survivors of human trafficking. One of the critiques of research involving traumatized individuals is that they may be re-traumatized (Leitch, 2017). Similarly, sharp critiques have been leveled at the anti-human trafficking movement for engaging with survivors in ways that are re-traumatizing (Bender, 2014; Cojocaru, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm & Brackin, 2017; Foot, 2015; Landerholm, 2018; Lloyd, 2013, Smith, 2014). To minimize the possibility of re-traumatization, this project takes a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approach. A trauma-informed approach prioritizes participants' physical and emotional safety, maximizes participants' choice and control within the research project, emphasizes resilience and works to minimize the possibility of traumatization (Macy & Johns, 2011; UNHCR, 2008). A resilience-oriented approach focuses on participants' strengths and competences, protective factors related to positive outcomes in the face of adversity, and processes that may contribute to or account for the protective factors (Leitch, 2017).

Clinical research has emphasized the importance of trauma-informed and resilience-oriented interventions for survivors of trafficking to promote their health and well-being, and reinforce their dignity and trust (Aron, Zweig, & Newmark, 2006; Caliber, 2007; Clawson & Dutch, 2008; SAMHSA, 2015).

By virtue of having survived traumatic experiences, survivors of human trafficking are experts in resilience. Because Photovoice methodology is a participatory approach to research, it offers a unique opportunity to gain insight into the perspectives of survivors to better understand resilience in their survival, healing, and recovery. It is microlevel research which studies a limited geographical area, which can uncover the complexities within the lived experiences of participants and provide deeper access to their insights and understandings about resilience than “extravagant macrolevel” studies (Weitzer, 2014, p. 15). Findings from this project aim to inform understandings of how to promote and support resilience not only for survivors of human trafficking, but for others who experience trauma and adversity.

Having reviewed prior human trafficking, resilience and Photovoice literature, I now turn in Chapter 2 to describe the study design and methods used to explore resilience in the lives of survivors of human trafficking. Later, in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I present analytic findings based on participants’ photo and interview data. This research project generated two major themes of how participants understand resilience in their lives. In Chapter 3, I discuss the analytic findings relating to the theme of *valuing relationships*. This chapter includes an exploration of ways participants connect valuing

relationships with others, as well as with themselves, with resilience. Next, I present analysis of data that represents participants' *strategies for engaging with reality* in Chapter 4. This second theme describes how participants take healthy, future oriented, positive, yet realistic approaches to coping with difficult situations past and present. In Chapter 5, I explore methodological findings and their implications. Results suggest that the Photovoice methodology enhanced the breadth and depth of research data by generating a wide range in responses, and also that participants experienced enhanced self-awareness of the role of resilience in their lives by participating in a Photovoice research project.

Chapter 2: Methods and Study Design

Study Setting and Recruitment

This project took place at San Francisco SafeHouse, a 501(c)3 nonprofit transitional residential program serving homeless women who have experienced sexual exploitation. San Francisco SafeHouse employs a harm-reduction approach with its clients, which focuses on the consequences and effects of risky behavior, such as sex work or drug use, as opposed to the moral or criminal aspects of the behavior itself (Marlatt, 1996; Rekart, 2005). All group and individual meetings were held in private rooms to ensure the confidentiality of participants.

Recruitment occurred in two phases. First, prospective participants were contacted via email by SafeHouse staff to inform them of the opportunity to be a part of the research project, and to share the project flyer (please see Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer). When communicating with potential participants about the research project, San Francisco SafeHouse staff emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and avoided undue pressure to participate. Participants were informed that participation or non-participation in the project would have no effect on participants' relationship with San Francisco SafeHouse. SafeHouse staff followed-up with graduates with an additional email a week before the project began. In the second phase of recruitment, the researcher communicated with interested prospective participants by phone and email to provide more details and answer questions. A homogeneous sampling frame was used (Patton, 2002) to recruit participants who meet the following inclusion/exclusion criteria:

- Participants have successfully graduated from the San Francisco SafeHouse program.
- Participants are adults (>18 and < 80 years of age).
- Participants identify as female (including transgender women).
- Participants are currently in a stable and independent living situation as assessed by San Francisco SafeHouse staff.
- Participants are English speaking.
- Participants have access to email.
- Participants are not currently experiencing severe mental illness, as determined by San Francisco SafeHouse staff.

Six people confirmed their interest in participating, but the actual number of participants ultimately participating were four. One confirmed participant never attended planned study meetings. Another discontinued participating after attending the first two group meetings. I was not able to determine why she chose to end her participation in the project.

Participants

In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, as well as privilege the ways in which they choose to identify themselves, I omit information which can personally identify participants. Participants were given the option to choose how they would be identified in the study. Instead of choosing pseudonyms, participants all chose to be identified by their initials, a common practice in safehouse programs to maintain

confidentiality. All data in this study concerning participants' identities and backgrounds comes directly from the interview data -- how the participant described herself. The focus of interview questions was on resilience, and therefore information about participants' background and identity was only collected if discussed by the participant.

As is common with most people who have experienced sexual exploitation (Rekard, 2006; Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal & Vafa, 2015; Zimmerman, Hossain, & Watts, 2011), several participants in this study have experienced multiple serious life challenges such as childhood neglect and abuse, homelessness, addiction, violence, and exploitation. As such, their perspectives on resilience are shaped by their intersectional identities related to their adverse life experiences and are not limited only to experiences of sexual exploitation. While two participants were comfortable mentioning their experiences of sexual exploitation, two participants objected strongly to being identified in any way with those experiences. To honor their wishes, and to avoid any semblance of re-exploiting them for their stories, I identify participants generally as graduates of a safehouse program serving homeless women with experiences of sexual exploitation, but do not include information about participants' personal histories in that regard.

I include here a brief personal sketch of each participant to give an initial overview and context from which to understand their narratives and comments in the interviews.

MJ

MJ is a Caucasian self-identified cis-gendered woman. She has been living independently

since she graduated from Safehouse. Growing up in a rural/suburban part of central CA, she had never left the state until a few years ago. MJ's family of origin has a history of addiction and poverty, and she has personal experiences of domestic violence, addiction, homelessness, and the early death of her sister. MJ has one biological daughter who was adopted out as a young child. She has reconnected with her biological daughter who is now a young adult, taking her on a trip to Hawaii to become reacquainted. MJ also has a non-biological daughter from a previous relationship with whom she is in contact, but for whom she is not the primary caregiver. Currently working at a treatment center for people recovering from substance abuse, MJ continues to pursue her education to get certified as a health counselor.

SG

A transsexual, African-American transwoman who is almost sixty years old, SG came to San Francisco some years ago from a loving but unstable family from the mid-west. She has a history of difficulties due to her sexual identity, involvement in the criminal justice system, addiction and homelessness. Living independently since leaving Safehouse, SG works for an organization that advocates for and supports LGBTQ individuals, which makes her feel proud. Her dog is an important part of her sobriety and motivation for her life.

SS

SS was born outside of the U.S., and is a married women, for whom English is a second language. She considers her experiences with exploitation and homelessness to be ones

that will empower her in the future. Her job, and future prospects, at a large corporation are important parts of her identity. She lives independently since leaving Safehouse, and is engaged in an unspecified immigration documentation process in hopes of bringing her husband to the U.S. SS has many goals and ambitions for the future.

JC

An African-American woman who came to San Francisco from the mid-west, JC has a history of addiction, complications from a serious illness, and homelessness. Receiving treatment and recovering from a serious health issue, JC has lived in a residential hospital facility recently. She was seeking housing during the course of this project, and awaiting the scheduling of future surgeries. Her main focus during this project was supporting her physical and emotional health.

Data collection

Stage 1: Group Meetings. I conducted the first two group meetings with participants in which the following topics were discussed: project procedures and schedule, the meaning of resilience, basic photography skills, safety and photography, and ideas for storytelling through images. To maximize the participatory nature of the project, participants discussed and collaboratively chose photo prompts for everyone to use in the project from a list of suggested prompts (See Appendix B: Sample Photo Prompts). Participants also discussed and agreed that their photos could be included in academic papers and presentations, as well as a public exhibit to be organized held at a later date. I wrote extensive field notes after each group meeting.

Stage 2: Photo Collection. Throughout the two weeks after the first two group meetings, participants texted to me the digital images they had chosen that best conveyed how they experience resilience. A total of 129 digital photo images were shared. (See Table 1)

Table 1. *Participant photos*

Participant	# of Photos
JC	38
MJ	22
SG	32
SS	37

Images were transferred and stored on Box.com, the University's approved, secure cloud storage service (Latz, 2017). Images did not include people, identifiable locations, or illegal activities.

Stage 3: Individual Interviews. I conducted semi-structured, face-to-face private interviews with each participant in which they narrated and explained how their images represented resilience in their lives. Participants chose from among their photos a smaller set that were most meaningful to them to be included for analysis and/or in a future exhibit. Interviews lasted from 1 hour 20 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes and were recorded. Segments of the interviews that related to resilience were transcribed verbatim. (See Appendix C: Interview Guide).

Stage 4: Group Photo Sharing and Identification of Themes. In the culminating group

meeting of the project, participants shared photos with the group and gave brief comments on what each image meant to them. Participants asked questions, reflected, and commented on each others' photos, and considered patterns they observed in the images and comments to identify possible themes. Together, they collaboratively identified the following themes during the final group meeting: love, changes we went through in the past, journey of life, God and not feeling good enough. In the final group meeting participants also reflected on their participation in the Photovoice process. For their time and insights participants received stipends of \$50 each (in the form of pre-paid cash cards). I did not record the meeting, but wrote extensive field notes afterwards. In the field notes I tried to capture what participants said, mostly about their photos, others' photos, the photovoice process, and resilience. I also noted my own ideas about participant comments that seemed new, unusual or striking. Fieldnotes were used and consulted throughout the data analysis to gain deeper insight on topics participants brought up both in interviews and in group meetings.

The full data corpus consisted in participants' photographs, a subset of photos used for analysis, the interview data set, fieldnotes, and analytic memos. (See Table 2)

Table 2 *Data corpus*

Type of Data	Amount
Photos - total	129
Photos – subset for analysis	40

Interview data set	40 pages
Field Notes	13 pages
Analytic Memos	12 pages

Data analysis.

According to Latz (2017) there is scant guidance provided by extant Photovoice research literature on analytic methods. Studies generally describe and focus on the participatory aspects of analysis. Some Photovoice studies conduct quantitative analysis of data (Budig et al., 2018; Ratcliffe et al., 2018; Russinova, 2014). Other researchers have relied upon inductive thematic analysis, but prior analyses have also been informed by the Grounded Theory Method strategies (Charmaz, 2006; Adegoke, 2017; Kabel, 2016; Latz, 2017; Teti, 2012; True, 2015; Van Oss et al., 2014).

This study took a participatory, interpretive, qualitative analytic approach. Initial analysis employed a participatory framework which included a three-stage approach: selecting, contextualizing and codifying (Wang & Burris, 1997). Participants selected the images that were most meaningful to them, provided context and understandings about the photos in the individual interviews, and identified potential themes present in data during the culminating group meeting. I shared a summary of analytic findings with participants via email to solicit their feedback but I did not receive any.

It is important to note that the primary focus of these analyses is the interview data as inspired by the photos, not the photos themselves. The photos are used to elicit

deeper and richer participant reflections and narratives about their lived experiences. The synergy between images and interview data (Latz, 2017) is included for analysis to understand how participants construct their ideas about resilience. I explore the impacts that thinking and communicating through visual and oral methods have on participants' insights and meanings related to resilience. Reflections on these aspects, and the wide range of ways participants use their images and interview comments together to construct ideas about resilience are offered in Chapter 5. But overall, participant voices from the interview data are foregrounded in this analysis (Liebenberg, 2018).

The coding process was initiated when I listened to the entire set of interviews from start to finish, transcribing and commenting on notable moments in the data (e.g. talk relating to photo prompts, resilience, or topics that seemed important to the participant, or important as an analytic reflection). After reading through comments on the notable moments, I came up with an initial set of codes to describe them, such as love, God, journey, and life changes. A second round of transcription included all comments from each interview that were deemed potentially relevant or important for this project. Transcripts were verbatim and included the entire interview, but unrelated digressions, talk that was not entirely coherent, and utterances such as "um", "uh", "like", "you know", and "you know what I mean", and "it's like" were all omitted.

In the next stage of analysis, I employed qualitative analytic methods to explore the relationship among images, narratives, and resilience (Bruan & Clarke, 2006, Cho & Lee, 2014). Thematic analysis explores ideas and patterns in the data to generate themes

which reflect the perspectives of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes identified by participants served as a starting point of analysis. Data extracts from the interviews were organized based on both the themes chosen by participants as well as the initial categories I identified. I wrote analytic memos throughout transcription and analysis to try out hunches and ideas about themes found in the data, asking questions like: What is surprising in the data? What is missing from the resilience literature? Why is a potential code important given my research question? Data analysis sessions with my thesis committee helped me to explore possible codes, themes and structures to guide analysis.

I generated new codes based on a re-reading and re-coding of the entire data set, using gerunds in order to avoid creating topics (Glaser, as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 49). It should be noted that meaningful comments from which codes were generated were peppered throughout the interview data, often amidst non-linear narratives and digressions. Part of analysis consisted of identifying and synthesizing comments which reflected particular codes but were interspersed throughout the data. I selected and organized data extracts based on the new codes. After another re-reading of the categorized data I interpreted the patterns, commonalities and differences between and throughout participants' comments as themes. Though various definitions of the meaning of "theme" exist (Saldana, 2009), the two that guide this analysis are the "coherent integration of the disparate pieces of data that constitute the findings" (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012, p. 1407), and "...an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a

recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations" (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000, p. 362). Finally, I re-read the entire data set to verify that the themes accurately represent the data, and to code data into themes that had been missed previously. Themes and sub-themes were defined and described in relation to the data extracts, which provide the materials of analysis in Chapters 3 through 5.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

A pertinent aspect of qualitative research design, data collection, and analysis is the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher (Qin, 2016). I am a long-time volunteer providing direct services to survivors of human trafficking in a shelter setting, a policy advocate at the regional level, and an academic researcher of human trafficking. I have what might be considered "insider" status, which influenced the choice of my research topic, facilitated access to participants, and provides background and contextual knowledge about the effects of sex trafficking on the lives of survivors. Through my volunteer experiences, trainings and research I have become familiar with issues faced by survivors, including myriad physical and psychological health problems, substance abuse, and lack of resources to name a few. However I am an outsider in terms of life experience, as a privileged, educated, white woman who is not a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation. To mitigate potential complications related to power and status differences between participants and myself, I employed strategies to elicit participant voices and decision-making as much as possible in the research process. Building rapport, positioning participants as co-researchers, facilitating inclusive group

discussions, and building in as much collaborative decision making as possible into the research process were some such strategies. My overall intention in analysis is to privilege participant perspectives, while at the same time being mindful to not unduly privilege participant data just because it lines up with my experiences through my prior work with survivors.

The different products resulting from this research will be informed by different principles and approaches to reflexivity. A future exhibit will be guided by an emphasis on showcasing each participant's perspective on resilience via her images and interview data. It may include themes that multiple participants share but will most likely focus on individual participants' data. The academic research report, which will include a more in-depth analysis related to data across participants, is a less participatory process. The report must conform to norms of higher education and seeks to offer analysis which adds to both disciplinary and applied knowledge.

I understand that "opening and interpreting lives is very different from opening and closing books" (Conquergood, 1985, p. 2). As an ally of survivors of trafficking, it has been especially important for me to be aware of potential ethical pitfalls in analysis such as "the enthusiast's infatuation" or "the curator's exhibitionism" as described by Conquergood (1985). Being aware of how my own beliefs, experiences and assumptions helped me to maneuver through the tensions inherent in participatory research analysis in an ethical way. As part of self-reflexivity, I endeavored to pay attention to elements in the interviews that participants had in common as well as those that were unique. During

interviews I continually reflected upon whether the answers given have sufficiently answered the interview question, and I followed-up with probes when needed. Writing post interview field notes, being aware of and mindful about participants' vulnerabilities, and reflecting on my assumptions and beliefs about the data were some ways I sought to be self-reflexive and ethical in the research process (Thompson, 2014). I made every effort to bracket personal experience and understandings, to privilege participant perspectives and base analysis on participant data. At the same time, I am well aware that the participatory nature of this project, which positions me as both researcher and co-researcher, meant that I would be interacting and collaborating in knowledge construction along with participants. I believe that embracing and embodying the key characteristics of dialogic interaction: "genuineness, empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard, presentness, spirit of mutual equality, and a supportive climate" throughout the research process, was the best approach to promote ethical interpretation and analysis (Johannesen, 1971, p. 376).

IRB Approval, Consent and Confidentiality

Exploring Resilience with Photovoice project procedures received Institutional Review Board approval from San Francisco State University (Project #H18-15 See Appendix D). Each participant, after reviewing project materials and procedures with the investigator, signed an informed consent form for participation in the project (see Appendix E: Informed Consent Form), a pseudonym form to denote how they wish to be identified in the project (see Appendix F: Pseudonym Form), and a release form to share project

photographs in future publications and exhibits (see Appendix G: Photo Release Form).

All data was maintained as confidential and no identifying information appears in this report or any future publications. Photo images are not connected with participants' actual names or identities. Digital photo images were stored on Box, SFSU's approved, secure cloud storage service. Tangible physical data, including signed paper Informed Consent Forms, were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's supervising faculty.

Funding.

The researcher applied for and received funding from the National Council of Jewish Women, San Francisco branch, a reputable volunteer organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for women, children and families. Participant stipends and the cost of printing photos for a future exhibit will come out of these funds.

Chapter 3: Results

Results Overview

Study participants include four women who are graduates of a safehouse program serving homeless women who have experienced sexual exploitation. As part of the participatory research design of Photovoice, participants collaboratively choose photo prompts based on their understandings about resilience. Thus the focus of inquiry was shaped and guided by participants lived experiences of resilience. Participants selected these five, from the more than twenty possible resilience-related questions provided in the group meetings, to inspire their Photovoice images. (See Appendix B: Sample Photo Prompts and Table 3)

Table 3 *Photo Prompts*

1. What motivates you?
2. What makes you feel healthy?
3. What does personal growth look like for you?
4. What does your strength look like?
5. Show what bouncing back means to you.

These photo prompts represent initial findings which demonstrate that participants understand resilience to be related to motivation, health, personal growth, and strength. They prioritized these aspects of resilience over others as they selected their prompts. Interestingly, in their interviews participants also discussed many of the topics reflected

in the other, unchosen resilience-related questions included in the sample photo prompt document. For example, questions related to issues of power, relationships, normalcy, skills, community, and change were not chosen by participants to guide their inquiry into resilience.

In individual semi-structured interviews they shared reflections and insights as they explain the meanings of the photos they took as part of the project. Participants construct their ideas about resilience in various ways. In some cases, they respond directly to photo prompts to generate reflections about their lived experiences of resilience. Sometimes participant comments are in response to the photos they took to represent ideas of resilience. In those cases they use both the photo and the interview talk to construct and frame their ideas. But in other cases, participant remarks related to resilience were embedded in talk and stories that were not directly related to either the prompts or the photos.

Participant data informed the creation of themes and subthemes and included remarks in which they explicitly linked their experiences with the terms “resilience” and “bouncing back”. However, participants used many terms to refer to their insights and perspectives on resilience such as recovery, healing, well-being, strength, mental health and emotional health. All of these terms reflect different aspects of resilience and thus fall under its umbrella. As such, I analyze interview data involving these terms.

Resilience is an ongoing and evolving process for participants. While there are many ways to enact resilience, in this study I examine how participants enact resilience

communicatively, whether through talk (or prayer) with others, via self-talk, and within the interview itself. The ways participants experience resilience are not limited to recovery from the past trauma of sexual exploitation, but also from addiction, homelessness, and domestic violence. Resilience is an ongoing, communicatively constructed action in the present (Craig, 1999) that supports their continued ability to move forward with their lives. Thus participant comments comprise a continuum, including reflections about ways they experienced resilience in the past, to realizations of how they continue to experience resilience in recent and current life situations.

I identify two major themes through photos and interviews related to how participants understand and construct ideas about resilience in their lived experiences. The first, *valuing relationships*, describes how participants value and positively orient to relationships with others and with themselves (Chapter 3). The second theme, *strategies for engaging with reality*, discusses how participants make sense of and engage with past traumatic memories and present realities (Chapter 4). The various subthemes of *valuing relationships* and *strategies for engaging with reality* are distinct and identified as such in analysis. Yet in the lived experiences of participants, they are often related and work together synergistically to foster their ability to be resilient. The themes explored in the following sections reflect participants' mindsets and strategies that promote resilience. Participants' mindsets, which I sometimes refer to as their perspectives, relate to ways of thinking about a topic. Strategies pertain to ways participants approach or engage with memories or present situations.

Valuing Relationships

In the first major theme, participants discussed the mindset of *valuing relationships* of all types as playing a key role in their past and present resilience. For many who have experienced trauma, the ability to cultivate and sustain positive relationships is a key protective factor contributing to resilience (Brandhorst, 2018; Hickle, 2017; Madsen & Abell, 2010; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Van der Kolk, 2015). The socio-behavioral accomplishment of garnering social support through reciprocal relationships is vitally important for those recovering from trauma. First, participants describe valuing relationships with others as an important aspect of their ability to be resilient, such as close connections with family, God, friends, and even pets. Second, participants shared how the resources and support they received through connecting with organizations such as workplaces, service providers, religious organizations and advocacy groups played a crucial part in their healing. Finally, participants demonstrated a mindset of positive self-engagement by framing their resilience within a positive self-growth orientation; expressing self-love, self-compassion and self-care in their comments; and affirming positive identity anchors in their reflections on resilience.

Valuing Relationships with Others.

Within the theme of valuing relationships, a major aspect discussed by participants was enhanced relationships with others after trauma. People come to value and invest more in relationships with others after experiences of trauma for a variety of reasons. The need to process trauma can influence a person to be more self-disclosing and emotionally

expressive than before, which can support relational health. Also, becoming aware of one's vulnerability can increase willingness to receive and benefit from social support (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). People who have gone through trauma begin to experience more benefits of relational health such as affection within relationships that reduces feelings of stress and loneliness, and a communal mindset which promotes healthy coping (Afifi, 2018). These positive repercussions of enhanced relationships with others prompts increased desire and efforts to cultivate and support the relationships. Many of the photos that participants selected as meaningful and related to their resilience represented relationships with others. While they could not take pictures of their loved ones' faces, they were creative in the ways they represented relationships within their pictures. In the interviews participants shared the ways that their close relationships with family, God, friends and even pets contributed to their well-being and resilience, and continue to do so today.

Valuing Relationships with Family.

For three participants, close connections with family members give them a sense of belonging and togetherness that serves as a foundation for their mental and emotional health. They understand the family relationships as something that gives them strength and endurance. Participants see family connections as a source of motivation to keep working hard and striving to improve their lives. Several participants chose pictures representing family relationships as most meaningful to them. Their comments reflected understandings that family relationships provide motivation to work hard, persevere, and

reach high for goals. Participants shared that close family connections afford a sense of collective unity which helps them to be patient with life's frustrations and a sense of belonging, or togetherness, that promotes and supports their emotional and mental health.

In the Excerpt 1, MJ comments on a picture representing her relationship with her biological daughter that she took in response to the prompt *What motivates you?* (See Figure 1) She shares how she understands their relationship as a primary source of motivation for her life. Earlier in the interview MJ shared that her biological daughter had been adopted out at a young age, that they lived apart for almost twelve years, and that they had recently reunited and restarted their relationship. MJ's hard work to become sober and heal from past trauma was motivated by a renewed chance to be in her daughter's life.

Excerpt 1. MJ 59:12 – 59:45

She was my motivation to get sober. And she still is my motivation. She was my huge motivation and still is. I wanted to be a part of her life. I wanted that relationship. She's my only child. Due to cancer I can't have any more children. I had a hysterectomy. She's the only child I'll ever have, my only biological...she looks just like me. She my mini-me. She is my



Figure 1. "Hawaii trip" by MJ

motivator. I don't ever want to mess up again.

Together, MJ's photo and interview comments reflect a variety of issues, such as considerations on motivation, sobriety, illness, and loss. In reflecting on Figure 1, MJ understands that losing her sobriety could threaten her current relationship with her biological daughter. Protecting that relationship was and is a primary motivation MJ to stay sober. Her statements: "I wanted to be a part of her life. I wanted that relationship" and "I don't ever want to mess up again" link getting and staying sober with the ability to maintain a relationship with her daughter as a vital part of her life. She constructs her comments temporally, referring to the relationship with her daughter as the foundation of her sobriety in the past, present and future. In her comments, "She *was* my huge motivation and *still is*" (italics mine) she refers to the past and present. When she says, "I don't ever want to mess up again", MJ expresses her desire and hope for the future – that she will not risk the relationship with her daughter by losing her sobriety. MJ recognizes that her history of cancer resulting in a hysterectomy means she will not be able to have any other biological children, which adds an intensity and urgency to the rekindled relationship she has with her daughter. The fact that there will be no second chances for MJ to achieve a healthy and loving relationship with a biological child motivates her to work very hard to heal and stay sober as a means of safeguarding her relationship with her only biological child. Connecting her sobriety with a continued relationship with her biological daughter gives MJ's efforts to stay sober purpose and meaning.

As part of valuing relationships with family, MJ also shares that she is motivated

by her children (MJ also has a non-biological child) to keep improving her life through education. She comments that more education not only leads to a better life through more knowledge, but also by increasing the amount of money that she can earn. The primary rationale she provides for the hard work of continuing her education is a desire to provide financially for her children, to help them have more opportunities for a better life than she had by exposing them to travel and life experiences, and to serve as a role model for them. Thus, the relationships with her daughters motivate MJ to work hard at maintaining her sobriety and achieving her educational goals by giving both endeavors purpose and meaning. Valuing relationships with family is the foundation of MJ's motivation to succeed – and is an important part of her resilience.

Another example of valuing relationships with family and resilience is provided by SG. In her discussion on the ways she relates to family, she points to the many benefits she receives. (see Excerpt 2).

Excerpt 2. SG 18:43 – 21:10

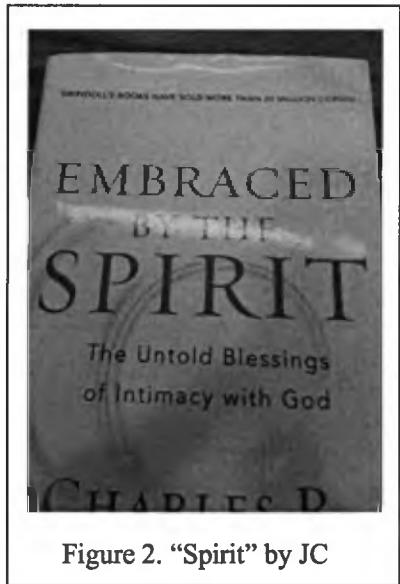
I love my family ... it's been hard and now we're in a good place. And that's healthy to me, because once my mind is in a good place and a clear place... that centers me. That makes me keep my mind, my heart and my body healthy ... That helps me to bounce back because it keeps my mind together where it needs to be. And helps me to stay focused.

In her comments, SG formulates enhanced and loving relationships with family as a boon of positive outcomes for herself. She contrasts difficult family relations of the past with a

more positive present as she assesses her current family situation as “a good place and a clear place”. She attributes a variety of benefits to improved family relationships – feeling centered, focused and healthy in her mind, heart and body. Drawing particular attention to the connection between family relationships and her mental state, SG links a positive family situation with good mental health – a vital aspect of resilience. Not having to worry about or manage problematic family relationships frees her to focus on what is important in life. Healthy family connections ground her in a stable, loving community of shared values and experiences, which strengthens her ability to cope in positive ways. The many advantages she identifies as coming from positive family relations lead her to love and value family members more than before.

Valuing a Relationship with God.

Spiritual and religious practices are embedded in almost every culture, and often influence how people make sense of and adapt to trauma (Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Nasello, & Koenig, 2007). A relationship with God is a part of spirituality, “deeply personal beliefs and practices that transcend the regular activities of this world”, which has been related with increased well-being and resilience (Madsen & Abell, 2010). Grappling with traumatic events often leads to strengthened spiritual or religious beliefs, which can provide a sense of control, and emotional comfort (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Research has linked increased levels of spirituality with increased levels of resilience (Kaslow et al., 2010).



Three participants shared that a relationship with God contributes to their resilience, giving descriptions of various spiritual practices that represented sources of strength, comfort and peace in the past and present. They chose photos that featured and represented their relationship with God as highly meaningful for their understandings of resilience, and shared ideas about finding comfort, reassurance, strength, confidence and spiritual peace. Believing that they are not alone, and

that they have received and continue to receive support from God plays a foundational role in how participants understand and construct their past experiences and current situation. Participants described a variety of spiritual practices that support their faith in God, such as reading the Bible, praying, attending church services and other spiritual ceremonies, including a Native American sweat lodge. Participants ascribed diverse meanings to a relationship with God such as attributing recovery from trauma and positive life progress to God's support and protection, seeing God as foundational to the ability to be open to people and ideas, and viewing God as a source of hope for the future.

JC positions a relationship with God as an important part of her resilience by choosing to discuss her photo featuring a book which represents her faith in the Bible and God. Earlier in the interview JC commented that while she was in the SafeHouse program recovering from trauma "prayer and therapy went hand in hand", positioning

prayer as equally important to therapy within her healing process and positioning a relationship with God as a crucial part of her recovery. In Excerpt 3, she details the specific practices she engaged in and found to be supportive in her healing process. (See Figure 2)

Excerpt 3. JC 01:01:19 – 01:04:52

...not only just reading the Bible but praying you know and actually using that faith and believing that what I've asked for, or the promises that are made to me as a believer in the Bible, felt very secure. And I had such peace about everything. And you know, not even six months earlier I was the opposite of the way I am. But that was really important, it was like that was a part of one of the first things. I don't ever remember how I started reading the Bible again but it became important to me because I needed some direction, and it all just fell in place....Faith is like a substance of things hoped for you know. You can't see it but you can feel it, and it helped me remain strong.

JC's comments provide insight into the practices and beliefs related to her faith in God and the Bible that she positions as an important part of her resilience. She shares that reading and believing in the Christian Bible, which promises a relationship with God, as well as praying to God helped -- and continues to help -- her feel secure and strong through her recovery from the trauma of being trafficked. Constructing her faith as a process that unfolded in time throughout her healing process, she notes that in the recent

past she did not have an active faith in her comments, “not even six months earlier I was the opposite of the way I am”. She then shares that she began to read the Bible again as one of the first part of her healing process, indicating that at some prior time in her life she practiced reading the Bible, likely as a part of her cultural or familial religious heritage.

JC also constructs her faith as a dynamic process that is not wholly based on her actions. Her comments, “I don’t ever remember how I started reading the Bible again” and “it all just fell in place” suggest serendipitous happenings or possibly God’s active involvement in strengthening her faith through the practice of prayer and Bible reading. JC reflects on the spiritual nature of her faith in her statements “you can’t see it but you can feel it”, indicating that her felt experience of God is a fundamental part of her faith. The positive role that JC’s relationship with God played in her healing process, by providing her with direction, security, and peace reflects a key aspect of her resilience. JC’s interview comments imply that, while she isn’t sure how things worked together to promote her healing, being at San Francisco SafeHouse, participating in therapy, and engaging in prayer combined in a meaningful way to facilitate her resilience.

MJ also shared about the importance of a relationship with God as a part of her resilience. She chose to talk about her photo of a Native American sweat lodge in response to the prompt *What makes you feel healthy?* She described the sweat lodge ritual as a family-oriented, embodied, communal act of prayer that she has recently participated in with colleagues from work. In Excerpt 4, MJ describes the connection she makes

between the sweat lodge ritual and her relationship with God. (See Figure 3).

Excerpt 4. MJ 16:40 – 19:53

I realized that everything that I prayed for in there has come true, has come to light. It's another form of religion I guess, it's like church, it's just spirituality ... God is forgiving ... He played, He plays a huge part in my recovery. Without Him I couldn't have done it ... To me that represents like give all your worries and everything to God.. that's what that represents for me.. just give it to God.

In response to Figure 3, MJ reflects on the nature of the sweat lodge ritual as related to religion, church, spirituality and God. The image of the lodge represents what makes her feel healthy because she has had experiences of prayers made there coming true. She constructs the active and pivotal role of God in her recovery as spanning time, from past to present, in her comments “He *played*, He *plays* a huge part in my recovery” (italics mine). When she participates in the ritual, physically going inside the sweatlodge, she can “give everything to God” – a key connection between sweatlodge and her relationship with God. For her, sweatlodge is a way and a place of connecting with God by emptying herself of worries and burdens through prayer. Together her photo and interview



Figure 3. “Sweatlodge” by MJ

comments show that she understands her connection with God to be related to the practice and structure of the sweat lodge. Her comments suggest that the ceremony offers emotional and spiritual relief and comfort by providing an embodied experience of active prayer to God. MJ constructs her ideas about what health means to her by expressing the critical role God played in her recovery. She positions her ability to cope with and heal from trauma and addiction – her ability to be resilient - as dependent upon a relationship with God.

Valuing Relationships with Friends and Pets.

Participants also featured other types of relationships in the photos they chose to represent resilience, including a new friendship and the ability to love and care for a pet. In Excerpt 5, JC points to a new close friendship with another SafeHouse alumna as a marker of her healing and resilience. Earlier in the interview she shared that learning “everyone cares and shows support in their way” helped her to be open to more friendships than in the past.

Excerpt 5 JC 51:09-52:55

My very close friendship with (name omitted) ... it's probably going to last a long time. I don't have any concerns about it. The friendship just keeps getting stronger ... I didn't think that I would ever have a friend...on this level. The friends that I've had they've all died of AIDS, but they were all men...I never had, I was always that loner person.

In her comments on the close friendship she has developed with another alumna of

SafeHouse, JC predicts it will be a long-lasting one. She tells about not having “any concerns” for the relationships, and that it continues to grow stronger. These relational descriptions can be understood to stand in contrast with past relationships which were likely more superficial, more concerning and shorter-lived. JC expresses appreciation and wonder at the depth and richness of the friendship in her comment “I didn’t think that I would ever have a friend...on this level”. Though she mentions past friendships with men who have sadly all passed away from AIDS, JC shares that in the past she did not have close or deep friendships like the one she enjoys now. She constructs the value of her current close friendship as a contrast to her past when she was a loner, without deep and meaningful friendships. The ability to make and keep friends increases JC’s opportunities for affection and social support, which can support her emotional and mental well-being. She chose to talk about the friendship as an aspect of her resilience, the only personal relationship she discussed in her interview, reflecting the value she places on it.

All sorts of relationships can be gratifying and supportive for those who have experienced trauma. SG tells how her relationship with her dog, Marshall, gives her strength to get up every morning and keep going. (See Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6. SG #2 1:35 – 2:31

I have to go to work to provide for him. I have to keep up the surroundings and everything to keep him comfortable. and what he’s accustomed to. And he gets me up out of bed ... I remember how the other animals, I treated them, and I regret that every single time. Like God I that I gotta forgive

myself for that too. So my thinking behind that is every time I see him it reminds me of them, and what I need to do to keep his life going, and what I need to do to keep my life going.

Responding to the prompt *What does your strength look like?* SG shares how caring and providing for her dog motivates and gives her strength. She comments that a main purpose for working to earn money is to keep Marshall “comfortable, and what he’s accustomed to”, suggesting that she might not otherwise get up for work every day. She shares that she was not able to properly care for other pets in the past, possibly due to addiction and other life challenges, and suggests that her treatment of them was bad enough to warrant feelings of regret and the need for forgiveness. She constructs her current strength as not only grounded in caring for Marshall, but also based on memories of unfortunate past experiences with pets. The connection between past and present is evident as those memories both inform her how not to treat her dog, and also guide her to the positive ways she now cares for him. When she states that the memories of past pets remind her of “what I need to do to keep his life going, and what I need to do to keep my life going,” SG connects Marshall’s well-being with her own. Caring for him serves as the strength she needs to care for herself. She values her relationship with her dog as it gives her the strength to go on each day and to work hard - both important aspects of resilience.

All participants chose pictures representing relationships with others that empowered them to be resilient. Each one spoke at length about how they understand

these relationships, with family members, God, friends or a pet, to be the foundation of their ability to endure and move forward in life. Participants constructed the value of relationships temporally, either by referring to the positive influence of relationships across time, or by contrasting present, positive relationships with past, negative ones. Though maintaining healthy relationships with other individuals is dramatically different from pursuing a relationship with God, both require intention, effort and commitment if they are to be meaningful. Positive relationships described by participants involved interactive or give-and-take dynamics that help them feel they are a part of something which gives them reasons to want to succeed.

The ability to cultivate and maintain positive relationships fosters resilience by providing participants with a plethora of supports and benefits. Improved mental health, emotional relief, confidence, peace, motivation, comfort and daily strength are some of the advantages participants described. Relationships help participants feel less alone, and more grounded in a communal mindset that helps them to cope and adapt positively to life's challenges. Participants value relationships with others, and chose to discuss them in their interviews, because they recognize and understand the significant role relationships play in supporting their resilience.

Valuing Relationships with Organizations.

This theme represents relationships that participants have established and maintained with organizations such as service providers, religious organizations, advocacy groups, and workplaces. Because participants generally have experienced multiple life

challenges, they have come into contact with a variety of organizations (and the employees who work for them) from which they received support. Two participants currently work for service and advocacy organizations at which they were previously clients. Connecting with organizations such as these is related to the idea of social capital. Defined as support and resources available through organizational and social relationships (Botrell, 2009), social capital has been described as a fundamental aspect of resilience (Buzzanell, 2010). In this case it reflects an individual to organization relationship from which participants received, and sometimes continue to receive, support and benefits.

Participants shared how connections with organizations, and the people who work for them, played a part in their ability to bounce back from adversity. For example, in response to the prompt *What does personal growth look like to you?* MJ took a picture of herself doing homework on a computer, alongside a photo of her high school graduation tassels. (See Figure 4). In her discussion on the meaning of the photos, MJ shares about contact with Community Health Workers (CHW), usually employees of city or nonprofit service agencies, who supported her when she was feeling hopeless. Earlier in the interview she had shared that she is currently studying to become a CHW herself. (See Excerpt 7 and Figure 4)

Excerpt 7. MJ 06:45 – 07:03

I've noticed that there was Community Health Workers along the way ...

And I feel like without those people I wouldn't be able to be where I'm at

today. They definitely played a huge part in my life, especially when I was going through cancer ... Knowing that those people made such a difference in my life by just caring and being that support that you needed. And I know what lack of support feels like. Not everybody comes from a home where their parents are even capable of giving that support. May it be not having any money to help you out, not having a home to house you, or not having an education behind you to help push you.

MJ's comments reflect her awareness of the valuable role Community Health Workers played in her struggles and recovery from trauma, addiction and cancer. She attributes her current positive life trajectory, and possibly her very survival, to the support she received from CHWs. She doesn't detail the services provided by the CHWs, but makes it clear that it was not only logistical

support or health services they provided, but also emotional support and connection. MJ expresses a keen awareness of the value of the support she received from CHWs, as she contrasts it to the lack of support she experienced in her past. In her comments, "I know what lack of support feels like. Not everybody comes from a home where their parents are even capable of giving that support," she refers to her own past family life. Though



Figure 4. "Education" by MJ

she specifies the kind of support her parents were not able to provide, “not having any money to help you out, not having a home to house you, or not having an education behind you to help push you,” MJ speaks without noticeable resentment or anger towards her parents. She is now a parent who for some years was unable to provide those things for her daughter, which may help her to view such a situation without judgement. MJ’s decision to pursue a career as a CHW demonstrates how much she values the vital role they played in her life, and how her connection with them inspired (and continues to inspire) her to work hard at improving her life. It also reflects her desire to give the same kind of support and caring to others who are struggling - to pay it forward, as it were. MJ’s photo and interview comments work together to generate rich understandings about the way valuing relationships with organizations (and their employees) served as inspiration and motivation which contributed to her resilience in the past, and continue to support to her ongoing resilience.

In her reflections on the value of relationships with organizations, JC spoke about her involvement with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) as an important part of her resilience. Earlier in the interview she shared that a huge part of resilience for her is healing, to explain why she chose a photo featuring a book related to AA. In response to the photo, she tells the story of becoming a secretary in an AA chapter, even though she had never been an alcoholic, and how her connection to the organization contributed to her healing.

Excerpt 8. JC 57:43-58:43

I did the AA thing and ended up being a secretary. But it helped me with

part of my healing. It was part of my resilience to become someone better by hearing other people's stories. And the stories were incredible! Some of them were, just like Wow! But it caused me to heal on the inside, the part that no one could see, the part that no one could understand....they voted me in as secretary and it was kind of fun!

JC discusses issues of healing, the power of narratives, and organizational relationships and affiliations in this excerpt. She shares how her connection with the AA organization supported her healing process and even helped her to "become someone better." Hearing the compelling narratives of other AA members impacted JC in a powerful way, so much so that she attributes her inner healing of "the part that no one could see" to the influence of those stories. Her understanding of the connection between the AA stories and her healing speaks to the capacity of narrative to affect people's mental and emotional well-being in profound ways. She mentions twice that she became a chapter secretary, an accomplishment that, though she lightly describes it as "fun", implies that she was accepted and well-liked there. The emotional satisfaction and sense of belonging JC experienced as a result of being voted in as secretary likely contributed to increased self-esteem and a more positive self-perception for her. JC's comments reflect her awareness that she received support and benefits from her involvement in AA which supported her mental and emotional health. Her connection with the AA organization contributed to her resilience because it played a key role in her healing process which she identified in her interview as important to her ability to positively cope with and adapt to trauma.

Though MJ and JC speak about valuing relationships with organizations in the past, all participants share about the importance of the support they continue to receive from various organizations, especially San Francisco SafeHouse. Participants describe SF SafeHouse as a safe, nurturing place where a person can “blossom”. Participants share how the support provided by SafeHouse empowered them to focus on the things that were important to them at the time, such as mental health, emotional health and educational goals. The importance of a continuing positive relationship with SafeHouse (after graduation) was referred to as something participants value as a part of their ongoing resilience. MJ describes the key role SafeHouse played in her ability to bounce back after multiple traumas and life challenges.

Excerpt 9. MJ 34:00-34:28

At SafeHouse my focus was schooling. So I got my high school diploma while at SafeHouse. And then I also focused on therapy behind the domestic violence and support groups there....and I also enrolled in college and I completed my first year at SafeHouse of college as well...they've been a huge support for me. At school they were all at my graduation, my cheerleaders.

MJ's comments exemplify the important role organizations can play in the recovery and healing of those who have experienced trauma. She tells how being in the SafeHouse program gave her the support she needed to focus on and advance her education, which she later in the interview identifies as a crucial part of her resilience. Noting that

SafeHouse staff attended her graduation as “cheerleaders”, she illustrates that the organization provided emotional as well as practical and therapeutic support. MJ also shares that her participation as a client of the SafeHouse organization enabled her to focus on therapy, and attend various support groups, which were key aspects of her healing and recovery from trauma. By receiving logistical support (housing), services (case management and support groups), and emotional support (staff encouragement) MJ had the foundation and space she needed, possibly for the first time in her life, to focus on what she really wanted to do. MJ emphasized throughout her interview that pursuing education to improve her life situation is a primary way she understands her ability to be resilient. She highlights her relationship with the SF SafeHouse organization because she recognizes and values the fact that it enabled her to focus on education. Her comments about the support and benefits she received from her participation in the SF SafeHouse program, demonstrate the ways that organizational relationships positively impact participants’ emotional and mental health – key aspects of resilience.

All participants discussed how connecting and maintaining relationships with organizations was a vital element in their resilience. Like many survivors of exploitation, participants do not have strong family or community support systems that can aid and uphold them during times of crisis. Thus, they rely upon a variety of organizations for protection, assistance and relief after traumatic experiences. Going on to become employed with an agency where one was previously a client is one way to continue the organizational relationship. Participants shared how past connections with organizations

provided them with benefits such as emotional support, inner healing, and a sense of belonging. Participants also spoke of ongoing and current relationships with organizations, such as San Francisco SafeHouse, from which they continue to receive emotional support and services. Whether in reference to a past organizational connection which no longer exists, or an ongoing one that they continue to maintain, participants recognize and appreciate the connection between organizational relationships and their ability to be resilient. Valuing organizational relationships points to the vitally important role such organizations play in the healing and recovery of people who have experienced trauma and exploitation. The many benefits participants describe receiving via connections with organizations play a key role in their resilience.

Choosing Positive Self-Engagement.

A mindset of positive self-engagement, cognitive-emotional energy focused on positive self-perceptions, represented a key pattern in participants' reflections when describing the meaning of their photos. Participants identified, described or referred to themselves from within a positive framework, reflecting a positive relationship with themselves. First, they framed their resilience within a positive self-growth orientation. Second, as they discussed the meaning of their photos, participants made comments expressing self-compassion, including self-love and self-care. Finally, participants identified themselves by affirming positive identity anchors, such as "believer" or "mother". The positive and affirming self-relationship that they expressed demonstrates a mindset that contributed to their resilience.

Positive self-growth orientation.

A positive self-growth orientation is one in which a person is aware of, and actively explores her ability to change and transform for the better and is a part of healthy meaning-making (Lilgendahl et al., 2013). It is not uncommon for those who have experienced trauma to experience a transformed sense of self. Surviving traumatic experiences shows people their own strength and competence in ways they were previously unaware of, and can lead to an enhanced sense of self-esteem and confidence (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). A belief in one's own strength, or ability to survive the worst of life's challenges, can contribute to a positive self-concept which is key to promoting resilience (Brandhorst, 2018). In commenting on their photos, participants demonstrated a positive self-growth orientation with comments like "I've done a good job...", "look where I am today", and "look how far I've come".

In the Excerpt 10, SG demonstrates a positive self-growth orientation as she comments on the photo chosen by her to represent personal growth (See Figure 5). The picture shows a beautiful cathedral with a bright neon "LGBTQ" sign hung from the ceiling. SG shares about what she felt and thought when she walked into the cathedral and saw the sign.

Excerpt 10. SG Pt 1 28:32-33:22

...look how far I've grown to be not ashamed. Because I was from the Midwest and seeing THAT just, you know what I mean, would make me in fear to be around it. But now I can see the beauty that comes from it, and that

I'm seeing other parts of it, and other types of it than just mine, and respecting and accepting it, and having acceptance and trying to be more open and understanding because I know how it is to be who I am, so I can never know how it is to be someone else.... What I went through? OK I went through it. But look where I'm at today! And look at the love I have to give.

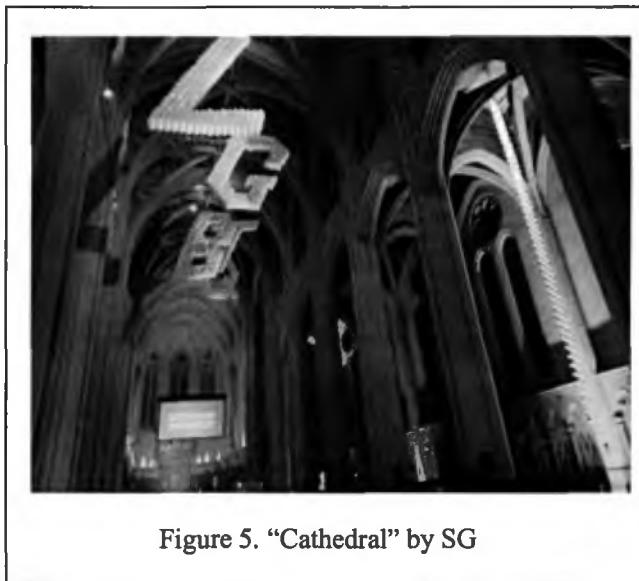


Figure 5. "Cathedral" by SG

A multitude of considerations are evident in SG's comment, including personal shame, geographic background, LGBTQ concerns and fears, acceptance of others, self-acceptance, and self-awareness. SG identifies personal growth, an aspect of resilience chosen as meaningful by all

participants, as related to not being ashamed about her sexuality. She exhibits a positive self-growth orientation by affirming the progress she has made in the comment "...look how far I've grown." SG demonstrates how she has grown beyond the mindset of fear and shame based on her roots in the Mid-West, both by realizing how it held her back in the past, but also by her present ability to let it go. She contrasts her past situation of being in fear to her present perspective of seeing "beauty" and "respecting and accepting"

different sexual orientations and sexualities, demonstrating her exploration and awareness of her ability to change for the better. Articulating that she is now able to be more open and understanding of others who are different reflects SG's awareness of her new strengths and abilities. SG shares a second positive self-growth statement when she says "...look where I'm at today! And look at the love I have to give", in which she demonstrates her enhanced sense of self-esteem and confidence. Personal growth is understood by SG as progressing to a place where she is not ashamed of herself. But more than that, she positively affirms her own growth, progress and capacity to love. Her positive self-growth orientation relates to a transformed sense of self, an increased awareness of her ability to change for the better and an enhanced sense of self-esteem – all of which facilitate her resilience.

Though SG doesn't explicitly mention her relationship with God in this excerpt, it is striking that she chose to construct the idea of personal growth via a photo set in a church. The location of the photo is important as it symbolizes unconditional acceptance by God, which likely contributed to SG's ability to release past fear and shame around her sexuality and begin to love and accept herself.

Self-compassion.

Participants demonstrated a mindset of positive self-engagement by speaking in ways that expressed self-compassion. Self-compassion entails treating oneself with kindness, warmth, understanding and support instead of in a harsh or critical way (Ehret, Joormann, & Berking, 2015; Kemper, Mo, & Khayat, 2015), and has been highly correlated with

well-being (Neff & McGehee, 2010). The ability to hold one's feelings of pain or failure with compassion is related to resilience because it helps to create distance from suffering, increases positive psycho-cognitive outcomes such as happiness and optimism, and decreases negative effects such as anxiety and depression (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Participant comments expressing self-love and self-care are included in this section as they are enactments and outcomes of self-compassion. Participants embedded remarks reflecting self-compassion, self-love and self-care in talk about photos representing other aspects of resilience, such as motivation and strength. Such remarks were sometimes framed as self-talk in which participants shared what they told themselves in the moment, such as "I'll be OK just loving myself" and "I have to tell myself that it's OK. It's OK".

For instance, when SS spoke about the meaning of her photo featuring a door and an exit sign, she included self-talk about forgiving herself, which is a part of self-compassion (See Excerpt 11 and Figure 6). SS had explained earlier in the interview that she is involved in a lengthy immigration process which keeps her from moving on to her future.



Figure 6. "Doorway" by SS

Excerpt 11. SS Pt 2 10:30-11:13

You need to go, but outside this door is a lot for you. So right now save yourself, survive. But at the same time sometimes it's not just for survive. You went through a lot, you did a lot, you got hurt a lot...to go out of everything...move on to future. It doesn't mean that you need to forget. I'm gonna forgive myself.

In response to Figure 4, these comments provide insight into matters of survival, personal progress, wounding, healing, and forgiveness. In the first part of this excerpt, SS engages in self-talk, in which she is addressing herself and her own experience as "you". She shares her interpretation of the metaphorical meaning of the door in her photo as an extended time of waiting in her remark "outside this door is a lot for you." SS employs the door-as-time of waiting metaphor to represent her current reality of waiting upon approval for a U.S. visa, which will allow her to begin working towards important life goals in the future. She describes her present situation as a time to "save yourself, survive" within this holding pattern. When SS talks about forgiving herself, she switches from referring to herself as "you" to the personal pronoun "I", which emphasizes the poignancy and the here-and-now quality of that moment in the interview. Though she doesn't specify why she believes that she needs forgiveness, and is clear that in the future she will not forget what happened to her, she nonetheless denotes self-forgiveness as necessary for her to move on to her future. In her response to Figure 4, SS demonstrates the beginnings of self-compassion, as she articulates her intention to forgive herself,

albeit in the future, after the time of waiting.

A second aspect of positive self-engagement was reflected in interviews by participants' comments about loving one's self. Self-love is a part of self-compassion, as it involves thinking and feeling about the self in positive, nurturing and supportive ways. Instead of judging or criticizing one's thoughts or actions, self-love involves believing that one is worthy and deserving of love, as well as other good things. Loving one's self is self-compassion in action.

In Excerpt 12, SG demonstrates positive self-engagement as she discusses the meaning of her photo featuring the Paramount Theater sign (See Figure 7), which she took in response to the prompt about motivation. Earlier she shared that the changing colors in the neon sign represent the way her life has changed so much since her youth, and gave a lengthy description of the many challenges she faced growing up, including the death of her mother.

Excerpt 12. SG 07:37 – 10:49

My life has never been a stable place as a child. Which caused it not to be stable in my life growing up. There were good people. There were things that happened. It was what it was....death at 6 years old. Somehow becoming a caregiver and role model to my sister...all of that....What the fuck? What the FUCK? My life has been such a deep, compelling, internal, mental, spiritual thing! And being where I'm at today and seeing, I just gotta love myself no matter what. I'm this I'm that, I'm that I'm this. I've got

flaws. So fucking what?... It's a work in process, but to be open, today the way I am today. And to love me as a person. All of me.

Issues of relationships, childhood trauma and instability, self-reflection, self-acceptance, and self-love are evident in SG's remarks. She constructs ideas about motivation by articulating her awareness of what her life was like *then*, and how it has changed *now*. She contrasts her past with her present by first providing the historical context of her unstable youth (due to the death of her mother when she was six, and her resulting role as



Figure 7. "Paramount" by SG

the caregiver and role model for her little sister), and her current situation of self-acceptance. Her exclamation, "What the FUCK?" implies a sense of wonder and amazement at the difficult experiences of her youth, despite which she has grown to view herself as worthy of love. SG missed out on the love of her mother, needed to focus her nurturing energy on her sister instead of herself, and experienced all sorts of instability in her youth. She reconciles her awareness of her past traumas by using it as fuel for her motivation to love herself. She demonstrates self-love by treating her imperfections with kindness and support, not criticism, in her comments "I've got flaws. So fucking what?..."

It's a work in process." Despite an awareness that she is not perfect, SG demonstrates self-love by embracing herself in an unconditionally accepting way, explicitly stating, "I just gotta love myself no matter what". She constructs her ideas about motivation, a key aspect of resilience, by emphasizing the importance of loving herself.

A third aspect of positive self-engagement mentioned by participants is self-care, which entails behaviors that support physical, emotional and mental health. Physical self-care can entail healthy physical activity, nutrition, and getting enough rest, for example. Emotional and mental-health self-care can include a variety of behaviors such as practicing stress reduction techniques, setting appropriate relational boundaries, and investing in healthy interpersonal relationships. Self-care flows out of self-compassion – viewing the self as worthy of care and nurture.

In the Excerpt 13 JC talks about practical ways she takes care of herself on an everyday basis, in response to the prompt *What does your strength look like?* She chose pictures of everyday items that influence her feelings of strength, such as beauty products and her bed, to construct her ideas about strength. (See Figure 7)

Excerpt 13. JC 24:26-24:56

One thing that I've lived by is good people, good food, and plenty of rest. I have applied it to my life since I've lived here in SF. So I looked at the bed... I said to myself "wait a minute, what are one of the things that makes me feel positive and allow me to be strong, and to have energy, and be able to focus – is sleep".

JC's comments in response to Figure 6 reflect her practical perspective towards resilience which is situated in the everyday, focused on physical needs and interpersonal relationships. Her remark about the value of "good people, good food, and plenty of rest" is an almost a textbook example of self-care.

JC's insights about the importance of sleep may at first glance seem obvious, but a commitment to self-care, including getting enough sleep, is crucial for someone recovering from trauma. As she

explains why she chose to take a photo of her bed, she asks herself a question, "wait a minute, what are one of the things that makes me feel positive and allow me to be strong, and to have energy, and be able to focus – is sleep". This self-questioning prompted by the Photovoice process demonstrates JC's understanding that resilience is not limited only to ideas of strength, but for her is also related to feeling positive, feeling strong, having energy, and being able to focus. She uses the photo and her comments to generate and construct ideas about the important link between self-care and resilience that are much fuller and richer than what was asked about in the prompt.

Affirming Identity Anchors.

The final aspect of a positive self-engagement mindset that was reflected in participant



Figure 8. "Bed" by JC

comments is affirming identity anchors. Buzzanell (2010) defines identity anchors as “a relatively enduring cluster of identity discourses upon which individuals and their familial, collegial, and/or community members rely when explaining who they are for



Figure 9. "Trinity" by SG

themselves and in relation to each other” (p. 4).

Identity anchors are constructed and performed through discourse in order to secure an identity against uncertainty. Affirming identity anchors can provide a sense of stability and wholeness in the face of present or remembered difficulties.

Participants created positive identity anchors in their comments on ways they understand and identify themselves. As they shared meanings related to their photos on resilience, participants

discursively constructed positive identity anchors such as *beautiful, mother, provider, loved by my family, Christian, and independent*. The positive identity anchors align with and support their current needs, helping participants to feel motivated, secure, successful, and confident.

In response to the prompt *What does your strength look like?*, SG discussed the meaning of her photo of a statue of the Christian Trinity (See Excerpt 14 and Figure 8). The statue is located in the building where she lives, and inspires in her deep appreciation, as she had previously experienced being homeless.

Excerpt 14. SG Pt 2 05:29 – 07:35

I was like Wow! I'm living in a building like this...it represents a great deal of who I am. The idea of it - Because it has religious connotations and I can relate to them....I can relate to those beliefs...and I'm lucky to be in a place like that. That represents to me like you gotta stand no matter what. Keep standing. Keep going strong. And keep fighting...My religion helped me to be open and let me know that someone's got my back. Even if I don't have my back, even if my mother or father... God has my back and that's who I am today.

In addition to Figure 8, SG shared four other photos of spiritually-related sculptures. She connects the type of building where she lives (a building which features spiritual statues and art) with her identity, saying “it represents a great deal of who I am”. The connection between the building and her identity may represent her sense of belonging and affinity for a place displaying art that aligns with her spiritual beliefs. Earlier in the interview SG shared that she is a believer in God. Here she talks about how she relates to the religious connotations and beliefs represented in the statue, and how the connection between the building where she lives, the statue and her spiritual beliefs gives her strength and motivation to “keep fighting”. She constructs the identity anchor of *believer* by contrasting a lack of reliable protection from her parents and even herself, with God’s certain protection. In her comment, “God has my back and that's who I am today” SG links the support and care of God with her identity. Through her photo and interview

comments SG constructs ideas about strength, by affirming the identity anchor of *believer*. This identity anchor provides her with a sense of belonging and protection which gives her strength – a key aspect of resilience.

Interestingly, another participant created her positive identity anchor in her response to the same prompt about strength. Many of JC's photos contained products she uses in her daily beauty regimen that help her feel more confident when stepping out for appointments and meetings. Earlier in the interview she shared that "being clean and fresh and feeling beautiful about myself is really important". She also expressed that one of the main traumas she experienced in being kidnapped and trafficked, was a loss of a sense of self. In Excerpt 15, she responds to an interviewer question about the relationship between the beauty products, self-care and healthy life choices.

Excerpt 15. JC 35:45-36:32

It's something for me to celebrate! Because that kidnapping, I was kidnapped nine years ago... and after therapy I became alive again. And I had to relearn about myself. I didn't even know I had siblings. Yeah it was really a deep situation...those people did some mind trips on me, where I didn't even understand who I was. Everything about myself, down to a little brush, to makeup, is very, very, very important to me because it symbolizes who I am, and the things that I care about.

JC rejoices in her ability to provide herself with beauty products and engage in self-care around her image, because it is something she was not able to do in the past. In response

to her many photos of beauty items, she discursively constructs the identity anchor *beautiful* by contrasting past and present. In her comments, “I had to relearn about myself” and “I didn’t even understand who I was” JC refers to the past situation in which the effects of her trauma led to a loss of sense of self. This is quite different from her current situation in which every decision she makes about her image, “down to a little brush, to makeup, is very, very, very important to me because it symbolizes who I am, and the things that I care about.” Making intentional choices (something she has had to re-learn how to do after the kidnapping), and choosing to be beautiful, is a high priority for JC. Seeing herself in this way meets her need to feel confident and optimistic as she makes her way in the world. The combination of photos and talk enable JC to generate rich reflections about her strength. She connects her strength with the positive identity anchor of *beautiful*.

It is notable that participants responded to the prompts and photos with so many expressions of positive-self engagement, considering the prompts did not explicitly or implicitly invite such a response. It’s not possible to know participants’ inner intentions and motivations for positive self-engagement, whether demonstrated through a positive self-growth orientation, expressions of self-compassion, or affirmations of positive identity anchors. There are however possible explanations that may account for participants’ kind and loving approach-to-self that they identified as so important to their resilience.

One possibility is that they have learned to have a positive and supportive mindset

towards themselves through exposure to harm reduction approaches, as well as emotional, mental, and spiritual health practices in their healing journeys. A harm reduction approach often frames recovery and healing (from substance abuse or other dangerous activities) as an unfolding and ongoing process, instead of an all or nothing situation (Marlatt, 1996). Experiencing an addiction relapse, for example, is seen as one part of a long journey in which the person may have experienced greater and greater periods of sobriety, as opposed to a complete and final failure to become sober. Mental, emotional and spiritual health practices generally discourage negative thinking, and encourage attitudes of kindness and compassion towards the self (and others). As all participants discussed experiences with a variety of these kinds of approaches and practices during their recovery from trauma, it is possible that they were able to adopt them for themselves.

Another potential explanation for participants' positive self-engagement is that the very experience of surviving trauma led them to a new awareness of their own value, strength, and abilities. Knowing that it was their own thoughts, beliefs and behaviors that enabled them to make it through multiple traumatic experiences may help participants to see themselves in a positive light. Through trauma, they may have been able to learn things about themselves that they simply were not aware of before. Realizations about their strength, abilities and accomplishments likely enhanced participants' self-evaluation, self-esteem, and self-concept - important aspects of resilience (Brandhorst, 2018; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Such enhanced self-realizations can generalize to all

sorts of situations, and can account for participants' many expressions of positive self-engagement.

Conclusion

Through their photos and interview comments, participants constructed ideas demonstrating that valuing relationships, with others and with themselves, is a key aspect of their resilience. They spoke of the many benefits they receive through relationships with others: motivation to work hard, improved mental health, a sense of security, emotional comfort, strength, and confidence – all factors related to resilience (Affifi, 2018; Brandhorst, 2018; Buzzanell, 2010; Madsen & Abell, 2010). Cultivating and nurturing relationships with others, whether with family, friends, God, pets, or organizations, leads to a sense of community and connection in the world which is related to resilient functioning. Such relationships activate a positive feedback loop in which participants' efforts towards positive reciprocal relationships generate benefits, which in turn strengthen the relationships, and on it goes. Valuing relationships with others represents how resilience is a collaborative affair involving communities (Buzzanell, 2010).

A mindset of positive self-engagement, demonstrated when participants express how they value themselves, implies a sense of inner wholeness and unity. In contrast to critical or ruminating self-reflections, participants noticeably treated themselves in supportive and compassionate ways, via a positive self-growth orientation, expressions of self-compassion or affirming positive identity anchors. It is possible that most

participants developed positive self-engagement after their experiences of trauma, as they often constructed their ideas by contrasting a difficult past with a more positive present (and future). Each of the ways participants demonstrated a positive approach-to-self serves to promote their emotional and mental health, which are key aspects of resilience.

The various manifestations of valuing relationships with others and with themselves, though separated and examined individually in this analysis, do not exist in isolation for participants. They are often related to each other, working dynamically to foster resilience. Participants' comments about the different aspects of valuing relationships were embedded in the context of their lived experiences of resilience, and demonstrate an overall mindset of recognizing and valuing the positive and healthy things in their lives. As they often constructed their ideas about resilience by contrasting the present with the past, it is likely that this attitude is one they learned (at least in part) from going through trauma.

Chapter 4: Results

Strategies for engaging with reality

The second major theme I identify as a critical part of participants' resilience is *strategies for engaging with reality*. Participants remark on ways they think about, make sense of, and engage with past traumatic memories and present realities. They discuss how they take healthy, future oriented, positive yet realistic approaches to coping with difficult situations past and present. Some of the most important strategies for engaging with reality are described as: *finding meaning in trauma and difficulties, downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive, and seeing reality clearly*. In the following sections I discuss how participants communicatively construct resilience via these strategies.

Finding Meaning in Trauma.

The ability to find and construct meaning from past traumatic experiences plays a crucial role in resilience. Healthy or resilient meaning making has to do with how a person evaluates and interprets past experiences in relation to self-concept. Being able to find lessons in trauma that become the foundation for self-growth and transformation contributes to optimal well-being (Lilgendahl, McLean, & Mansfield, 2013). The strategy of purposefully exploring the meaning of past trauma and its potential for self-change enables a person to connect negative past events with positive self-growth and self-transformation (Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2011). Finding meaning in trauma serves to provide emotional comfort and can change a person's beliefs about the meaning of life

(Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Coutu describes this process as building bridges from hardship to a “fuller, better constructed future” (2002).

In this study, participants share reflections on the positive meanings they were able to glean from trauma. They demonstrate self-awareness about wisdom, strength, life-lessons and skills they gained from past experiences of trauma, which serves to reframe their memories, and thus to positively reorient participants in relation to their trauma. Recognizing meaning in trauma promotes healthy thinking, motivates and empowers participants, and contributes to their ongoing resilience in the face of adversity.

For example, in Excerpt 16 SS finds meaning in trauma as she comments on a photo she took in response to the prompt *What makes you feel healthy?* The photo features a sign announcing that a location where SS spends a considerable amount of time will be a no-smoking zone. The sign shows a large no-smoking symbol (a cigarette in a circle with a line drawn through it), the announcement that the location will be tobacco free after the effective date, the name of a service organization from which SS received services in the past, and a message of thanks for helping to make the location a healthier place.

Excerpt #16 SS Pt 1 24:52-26:45

By going through this trauma, see how many knowledge I am getting, and skills, and more open mind. So it's not a weakness. So I went through a lot, but it gives me more knowledge...I'm not weak. I I have – we all have weaknesses. I'm working on that. But that's different from being victim and

being vulnerable. So I recognize that. I've noticed. I'm working on that. I'm gonna make a strength out of my weakness.

In her comments, SS addresses issues of trauma, personal weakness v. vulnerability, and self-awareness. She explicitly states her understanding of what she gained by going through trauma: knowledge, skills and a more open mind. Referring to her trauma explicitly in the first line of Excerpt 16, and again in her comments "I went through a lot", SS acknowledges the pain and difficulty of her past. But she resists the idea that experiencing trauma makes her weak, or that having weakness equates with "being a victim". In fact, SS positions her recognition of her own weaknesses as what will empower her to be even stronger when she declares "I'm gonna make a strength out of my weakness". By reframing her trauma from something wholly awful, to something that provides her with knowledge, skills and a more open mind, SS reorients herself into a more positive relation with it, diminishing the negative mental and emotional power it may hold over her. For SS, finding meaning in trauma contributes to her ability to be resilient by giving her a sense of agency and control over her life, and motivation for the future.

Reported Private Thought (RPT).

In their interviews, some participants employ the discursive practice of reported private thought (RPT) to explain their ideas on finding meaning in trauma. Speakers use RPT to convey their inner thoughts within a narrative, and to emphasize a cognitive process which helps the listener understand how they were (or are) thinking about something.

(Barnes & Moss, 2007; Sacks, 1992; Wooffitt, 1992). Participants use RPT to express how their self-questioning can account for subsequent decisions and actions in their story.



Figure 10. "Golden Gate Bridge" by MJ

An example of how RPT is used to construct ideas about finding meaning in trauma is exemplified by

MJ as she interprets the significance of the death of her sister. Earlier in the interview MJ shared that she was very close with her sister, and that her death was linked emotionally with other exceptionally painful events in her life. MJ's comments relate to a photo she took of the Golden Gate Bridge in response to the prompt *What does bouncing back look like for you?* (See Figure 10 and Excerpt 17)

Excerpt 17 MJ 35:34-36:49

When my sister passed away ... I was here by myself, alone....me and my sister were 18 months apart....that was the first time I'd ever been to Ocean Beach. It was the first time I'd ever seen a sunset at the beach. and I remember just sitting there looking out into the ocean, you could see the sky and the ocean meet, and the sun....I was just thinking, like *I can't even see, like this world is huge, this world is huge and I spent a good amount of it in my room getting high, and I haven't even like gave myself a chance to live*

and to venture out. And that was a feeling I remember having, this world is huge what are you doing? Are you gonna fucking spend it in a room smoking dope and fucking dying like your sister? Is that what you want?....so that ties into ... really trying to thrive in life because it is short, it's precious.

In this vignette of a time in her past, MJ describes the profound awareness and inspiration she found soon after the death of her sister. Her emotions of grief and isolation after losing her sister set the stage for the moment she tells about, in which a beautiful beach sunset inspired realizations about the immensity of the world and her relationship to it. She describes realizing that up to that moment, she had been missing out on seeing the world and living life as fully as possible because of dedicating so much time to “getting high”. She shares her realization as a reported private thought (RPT in italics), indicated by the phrase, “I was just thinking...”, performed in that moment on the beach. She describes the realization about how her addiction was keeping her from seeing the world as a “feeling”, indicating that the new awareness she gained reflecting on the meaning of her sister’s death impacted her emotionally. In her RPT she questions and critiques the choices and actions that were very possibly going to lead to her death, as they unfortunately had for her sister. She expresses self-awareness of pivotal, life or death decisions she faced in that moment on the beach in her RPT in which she questioned whether she wanted to keep, “smoking dope and fucking dying like your sister”. She constructs the turning point moment in her story through RPT to articulate how she

became aware that her life is more meaningful than she had previously realized, and why she decided to change her life (Lockyer & Wingard, *in press*). The use of RPT brings the listening into that moment of the story, and dramatizes the telling. For MJ, feeling alone in the world after the death of her sister, and connecting with the beauty and grandeur of the beach sunset combine to generate life-altering realizations, inspiration to make changes for the better. From a tragic and sad situation, MJ finds meaning which enables her to have hope for a better future. She connects her sister's death with the recognition of the brevity and preciousness of life, and her desire and motivation to "thrive in life". For MJ, finding meaning in the trauma of her sister's death occurred that moment on the beach, and also continues to motivate and inspire her to live her best life today, strengthening her ability to be resilient.

Finding meaning in trauma is also exemplified by JC as she talks about lessons she learned from going through traumatic experiences. The comments in Excerpt 18 are not directly in response to a prompt or photo. Rather they are the culmination of a lengthy discussion within the interview about healthy choices she has been learning to make for herself. Prior to this excerpt, JC shared an extensive narrative about the beauty products she uses in her daily life, choosing to take care of her image, and how she presents herself to the world. She also discussed past negative experiences with romantic relationships, and how she has learned to make healthier choices in that regard. Her comments in Excerpt 18 are her conclusion or summary of how she thinks about such important life choices.

Excerpt 18 JC 42:42 – 42:56

My biggest issue is ‘is this good for me? What is the long term, what is going to be the outcome if I chose to take this route?’ And those negative things that happened in my life cause me to think this way.

In her comments about making healthy choices, JC also uses RPT to share the process self-questioning she has learned is necessary in order to keep herself safe. The RPT itself reflects present an ongoing self-questioning to guide decisions, as opposed to providing access to past inner thoughts. It is unclear whether prior work has documented the use of RPT in this way. As such, this may represent a use of RPT that does not conform with current literature. Unlike MJ, JC does not share private thoughts from the past. Instead she uses RPT to describe the ongoing, inward self-questioning that she uses to guide decisions today. She asks herself the kinds of questions that help her to carefully evaluate both immediate and long-term consequences and risks. JC explicitly attributes learning to critically consider and assess the possible outcomes of her choices to her past experiences of trauma in her comment, “those negative things that happened in my life cause me to think this way.” For JC, the strategy of finding meaning in trauma empowers healthy thinking – an important aspect of resilience.

In sum, finding meaning in trauma is a strategy for engaging with reality which contributes to participants’ resilience in two ways. First, it is a way of making sense of, and engaging with past traumatic memories that helps to diminish or limit the devastating emotional and psychological after-effects of traumatic memories for participants. To

recover from trauma, people must learn how to “live with the memories of the past without being overwhelmed by them in the present” (Van der Kolk, 2015). As participants communicatively construct the meaning of their trauma, often via RPT, they positively reorient themselves in relation to their memories of the trauma. The memories are no longer seen as completely and overwhelmingly horrible, but also as a source of wisdom, strength, life lessons...etc. Also, constructing a narrative of meaning serves to restrict or circumscribe the memories, to put them in their place, as it were. Second, the strategy of finding meaning in trauma contributes to participants’ resilience by providing them with wisdom, strength, self-awareness, skills and other life lessons. The benefits that participants identify in their interviews serve as the foundation for their ongoing growth, transformation, and well-being.

Downplaying the Negative while Foregrounding the Positive.

Participants reframed difficult situations, past and present, to downplay their negative aspects while foregrounding positive ones. This strategy reflects how participants make sense of and engage with past traumatic memories and present realities in a way that contributes to their resilience. The strategy of reframing difficult situations plays a key role in the communicative construction of resilience. Buzzanell (2010) discusses this dynamic as “the reframing of the situation linguistically and metaphorically to one of constrained hopefulness” and “the deliberate foregrounding of productive action” (p. 7-8). Backgrounding negative emotions and situations is not the same as repression, and prioritizing positive feelings is not faking at happiness. Rather, downplaying the negative

while foregrounding the positive is a strategy which recognizes that a focus on negative feelings and situations is counterproductive to achieving other, higher priority goals.

Participants described extremely difficult and painful circumstances in their lives, such as experiencing family dysfunction, surviving in a homeless shelter, and missing the first years of a child's life. In their interviews, they reframed how they think about those situations by also highlighting their positive aspects. For example, in her comments on her photo (see Figure #1) taken in response to the prompt *What motivates you?* In Excerpt 19, MJ described her sorrow at having missed out on many of her daughter's "firsts". She told about how she apologized to her daughter while on a trip to Hawaii, but then goes on to reframe the situation to highlight the positive.

Excerpt 19 MJ 56:24 – 56:52

I, we realized I am some of her firsts. It was the first time she had ever been on a plane. It was the first time she'd ever been out of (hometown omitted).

It was the first time she had ever been snorkeling, or parasailing, or on a boat. She'd never been on a boat! So it was a lot of firsts and I was grateful to have been the one to show her those things.

Instead of dwelling on the sad circumstances of having been apart for many years, MJ and her daughter co-construct a new frame for their relationship. The statement, "I, we realized I am some of her firsts" demonstrates that the two realized together that the trip to Hawaii had enabled MJ to provide for, and be present, at many of her daughter's "firsts" after all. MJ lists all of the many new experiences her daughter had while on the

trip to Hawaii, including flying, snorkeling, parasailing, boating, and being out of her hometown for the first time. By emphasizing the many “firsts” shared between MJ and her daughter, and highlighting her gratitude for getting to provide and share them with her, MJ downplays the negative, while foregrounding the positive. Though she acknowledges a painful past situation in which she missed out on years of her daughter’s life, she chooses to reframe how she thinks about the relationship to highlight the current, positive aspects. Thinking about the relationship in this way is a strategy that promotes inner healing for MJ, and healing for the relationship with her daughter.

Another example of downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive is seen as SG talks about the meaning of her photo response to the prompt *What makes you feel healthy?* (See Figure 11). She discusses her photo featuring the feet of multiple family members gathered together during the holidays in Excerpt 20.

Excerpt 20 SG Pt 1 16:14-17:52

Like our family is dysfunctional. But how we learned still how blessed we are to be together...So many times we stopped talking to each other for stupid, ridiculous things, and sometimes we still kind of piss each other off...but we know we don't have to hang up from each other, or if we do we do it in a nice way. Because I'm very appreciative that my family is still healthy and alive.



Figure 11. "Family" by SG

SG acknowledges the dysfunction and pain within her family. She tells about past times when family members didn't speak to each other, or felt angry at each other. But the main focus of her remarks is how today they feel blessed to have each other. In her comment "we learned

still how blessed we are to be together" SG indicates that she and other family members share the awareness of being blessed, indicating a co-constructed reframing to emphasize positive aspects of the family. SG highlights her appreciation for relational improvements that have been made, and that her family is still alive and healthy. While aware of ongoing "dysfunctional" family dynamics, she prioritizes trying to love and appreciate her family. SG's interview comments and her photo (Figure 8) work together to demonstrate her focus on the positive aspects of family relationships. Positively reframing how she thinks about her family leads to healthier relationships, as well as a sense of belonging and community – both important aspects of resilience.

SS downplays the negative and foregrounds the positive as she talks about the meaning of her photo showing the same no-smoking sign she discussed in Excerpt 16. (See Excerpt 21) The sign features, among other things, the month of July, which is very meaningful for her.

Excerpt 21 SS Part 1 30:25.- 33:20

When I got trapped. That was a heavy month for me. Heavy, heavy month...I started to hate this month, but now I love it! That is, like mentally and everything I got hurt...It wasn't easy for me but right now I try when it goes to July, I try to enjoy that month. To say, 'Hey! No! I can't hate you because of somebody, [unintelligible], event, dirty people, I can not hate you. Instead I try, when it goes to July, I try to make the best month of my whole year. To say 'No!' For my mental health, for my physical health.

In these comments, SS explains how the month of July held immense pain for her because it was the month her exploitation began. She then reframes her relationship with the month of July by expressing her intention to not hate, but instead to love it, reflecting a conscious decision to focus on positive, future-oriented action. Her determined choice to foreground the positive by trying to make July the best month of the year represents a strategy which prioritizes her desire for better mental and physical health. When SS repeats twice that she will say "No!" to hating July and the intense negative emotions it evokes, she not only backgrounds the negative, she actively and emphatically resists the adverse consequences of her exploitation. In response to her photo, SS reframes how she thinks about the month of July to emphasize positive intentions for improved mental and physical health instead of painful memories. This strategy leads to emotional relief and comfort, as well as a sense of agency for SS, which can facilitate increased resilience.

To sum up, backgrounding the negative while foregrounding the positive is a life strategy that empowers participants to be resilient. Participants are not unaware of the pain and difficulty of life situations, both past and present. But in the face of adversity and hardship they chose not to center negative feelings and thoughts, but rather to emphasize the positive aspects of their situations. MJ highlights that she got to be many of her daughter's "firsts" after missing out on many years together. SG prioritizes gratitude for her family, despite ongoing relational challenges. SS emphasizes her positive intentions for the month of July, even though it was a painful month for her in the past. These examples and others from participants' interviews demonstrate how they positively reframe how they think about life situations in order to promote their own healing, healthy relationships, and mental and physical health.

Seeing Reality Clearly.

The ability to see reality clearly, to face and accurately assess difficult situations and harsh truths, is an important aspect of resilience. A clear take on reality means recognizing nuance and complexity in situations, helping people maneuver through difficulties. It is the opposite of wearing rose colored glasses, denial, or having a distorted sense of reality, which can lead to disastrous results in dangerous situations. An optimistic approach towards life circumstances is only helpful if it doesn't warp one's sense of reality. Accurately recognizing one's place in the world, and correctly assessing the impacts of one's actions prepares a person to endure and overcome extreme adversity (Brandhorst, 2018; Coutu, 2002).

Participants share about confronting and clearly assessing their reality, seeing all sides of a situation, and recognizing subtleties within the harsh realities of the world they live in. Seeing reality clearly includes being aware of the nuances and complexities of social situations, one's own mental and emotional state, and likely outcomes of a given circumstance. Participants express that correctly assessing how others respond to their actions, words and even to their appearance, allows them to adapt in ways that enable them to meet their goals. Participants recognize that situations are not simplistic, that seeing and acknowledging nuance is important. For example, JC shares that she perceives her resilience more when she recognizes that her successes in life occur amidst and despite negative emotions such as insecurity and fear. Similarly, in Excerpt 22 SS is able to clearly see nuance as she describes her present life situation in response to Figure 12.



Figure 12. "Window" by SS

Excerpt 22 SS Pt 2 02:00 - 05:20

Behind those bars and beyond those cities and beyond the cloud there is sun.

So it gives you hope. There's a big hope... Sometimes you have to pause your life. if you are just fighting and fighting it goes down more and people think 'Oh, you are not good for job. You are not mentally, you are not stable.'

You can not stay here. Oh my God, you are dangerous'...Sometimes you just need to do nothing and be patient and wait for help. And just remember that there is a big hope....Resilience is not just about fighting you know...sometimes resilience means do nothing.

For SS, the bars, buildings, and clouds in Figure 12 metaphorically represent obstacles that keep her from moving forward in life. The sun, on the other hand, is a metaphor for hope for the future. Figure 11 and Excerpt 22 work synergistically to help SS describe how she sees her present, complicated life situation. She shares a nuanced view and accurate assessment of her current circumstances in which she has to wait and be patient, instead of moving forward as she would like. Her comments demonstrate that she understands that fighting, which she understands as actively struggling and advocating for what she wants and what she believes to be right, will not help her to achieve her goals. She uses the discursive device of reported speech, lending her voice to the original speaker (Holt, 1996), to describe the dramatic and unhelpful ways people have responded to her in the past as she says "Oh, you are not good for job...you are not stable. You can not stay here. Oh my God, you are dangerous". She recognizes that people, including employers and service providers, often respond to her forceful or combative approach in ways that are not beneficial for her. She sees and acknowledges the reality that because of this, sometimes there is nothing she can do to resolve her situation but "be patient, and wait for help". The hope represented by the sun in Figure 9 helps SS to be patient, to "do nothing". Together the image and interview comments

enable SS to construct complex and nuanced ideas about her assessment of her current reality. SS explicitly connects the implications of seeing that reality with her resilience in her comments, "sometimes resilience means do nothing."

Another way that seeing reality clearly plays a part in resilience is exemplified by JC. She chose a set of pictures of her beauty products in response to the prompt *What does your strength look like?* After explaining how she uses each product as part of her daily beauty regimen, JC discusses how understanding the world helps her to attain her goals. (See Figure 13 and Excerpt 23)



Figure 13. "Beauty Products" by JC

Excerpt 23 JC 07:07-07:48

People look at the way that you dress...like 'dress for success'. People are going to look at you and judge you, unfortunately but they do, and they're going to judge the way that you look. And when you walk into a place they're going to treat you a certain way because you look a certain way. And I think that's really important because it opens doors, unfortunately, but it opens doors to different opportunities that if you hadn't taken time in the morning to clean yourself up, then those doors more than likely wouldn't open.

JC describes her understanding that looking well-dressed and beautiful “opens doors” for her that would otherwise stay closed, and that people will judge her, and treat her in different ways based on her appearance. While she evaluates the dynamic of being judged by others based on her appearance as “unfortunate”, she clearly sees this reality, enabling her to adapt in ways that position her to achieve her goals. She prioritizes her image by dressing well, and investing time, energy, and money in beauty products. Seeing reality clearly enables JC to correctly assess how others view and respond to her appearance in her daily life. On the basis of this, she is able to adapt and change in ways that lead to positive outcomes for her. She connects the positive changes she has made with her sense of strength. She derives daily strength – a facet of resilience - from believing she is doing what it takes to be successful.

In another excerpt, JC discusses the disastrous consequences of a time when she did not see the reality of her situation clearly in Excerpt 24. Her comments in Excerpt 24 are a continuation from Excerpt 18, both of which came after an extended discussion of the beauty products she uses in her daily life, reflections about how she presents herself to the world, and learning to make healthy choices in relation to romantic relationships.

Excerpt 24 JC 42:47 - 43:20

... before the kidnapping I never thought that way. I was just like “OK sure why not?” and you walk into a situation, which unfortunately – that happened to me....Because the world changed and I didn’t.

In her comment, “before the kidnapping I never thought that way,” JC tells how in the past she didn’t think through the consequences of her actions, which contributed to her inaccurate assessment of a dangerous situation. She illustrates the naïve thinking that placed her in peril when she shares her reported private thought ,“OK sure why not?”. Her naivete led her to inaccurately assess her situation, including not perceiving the nefarious motives of her traffickers or the danger of engaging with them. JC articulates her awareness of the implications of not seeing reality clearly. She understands that not seeing reality clearly was a limitation that kept her from being able to make good choices in the past. She connects not seeing her reality clearly with the consequence of being kidnapped and trafficked, and links not recognizing that the world had changed (presumably in dangerous ways) with the catastrophic consequences she experienced.

In general, seeing reality clearly enables participants to adapt in ways that are beneficial to them. They accurately assess their life circumstances and their implications, which helps them to make different choices and take new actions (or inaction as is the case for SS) for more positive results. In contrast, an overly optimistic or warped sense of reality can lead to disaster in a dangerous situation, as demonstrated by JC. It is likely that the ability to understand and correctly assess a complex situation is something participants learned to do better based on their prior traumatic experiences, which shape who they are and how they see the world. JC explicitly linked her past experiences with the ability to see reality clearly. This connection may apply equally to other participants.

Seeing reality clearly represents a strategy for engaging with reality that contributes to resilience because it lays a solid foundation for productive choices and actions.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored in detail how participants understand each strategy for engaging with reality – finding meaning in trauma, downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive, and seeing reality clearly – as they construct ideas about resilience. Strategies represent ways that participants think about, make sense of, and engage with past traumatic memories and present realities. While each strategy is distinct and analyzed separately, they are often interrelated, overlapping, and working together synergistically to foster resilience in the lived experiences of participants. For example, the ability to understand and correctly assess a complex situation is foundational to making choices about how to think about it. A person can't downplay the negative while foregrounding the positive if they can't see all aspects (positive and negative) of a situation. All three strategies provide or make possible many benefits and advantages for participants, which they connect with their ability to be resilient. Generally, the strategies reflect a positive, yet realistic way of thinking about past and present adversity. Table 4 offers a side-by-side look at participants' strategies for engaging with reality, which may be useful for practitioners who support people as they recover from trauma.

Table 4. Strategies for engaging with reality

Strategy	What it is	What it does	How it helps
Finding Meaning in Trauma	Way of thinking about past trauma	Changes meaning of past trauma to something that gave benefits	Provides benefits such as wisdom, strength, skills, and diminished power of painful memories of trauma
Downplaying the Negative While Foregrounding the Positive	Way of thinking about past and ongoing difficult (non-traumatic) life situations	Positively reframes past and ongoing difficult life situations	Provides benefits such as healing, emotional comfort, healthy relationships, improved mental and physical health
Seeing Reality Clearly	Ability to accurately assess current life situations	Creates foundation for new choices and actions	Enables participants to better adapt for positive outcomes

The ways of thinking about reality described by participants may provide insight for those who support survivors of trauma. Research is increasingly finding that resilience can be learned (Coutu, 2002). Being aware that these strategies have been connected with resilience may guide and inform practitioners in what processes to look for and encourage in clients. They may consider asking questions, whether paired with visual images or not, that prompt reflections related to one or more of these strategies. While it is not possible to generalize findings based on such a small participant sample, this study provides empirical evidence linking the strategies *finding meaning in trauma*, *downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive*, and *seeing reality clearly* with resilience for survivors of human trafficking. It is hoped these findings will inform and empower interventions aimed at promoting resilience for those who have experienced sexual exploitation or any other kind of trauma.

Chapter 5: Reflections on Photovoice as a Research Methodology

This chapter explores the advantages and limitations of Photovoice as a research methodology, and considers its relevance for use with vulnerable populations.

Methodologically, Photovoice offered two unique advantages that enhanced outcomes of the study. First, this methodology enhanced the breadth and depth of research data by generating a wide range in response types through the synergistic relationship of visual and oral data and the participatory research design. Second, Photovoice provided benefits for participants by increasing their critical consciousness about role of resilience in their lives (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006; Latz, 2017; Leibenberg, 2018; Teti, 2012; Wagner, Ellingson, & Kunkel, 2016). There were moments when the methodology may have limited data due to the freedom it gives participants to craft their photo and interview responses. However, Photovoice primarily prompted critical and deep thinking that enabled participants to reflect in new ways about the role of resilience in their lives.

Photovoice enriches data collected

In this section I discuss how the Photovoice methodology opens up or limits possibilities for rich and relevant data elicited from participants. I believe that in this study the methodology enhanced and deepened participant reflections and understandings about resilience both due to the participatory research design, which privileges participants' perspectives, and the synergy between visual and interview data. While there were some ways that the methodology posed challenges that may have limited participant input,

overall, Photovoice enhanced meaningful participant insights about resilience in their lives.

Participatory Research Design.

Here, I explore how the participatory nature and design of the Photovoice research methodology offers deep and rich access to participant meanings and understandings about the topical focus for this project, resilience. Throughout the project, participants' choices and decisions informed and guided their inquiry. The reader may recall from page 25 in Chapter 3, that before taking their photos participants discussed and collaboratively selected five photo prompts from the more than twenty possible resilience-related questions provided in the group meetings, which would inspire their Photovoice images. (See Appendix B Sample Photo Prompts and Table 3) As the researcher, I consciously remained mostly silent during the discussion and selection process, in order to background my own ideas about resilience in order to privilege participants' ideas.

Table 3 Photo Prompts

1. What motivates you?
2. What makes you feel healthy?
3. What does personal growth look like for you?
4. What does your strength look like?
5. Show what bouncing back means to you.

The photo prompts that participants chose matter, not only because they reflect their ideas about resilience, but also because they shape the research process from its inception.

Though they discuss some of the other resilience-related topics in their interviews, such as power, relationships, normalcy, skills, community, and change, participants framed their experience of resilience through the topics of motivation, health, personal growth, and strength. The aim of this study was to prioritize participants' understandings about what makes up resilience and what resilience means in their lives.

To review the participatory data collection methods involved in this study (See Chapter 2), participants took photos from their own lives in response to photo prompts they selected earlier. In the interviews, participants were able to further explore and articulate the ways their photos reflected and represented their ideas about resilience. Data collection foregrounded the perspectives and lived experiences of participants as their photos and interviews, along with field notes from the group meetings, resulted in the data for this project. The procedural steps of choosing photo prompts, taking photos in response to the prompts, and then discussing the meaning of the photos helped participants zero in on what was most meaningful to them about their resilience. Finally, participants generated initial themes or patterns they observed as they shared photos and their meanings with the group in the culminating group meeting. Though not ultimately included in analytic findings, this initial set of themes served as the starting point of analysis.

As the researcher, my perspectives on resilience were mostly backgrounded throughout this study. Though I generated the list of potential photo prompts based on the resilience literature, I did not voice my preferences or desires in the second group

meeting when participants collaboratively chose prompts to use for the project. While I provided participants with very basic photography instruction, and shared some photo images from other Photovoice projects to stimulate ideas and encourage them in their photo-taking, all of the decisions about what and how to photograph were made by the participants alone.

Because the methodology empowers participants who often go unheard to determine which paths their photographs and interviews will take, they explored issues and topics that I would not have known to ask about. It is important to note that I collaborated with participants in co-constructing meanings about resilience in respect to asking interview questions to help provide a supportive and nurturing interview environment. However, in interviews participants were able to construct and express their ideas about resilience in whatever ways made sense to them, with minimal input or feedback from me. Participant engagement in the research process, including research design, data collection and production, and initial analysis, facilitated profound and complex reflections and narratives about resilience in their lives.

Synergy between visual and oral data.

I now turn to discuss the implications of the synergy between visual and oral data for participant meanings and self-awareness. Unlike research that analyzes oral and written data only, Photovoice capitalizes on the nuance, texture and depth that visual images can provide. The use of visual images in concert with interview data opened up previously unavailable participant understandings. Thinking and communicating about resilience

through visual and oral methods also deepened their insights. Knowing that they would be explaining their photos while they were taking them and later viewing and talking about them with me created space for participants to think in new and creative ways. Participants struggled to represent ideas about relationships, beliefs and emotions symbolically, which challenged them to deepen their thinking. They engaged with the Photovoice process on multiple levels – via the combination of visual technology (digital phone cameras), visual art (photos) and individual and group talk (interviews and group meetings). Participants' cognitive, emotional and physical engagement with the methodology, combined with private reflection and collective introspection enabled them to reach a new cognitive awareness (Carlson, et al., 2006). The synergy between visual and verbal modes of communication produced nuanced, profound and multiple meanings about resilience in participants' lives. For example, the breadth and depth of meanings SS shares about Figure 14, a pair of small snails moving across her palm, is striking.

Excerpt 25 SS Pt 1 15:30 -16:00

They know that they are vulnerable. Any creature can destroy them. You know? And they are very fragile at the same time too. But they are strong enough make their shell. To like protect themselves. So yeah, I know that I'm very fragile. I know that anybody can hurt me. But I am going to make as much as I can to protect myself...



Figure 14. "Two Snails" by SS

Considerations of relationships, time, self-awareness and personal determination are made available through her comments in response to

Figure 14. In total, SS spoke for over ten minutes in response to the image. Prior to Excerpt 25 she shared that the snails represent her and her husband as they wait in a lengthy immigration process. She discussed Einstein's theory of relativity to explain how time sometimes moves slowly (as it does for her right now) and

sometimes moves rapidly (as it did when she was trying to escape her exploiters). In Excerpt 25 she tells how she understands the snails metaphorically represent her and her husband's vulnerability and fragility as they await her visa approval in an already lengthy immigration process. The image and her comments combine to evoke both the sluggish pace of the process she finds herself in, and also the way she and her husband press on together, however gradually, despite not being able to see what's coming ahead. That the tiny snails are placed in a huge hand evokes the sense that some colossal power which is many times more powerful than she and her husband holds their future in its figurative hand – perhaps the U.S. government? In her comments, "But they are strong enough make their shell. To like protect themselves," she shares that the snails also symbolize strength and the ability to protect themselves. The image and comments work in concert

to demonstrate her deep, nuanced and paradoxical awareness that vulnerability and strength can coexist at the same time, in the same being. SS connects her situation to that of the snails in her comment, "I know that I'm very fragile. I know that anybody can hurt me," demonstrating an awareness of her fragility and vulnerability. But SS tells how, like the snails, she will do all she can to protect herself in the future. She identified an awareness of the coexistence of her vulnerability, strength, and ability to protect herself as related to her resilience. Figure 14 and SS's interview comments work together to discursively construct figurative, procedural, and literal meanings about resilience.

Participants shared that taking photos representing ideas such as strength, health, or personal growth was challenging. In addition to the fact that they had not reflected much about their own resilience, they had most certainly not tried to envision their resilience as an image. The process of connecting prompts-to-photos-to-talk, enabled them to drill down or zero in on deeper, richer and more meaningful reflections and insights about resilience. Being encouraged to depict their ideas as visual representations found in their everyday lives led participants to think about resilience throughout the six weeks of the project. This ongoing reflection about resilience, coupled with knowing they would need to be able to explain their photo images, interacted dynamically with their photo taking process. Some participants reported taking a few photos every few days, and others took almost all of their photos in one day. In both cases, they shared that it was the first time they had dedicated weeks to consciously reflecting on resilience. Their insights and realizations while creatively thinking about how to represent their ideas in photos

were new and profound. One participant invested so much time and effort into her thoughts about resilience, she even practiced what she would say at home before coming to the interview. This suggests that the process of thinking and picture taking, plus the resulting insights, were so important and meaningful to her that she cared a lot about presenting them well.

There were several “ah-ha” moments when participants gained an insight into their lives during the interview directly related to the Photovoice methodology. While thinking metaphorically and symbolically was quite challenging for participants, they delighted in sharing the insights such thinking afforded. For example, in Excerpt 26 MJ describes her thoughts and feelings as she viewed all together the photos she chose to discuss in her interview and responded to the question of what she learned about herself through the Photovoice process.

Excerpt 26 MJ 1:02:54-1:19:09

Wow. It's huge. I believe in myself when I see those pictures - I personally made all of that happen. Wow! ...Wow. I don't ever want to forget this. I don't want to ever get too content to where I forget that all the struggles and everything I had to get to, to make this possible...I'm pretty awesome I think! Yes! I feel that I've done a good job at trying to bounce back. I'm very resilient I think... I'm capable, huh? It's pretty cool. I liked it, I really liked it. I learned about myself.

This excerpt, which occurred towards the end of the interview, serves as an example of the power of images to open up space for new meanings. Considerations of self-awareness, memory, relationships, inspiration, and pride become available as a result of MJ seeing her photos all together. In the moment, she realizes in a profound way that she is responsible for the ways she has recovered and healed from trauma. With emotion and some tears, she shares how this project helped her to remember, and motivates her to not forget, the “struggles and everything” that she has gone through to move forward with her life in a positive and thriving way. MJ’s comments mark an important self-realization about the immensity of her difficult life journey, and her ability to overcome. They suggest a newfound sense of accomplishment and feelings of pride in response to viewing her photos during her interview.

The visual element of the photos works together with her remarks to increase MJ’s awareness of her resilience. Without the photos it is doubtful such a realization would have occurred. Her comments, “I’m pretty awesome I think! Yes! I feel that I’ve done a good job at trying to bounce back. I’m very resilient I think... I’m capable” exemplify the potential for healing, increased self-awareness, and enhanced self-concept that can be generated via the synergy of visual and oral data found in Photovoice research. By sharing that she learned about herself, MJ demonstrates the pedagogical potential of the methodology as well. Because participants are not able to photograph people, they are “forced” to find and explain meaning in more metaphorical and nuanced ways. Even though she had earlier shared frustration at not being able to take photos of

people's faces, MJ was able to access a great deal of rich meanings about resilience in her life through the metaphorical thinking prompted by Photovoice.

While the combination of most photos and interviews elicited rich responses, not all did. It is important to notice the times when the Photovoice methodology, because of the freedom granted to participants, posed challenges which may have limited participant data. For example, there were instances when one participant's photos and comments did not clearly relate to resilience. She acted on her own agency to take photos and tell stories about situations from her life that were not directly related to the study topic. It is possible, even perhaps likely, that these photos and interview comments were connected to resilience in her mind, but she was not able to clearly express the link. Rather, it seemed that she acted on a need or desire to express something that was important to her, even if she could not communicate how it related to the research topic. The freedom granted to participants to determine how they will pursue their inquiry as part of the Photovoice methodology can result in unpredictable outcomes that do not always reflect the synergy between photos and interview data.

Range of photo and interview responses.

This section explores how the wide range in visual and interview response types enabled by the methodology enhanced the breadth and depth of research data. Participants' photos ranged from everyday items, to meaningful locations and scenarios, to metaphorical objects. Some images reflected a literal approach, in which participants photographed actual, tangible items from daily life. Other images featured locations, including vistas,

buildings, structures, and works of art that hold meaning for them. Photos also included scenarios, usually staged by the participant, to demonstrate something meaningful about a relationship, a practice, or experience related to resilience. Finally, some photos featured objects in purely metaphorical ways, for which the meaning could only be understood through explanations in the interview. This wide range of photo response typologies may have implications about how participants talk about their ideas, and the stories that might come out in interviews. For instance, some participants' interview responses spanned time (including the past, present, and future), while others' comments were situated completely in the present. Photovoice empowers participants to decide how to think about their inquiry. Thus their photo and interview responses are not circumscribed or restricted, which can result in a wide variety of responses.

In their photos and interviews, JC and SS exemplified the extremes of two response spectrums: the literal to the symbolic on one hand, and the present moment to the entire life journey on the other. Literal responses involve factual or concrete representations of actual things or events, the plain meaning of things, as it were. Symbolic responses include the use of metaphor or figurative images and language. JC's photos and comments represent literal responses related to daily life. (See Figure 12) In Excerpt 27, JC begins the interview with this response to my question of whether she wanted to begin discussing the photos themselves, or the questions that inspired them:

Excerpt 27 JC 01:03-01:31

All of these things are the things that I use daily. So I decided to use all the things where I reside... Daily life is pretty much all the questions for me.

All of JC's photos feature actual, tangible items from her current daily life and practices, such as beauty products, her bed, a clock...etc. (See Figures 8 & 13). In her interview, JC explains how she uses or engages with the items, and how they relate to her resilience. In a few instances an item carried some symbolic meaning when probed, but JC's general approach to all of the questions about resilience is to show the actual things that help her in this moment of life to feel motivated, strong, healthy and resilient. Figure 12 and Excerpt 27 demonstrate that JC's ideas and perspectives about resilience are grounded in tangible items found in her present daily life.

In contrast, all of the photo and interview responses of SS involve the extensive use of metaphors to convey aspects of her resilience. In addition, she frames her images and interview comments as representing her entire life journey, including the past, present and future. Within the five photos SS chose to discuss in her interview, two represent her past, two her present, and one photo represents her ideas about her future. (See Figure 14 and Excerpt 27)

Excerpt 27 SS Pt 2 14:45-16:49



Figure 15. "Future" by SS

That's my future ... the place that I will be... I'm that one, with a beautiful smell, beautiful shape... I got hurt. If you look at that, it is not that much healthy completely... a little damaged... but still is beautiful. It still is a flower and still has a smell.

SS again uses metaphorical thinking in her choices about what to photograph and how to explain the meaning of the image. The image features a spindly rose bush with a lot of leggy branches, but just one rose. In the interview, she points to the flower while saying, "That's my future". It is possible that the photo visually captured an abstract idea about resilience that she may not have been able to put into words before. She connects the health of the flower, which symbolically represents her future self, with her own condition, by stating "I got hurt" and noting that the flower is "a little damaged". SS indicates a sense of stalwart hope in her own future in her comment that the rose "still is beautiful. It still is a flower, and still has a smell." She articulates the paradoxical reality of a damaged, yet still beautiful and fragrant flower, which symbolizes the ways that she retains her identity and sense of self despite experiences of trauma. This use of paradox echoes her description of the co-existence of fragility and the strength in one being (See Figure 14 and Excerpt 25). She notes that the beauty, smell and shape of the rose remains even after being damaged, which suggests that she sees her future self as still beautiful, and not fundamentally changed by her traumatic experiences. Figure 14 and Excerpt 27 exemplify the way SS frames all of her ideas about resilience metaphorically and temporally, spanning from her past, to her present, and in this case, her future.

JC and SS each had a separate mode of taking photos to capture visually something important to them about resilience. JC's approach was almost totally literal and in the moment, while SS employed a completely metaphorical method, which involved the past, present, and future. Yet both were able to access rich and nuanced meanings about resilience. Their very different results demonstrate that a wide range of types of responses can be elicited by the methodology.

Meanings evolve.

Another interesting methodological aspect of this study was observing that some participants offered different meanings about their photos in the individual interviews and in the culminating group meeting. In response to viewing their photos with the entire group at the culminating group meeting several participants described new or different meanings from the ones they shared in the individual interview. For example, one participant mentioned a past traumatic experience briefly in the interview, but in the culminating group meeting she provided descriptive and emotional details about the experience and its meaning. Participants' shared history in the Safehouse program and similar backgrounds may account for the more intimate disclosures in the group meeting.

One participant shared a completely different meaning about a photo in the group meeting than she had described in her interview. In the interview, the meaning she shared reflected awareness of positive growth in her life. At the culminating group meeting, she expressed meanings that also included negative aspects of a memory related to the photo. Both meanings may be equally true and valid – they were not contradictory. But she

chose to focus on a different aspect of what the photo meant to her during the group meeting. Knowing that other participants had prior knowledge about that particular photo (as some had been with her when she took it) prompted her to co-construct meaning with them in the meeting in a way that would make sense for all of them. This example points to how meaning can evolve and change for individuals as they construct it in the moment and in relation to an audience, in this case, the interviewer (me) and the other study participants. They also demonstrate how different understandings are made available via the different contexts (individual interviews and group meetings) that are built into the participatory group research design of Photovoice.

Temporality.

Participant responses to the photo prompts shared a common thread of temporally constructing ideas about resilience. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, participants framed their ideas in many of their interview comments by contrasting a difficult past situation with a healthier, more positive present one. Research has shown that the progression from past to present in narratives can represent a “locus of transition”, initiating the next phase of the story or conversation (Robinson & Heritage, 2005). Rather than progressing from past to present in their responses, participants alternated between the two often. It may be that the multiple contrasts between a difficult past and a healthy present served to highlight and emphasize changes for the better over time, and thus add value, poignancy and importance to their present, positive status.

Effects of prompts.

A final note of methodological value explores the differences between data generated by photo prompts and data embedded in unrelated interview talk. In most cases, interview data included in analysis were in response to a photo prompt and the photo itself. Yet in some instances, as previously mentioned, interview responses relating to resilience occurred as a result of the interview itself, and were unrelated to any prompt or photo. The nature of the difference between types of responses is not entirely clear. Valuable and important participant ideas about resilience were embedded in talk that was unrelated to prompts and photos. Yet participant remarks in response to prompts seemed to be more clearly focused on the topic of study. Also, it seems that visual images gave participants a mental anchor to return to again and again as they described meanings about resilience, which facilitated lengthier and more detailed remarks. It may be of further methodological value to explore the differences between data generated by prompts and photos, and data that is embedded in unrelated participant talk. Analyzing data of each type may confirm my sense that participants' responses to prompts yield more focused and relevant data than those that occur in unrelated interview talk.

In sum, the various communicative processes, contexts, settings that make up the Photovoice methodology enabled participants to generate complex and diverse ideas about resilience. Through collaborative group conversations with other study participants and one-to-one interviews with the interviewer, participants discursively co-constructed perspectives, insights and realizations. Their photos and interview responses which were a dynamic combination of visual and oral communication methods helped participants

fashion narratives and discourses related to resilience. The opportunity to explore resilience in partnership with peers who have shared lived experiences empowered participants to communicatively construct meanings that foster and support their ongoing and future resilience. Attention to these communicative aspects of Photovoice plays a key role in understanding the communicative construction of resilience.

Critical Consciousness

In this section I offer reflections on ways Photovoice promoted and enhanced participants' self-awareness about the role of resilience in their lives. Participants' ability to recognize and critically consider both internal and external factors that contribute to their resilience reflects a critical consciousness. As discussed in Chapter 1, an oft-cited cornerstone of the methodology is its potential to promote critical consciousness for participants related to the topic of study (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006; Latz, 2017; Leibenberg, 2018; Teti, 2012; Wagner, Ellingson, & Kunkel, 2016). The concept of critical consciousness has its roots in a Freirian approach to education, which seeks to gain access to community knowledge and realities. Critical consciousness requires that "individuals realize that their actions can either maintain or disrupt their social realities" (Latz, 2017, p. 40). As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, in their interview responses participants demonstrated a variety of new insights and realizations about their resilience. Two participants shared directly that being a part of the research led them to have new insights and realizations about their own resilience. The self-reflection required in this Photovoice project challenged them to think in new and creative ways, which led

to increased recognition of their own motivation, strength, health, and personal growth.

An example of this is shown in Excerpt 28, in which MJ reflects on what she learned from the Photovoice process. At this moment of the interview, MJ was viewing all of the photos she had chosen as most meaningful for her ideas about resilience and responding to a question asking about her thoughts as she saw all the photos together.

Excerpt 28 MJ 1:04:03 – 1:04:39

I'm stronger than I thought, stronger than I give myself credit for. And, thank you Lord. It's amazing...I'm speechless really, honestly, I'm speechless. I didn't think of that that way....I'm proud of myself.

The insight that she is stronger than she previously knew was profound for MJ. After viewing, reflecting on, and discussing the photos she had chosen as most meaningful to her resilience, she gained new awareness of her strength and accomplishments. The emotional impact of her realization is evidenced by tears and her comments, "I'm speechless really, honestly, I'm speechless." MJ points to how participating the Photovoice process helped her to gain new ways of thinking about her own resilience. In her comment, "I didn't think of it that way", she articulates that before this project, she hadn't previously thought about her accomplishments and resilience in this way. Being involved in the Photovoice project gave her access to new self-awareness about the impact her choices and actions have had in promoting her resilience. Realizing that her strength has been instrumental in her healing and recovery from multiple difficult life challenges led MJ to express feelings of pride. MJ's situation exemplifies the important

benefits of critical consciousness: self-insight and awareness contributing to a positive self-concept and positive feelings, such as pride.

Not all participants commented directly on what it was like to participate in a Photovoice research project. But this brief comment by SG, where she responds to a question about why she agreed to participate in the project, also hints at an increased self-awareness.

Excerpt 29 SG 01:22 01:48

This helped me to grow as a person...and if I can share what I went through... through pictures... to help someone else...then great!

In Excerpt 29, SG states explicitly that the Photovoice project contributed to her personal growth. Her subsequent comments about helping others “through pictures” reflects not only an altruistic motivation for participating, but also a belief in her own ability to make a positive difference for others. Likewise, JC’s brief comment in Excerpt 30, in which she reflects on the Photovoice process, implies enhanced self-awareness.

Excerpt 30 JC 00:22-00:28

It was like having a conversation, a healthy conversation with myself.

JC thought about the Photovoice process as a “healthy conversation” with herself. Throughout her interview, many of her comments related to ways she supports her physical, emotional and mental health. The comment in Excerpt 30 suggests that the process of critically reflecting on resilience in her daily life increased her awareness of the ways she contributes to her resilience through healthy choices and actions. Interestingly, in her

response to the question “What did you learn about yourself doing this project?” SS highlights not self-awareness, but an increased sense of agency. (See Excerpt 31)

Excerpt 31 SS 33:48 – 39-25

Actually, I know myself. It's about sharing, which wasn't easy for me...it's like learning that I can be brave... it's not learning about myself, it's like 'dare to do this'.

For SS, being a part of this study was not easy, as she had many concerns about confidentiality. When she states, “Actually, I know myself”, and “it's not learning about myself” she twice rejects the notion that the Photovoice process helped her to learn more about herself. But she then contradicts that sentiment in her comment “it's like learning that I can be brave”. This suggests there is a distinction in her mind between being and doing - who she is vs. what she does. Her private thought, “it's like, ‘dare to do this’”, indicates that encouraging self-talk enabled her to participate in the study despite her fears. Though indirect, her comments in Excerpt 31 hint at an increased awareness of her ability to act based on her courage, not out of fear.

Participants also reflected on their participation in a Photovoice research project during the culminating group meeting in ways that indicate increased self-awareness about their resilience. The following are participant comments about what they liked best about the study (observed 2/16/19):

- Getting to have a moment to realize I have a lot to be proud of.

- We forget how far we have come sometimes because we still struggle. I came here with nothing!
- It helped me to reflect. You just don't see it when you're busy.
- Reflecting on my past. Look where I came from. Wow!

These comments bring up two important issues. First, taking time out of the busyness and struggle of daily life to reflect on their lives is an unusual practice for participants. Because of the ongoing struggle to provide for themselves so that they can remain healthy and independent, participants likely focus their energy primarily on day to day matters. Unless they continue with individual or group therapy, they probably do not take much time for reflection and self-analysis. Participants mention that mindful reflection –a key aspect of the Photovoice methodology -- is what they liked best about the project. This points the connection between the methodology and enhanced self-awareness. Second, reflections on resilience gave participants a new vantage point from which to view their lives. The ability to look back on the past from the present moment and see the progress they've made contributed to a heightened awareness of resilience for participants. It may be that a survival mindset, which has served them well in the past, discourages such retrospective reflections. Participating in the Photovoice project may have been the first time in a while that participants took time out of their busy daily schedules to look back on and contemplate their life journey. Further, awareness of the important ways they actively and dynamically contribute to their resilience, through their own motivation, strength, strategies and abilities, is a reflection of critical consciousness. Realizing that is was their own decisions, attitudes,

and actions that enabled them to recover and heal from trauma was a significant outcome enabled by Photovoice.

Conclusion

In this study, the Photovoice methodology offered two unique advantages that enhanced outcomes. First, it generated rich and relevant data for analysis due to the participatory research design, the synergy between visual and oral data, and the wide range of response types elicited from participants. Second, the Photovoice process provided benefits for participants by increasing their critical consciousness about role of resilience in their lives, such as increase self-awareness and enhanced self-concept.

The participatory nature of Photovoice gave participants the freedom to choose how they would generate and frame their ideas, giving access to important issues and topics that would not otherwise have been explored. Participant engagement in the research process, including research design, data collection and production, and initial analysis, facilitated profound and complex reflections and narratives about resilience in their lives. The synergy between visual and oral data led to enhanced meanings and realizations for participants, and richer, more nuanced data for analysis. The use of visual images in concert with interview data opened up previously unavailable participant understandings, and created space for participants to think in new and creative ways. The freedom to think of and express ideas about resilience in ways that make sense to them, generated a wide range of participant response types. Participants approached taking photos to visually capture something important to them about resilience in different ways.

The range of photo and interview responses that were generated by literal or metaphoric approaches, for example, enabled participants to access rich and nuanced meanings about resilience.

Photovoice as a research methodology provided participants with benefits, such as heightened critical consciousness about the role of resilience in their lives, increased self-awareness and enhanced self-concept. The methodology positioned participants as active agents in research, and prompted self-reflections leading to increased critical consciousness about the role of resilience in their lives. In their interview comments, participants demonstrated a variety of new insights and realizations about their resilience. One participant stated at the end the culminating group meeting, as we were hugging our goodbyes, that she felt like she had just seen her therapist! Her statement reflects awareness that sharing and discussing photos with peers who have common life experiences in a supportive and nurturing environment helped her to access deep self-understanding. It is hoped that exploring and constructing their own meanings about resilience through a Photovoice project will promote and strengthen participants' ongoing ability to be resilient.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Discussion

This study builds on prior literature in four ways. First, it builds on prior human trafficking literature which calls for an increased focus on survivor perspectives in research. Second, while this analysis confirms much of previous resilience research, which are discussed below, this project offers new insight about the key role that positive self-engagement plays in resilience. Third, this study contributes to the body of literature on the communicative construction of resilience, by highlighting discursive practices participants have identified as promoting their resilience. Finally, it supports earlier Photovoice literature highlighting the methodology's ability to both generate rich and nuanced data and also to facilitate critical consciousness for participants.

This research project sought to understand the relationship between resilience and the lived experiences of survivors of human trafficking. While prior studies have used Photovoice to investigate the relationship between resilience and trauma (Adegoke & Steyn, 2017; Kabel, Teti, & Zhang, 2016; True, Rigg & Butler, 2015), to my knowledge this is the first Photovoice study exploring resilience in adult survivors of human trafficking. By virtue of having experienced trauma, survivors of human trafficking are experts in resilience. Exploring their understandings, which are based on lived experiences, offers unique insights into processes that promote their resilience. This study identifies the following mindsets and strategies in the lived experiences of participants that contribute to resilience:

- valuing relationships with others

- choosing positive self-engagement
- finding meaning in trauma
- downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive
- seeing reality clearly.

As described in Chapter 3, mindsets relate to ways of thinking about a topic, and strategies pertain to ways participants approach or engage with memories or present situations. Though separated and distinct in analysis, these mindsets and strategies are interrelated and work dynamically to promote and support resilience for participants. For example, finding meaning in trauma increases participants' awareness of their own strength and skills, leading to a positive self-concept and feelings, which is reflected in expressions of positive self-engagement such as "Look how far I've come!" and "I'm gonna forgive myself."

Perspectives of Survivors of Human Trafficking

Previous human trafficking research called for a focus on survivor perspectives, and inclusion of survivors in the research process itself (Hounmenou, 2018). This study builds on prior literature of human trafficking by centering the lived experiences of survivors of human trafficking, revealing the perspectives of those who are often rendered invisible in research. People who have survived traumatic experiences of exploitation have unique knowledge about recovery and healing. Insight into their perspectives and understandings provides access to standpoints of reality that have largely been ignored (Macy & Johns, 2011; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). By creating space

for the voices of survivors of human trafficking, and highlighting their perspectives on resilience, this study contributes insights to our knowledge about survivor's resilience and recovery after trauma.

Analytic findings represent empirical evidence of mindsets and strategies that survivors of human trafficking have used to promote their resilience. Through their photos and interview comments, participants expressed the mindset of *valuing relationships* with others as a key aspect of their resilience. (See Chapter 3) They spoke of the many benefits they receive through relationships with others: motivation to work hard, improved mental health, a sense of security, emotional comfort, strength, and confidence – all factors related to resilience (Affifi, 2018; Brandhorst, 2018; Buzzanell, 2010; Madsen & Abell, 2010). Participants demonstrated a mindset of *positive self-engagement* as they noticeably treated themselves in supportive and compassionate ways, via a positive self-growth orientation, expressions of self-compassion or affirming positive identity anchors. (See Chapter 3) Participants' photos and interview comments worked together to reveal three strategies which contribute to their resilience. (see Chapter 4) *Finding meaning in trauma* changes the meaning of past trauma to something that gave benefits to participants such as wisdom, strength, life-lessons and skills. *Downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive* is a strategy of positively reframing past and present difficulties which promotes participants' healing, emotional comfort, healthy relationships, and improved mental and physical health. Finally, the

ability to *see reality clearly* is a strategy which creates a foundation for new choices and actions, enabling participants to better adapt for positive outcomes.

The unique standpoint of those who have experienced and recovered from human trafficking can provide novel insights, as they share about mindsets and strategies that helped them to be resilient. Focusing on the knowledge and perspectives of those with lived experience of trafficking is critical to informing interventions that seek to foster resilience for others who have experienced exploitation, and possibly for people who have experienced other kinds of trauma as well.

Findings suggest that practitioners who support survivors may want to encourage and support clients to value and nurture healthy relationships with others. Supporters may want to model and promote positive self-engagement for their clients. Service providers might coach and support clients to embrace the strategies of finding meaning in trauma, downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive, and seeing reality clearly in order to foster resilience. The purpose of this study is not to generalize findings, but to understand the experiences of a few individuals to see in-depth their experience using this method. Results suggest that attention to the coping strategies and mindsets identified in this study can key play a role in facilitating resilience for survivors of human trafficking.

Enhanced understandings of resilience

While this study supports much of prior resilience research, it contributes new insight into the important role of positive self-engagement in participants' resilience after experiences of trauma. Findings suggest that resilience in survivors is promoted not only

by perceived changes to the self after trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), but also by an attitude of positive self-engagement. As they integrate new knowledge about themselves after experiences of trauma, participants relate to themselves in affirming and compassionate ways. They demonstrate a positive self-growth orientation as they appreciate and affirm the extent and ways they have changed for the better. For example, in Excerpt 10 SG shares her awareness that the ability to let go of past feelings of shame about her sexual identity is positive self-growth in her statement, "...look how far I've grown," and "look where I am today". SG's positive self-growth orientation enhances her sense of self-esteem and confidence, because she is aware of her ability to change for the better, an important aspect of resilience. This suggests that encouraging survivors to reflect on and, more importantly, celebrate personal growth may facilitate increased resilience.

In addition to a positive self-growth orientation, this study finds that another key element of participants' resilience is their ability to demonstrate self-compassion, self-forgiveness, self-love, and self-care. They describe treating themselves with kindness, warmth and understanding. SS exemplifies an attitude of self-compassion in Excerpt 11 as expresses her awareness that she does not need to forget what happened to her in the past in order to forgive herself. She recognizes that self-forgiveness, an aspect of self-compassion, is necessary for her to move on in a positive way. This finding indicates that healing interventions which encourage and foster mindsets and expressions of self-compassion may promote resilience for those who have experienced trauma.

I theorize that participants' exposure to the harm reduction approach of treatment and services after trauma contributed to their ability to choose positive self-engagement. I base this hypothesis on knowledge gained in my involvement with this population over time. I have observed that survivors of human trafficking who succeed and thrive generally express an attitude of positive self-engagement in their conversations. It is possible that participants' experiences talking about their lives with service providers or therapists who have been a part of their recovery from trauma, have shaped their ideas about resilience. It would be feasible to devise a future study design to test this hypothesis.

The harm reduction approach focuses on the process of improvement, not on reaching perfection. It represents a therapeutic discourse that may influence participants' self-perspectives by empowering them to think about their lives without shame, judgement or worrying about what others think. Practitioners of harm reduction recognize and celebrate positive steps (big or small) in the healing or recovery process, which may help participants learn to do the same for themselves. Having participated in the same program (San Francisco SafeHouse) which employs a harm reduction approach, may have contributed to participants' overall mindset of positive self-engagement. Interestingly, in the culminating group meeting, participants named "harm reduction" and "loving yourself, or wanting to love yourself" as two of the main things that helped them to be resilient (observed, 2/16/19).

This study also confirms and builds on prior research on resilience, which has noted the importance of valuing relationships with others as a key protective factor contributing to the ability to bounce back after adversity (Afifi, 2018; Brandhorst, 2018; Buzzanell, 2010; Cecchet & Thoburn, 2014; Hickle, 2017; Lilgendahl et al., 2013; Madsen & Abell, 2010; Neff & McGehee, 2010; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). All participants discussed the mindset of *valuing relationships* as playing a key role in their past and present resilience. They pointed to the many benefits they receive through relationships with others: motivation to work hard, improved mental health, a sense of security, emotional comfort, strength, and confidence – all factors related to resilience. The importance that participants placed on the value of relationships demonstrates how resilience is a collaborative affair involving communities (Buzzanell, 2010), and confirms prior studies which have described the ways people can develop deeper relationships after trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Relationships help people to understand how their actions can affect others, and to become aware of the joint responsibility of maintaining connections which are both abilities essential to resilient living (Brandhorst, 2018). Feeling connected to others has been linked with the ability to make healthy life choices, such as exiting the sex trade (Hickle, 2017), and provides space for memory telling, which contributes to healthy meaning making (Lilgendahl et al., 2013). People who have overcome the negative effects trauma themselves point to the primary role that relationships played in that process (Madsen, 2008). Relationships with organizations can also provide essential support that enables people to recover from hardship (Buzzanell,

2010). Overall, this study confirms that the ability to establish and maintain relationships with others has been significantly correlated with resilience (Madsen & Abell, 2010).

Similarly, prior literature has described finding meaning in trauma, downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive, and seeing reality clearly as strategies that facilitate resilience (Buzzanell, 2010; Coutu, 2002; Lilgendahl, McLean, & Mansfield, 2013; Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2011). The ability to make sense of traumatic memories by transforming them into sources of positive growth represents healthy meaning making, which not only provides emotional comfort (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), but also contributes to a sense of well-being (Lilgendahl, McLean, & Mansfield, 2013).

Downplaying the negative while foregrounding the positive has been discussed as a key process in the communicative construction of resilience, because it prioritizes a “constrained hopefulness” and future-oriented goals (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 9). The ability to see reality clearly, to understand and correctly assess a complex situation, prepares one to adapt to life challenges in ways that lead to more positive outcomes (Coutu, 2002). Furthermore, others have described the dynamic and interrelated nature of protective factors that promote resilience (Coutu, 2002; Meschke, 2003).

Communicative construction of resilience

This study adds to the body of literature on the communicative construction of resilience. In their examination of the role of resilience in women exiting the sex trade, a population analogous to the one studied in this project, Cecchet and Thoburn (2014) conceptualize resilience as a personality trait inherent to individuals. In contrast, this research views

resilience as a dynamic and evolving process that is constituted and sustained through discourse (Brandhorst, 2018; Buzzanell, 2010). Findings point to the importance of communication in fostering resilience. For example, through talk participants construct ideas about resilience, such as valuing relationships or finding meaning in trauma, that enable them to cope, adapt, transform and overcome trauma. Through communication with others, with themselves via self-talk, and with me in the interview itself, participants construct awareness about their resilience. By creating discourses of positive self-engagement, participants not only demonstrate a key contributing factor to their resilience, but they also highlight the role of communication in this process - they talk their resilience into existence.

Evidence increasingly indicates that resilience can be learned (Coutu, 2002). While it cannot be measured directly, resilience can be observed through the expression of protective and adaptive attitudes and behaviors which lead to positive outcomes (Madsen & Abell, 2010). Attention to the communicative processes which have been demonstrated to promote resilience can play a vital role in understanding how best to teach, promote and support resilience for those who have experienced trauma. For instance, MJ and JC demonstrate a discursive practice of self-questioning that helped (and continues to help in the case of JC) them make positive and healthy decisions in Excerpts 17 and 18 as discussed in Chapter 4. This type of self-reflexive inner questioning is a skill that can be taught and encouraged by practitioners who support survivors of trauma.

Harm reduction is another approach to treatment that is implemented communicatively, primarily through conversation. Thinking of the connection between communication and resilience in this context allows for interventions and strategies (such as harm reduction) that locate resilience as a collaborative project, as opposed to a discrete personality trait that a person either has or doesn't have. It offers hope that resilient processes can be taught, shared, or transferred collaboratively through discourse. I suggest that, as a discursive practice that promotes and supports resilience, harm reduction can play a key role in the communicative construction of resilience (Buzzanell, 2010) for survivors of human trafficking. Future research might empirically investigate the link between the harm reduction model and client attitudes towards themselves to explore this connection.

Photovoice

To my knowledge, this is the first Photovoice study exploring resilience in adult survivors of human trafficking using a participatory research approach. Results as reported in Chapter 5 confirm previous Photovoice literature highlighting the methodology's ability to both generate rich and nuanced data (Latz, 2017), and also to facilitate critical consciousness for participants (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006; Latz, 2017; Leibenberg, 2018; Teti, 2012; Wagner, Ellingson, & Kunkel, 2016). Findings from this study support the use of Photovoice to access and reveal the ideas and realities of populations that often go unheard and unseen. If implemented within a resilience and trauma-informed framework, Photovoice is ideally situated to provide

access the knowledge and perspectives of survivors of human trafficking, while avoiding the risk of retraumatization for participants. Additionally, the methodology can offer benefits to participants such as increased self-awareness and an enhanced self-concept.

In this study, the Photovoice methodology created space for participants, whose voices and perspectives are often go unheard and unseen, to create knowledge and gain new awareness about resilience in their lives. The participatory nature of Photovoice gave participants the freedom to choose how they would generate and frame their ideas, giving access to important issues and topics that would not otherwise have been explored. It empowered them to co-construct knowledge and “move from being mere objects to acting as subjects of their own research process” (Maguire, 1987, p. 30). All participants were able to present and define themselves visually and orally, in ways that counter common stereotypes about people who have experienced exploitation and homelessness.

Human trafficking service providers and advocates may find Photovoice to be a useful tool for engaging with survivors to elicit their perspectives. Service providers could implement a Photovoice project to investigate client perspectives about the services and support they have received. Providers like San Francisco SafeHouse may choose to conduct abbreviated Photovoice projects with clients as they exit the treatment program. Doing so can both help service providers to better understand how clients think and feel about the program, and also help clients to engage in self-reflection that leads to enhanced awareness and resilience. Advocates may engage survivors in a Photovoice project exploring their ideas about policy and systems related to human trafficking, in

order to inform interventions aimed at helping those who are at risk of, or have experienced, human trafficking. Finally, a Photovoice project can help to access the unique knowledge and insights of survivors to provide both a rationale and impetus for needed policy change through a photo exhibition targeting decision-makers. The Photovoice methodology is adaptable in a variety of ways. The topic and timeframe of the study, as well as the number of participants involved can be adjusted. In sum, Photovoice offers unique advantages for exploring the knowledge and perspectives of survivors of human trafficking.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, findings are based on data from a relatively small number of participants. All participants participated in and graduated from the San Francisco SafeHouse program, which may have influenced them in similar ways, and may account for some commonalities found in their interviews. I did not have the ability to meet with or interview additional participants who did not share the experience of San Francisco SafeHouse. Second, one of the participants speaks English as a second language, which may have limited her ability to thoroughly explain, and my ability to fully understand, her ideas about resilience. Since the Photovoice methodology relies upon individual in-depth interviews, it is resource intensive. An availability of resources is needed to implement the methodology including: paid or volunteer researchers, digital or phone cameras for participants, computer software for storing and displaying images, and funds for participant stipends and printing photos (if an exhibit is part of the research

design). Finally, because study findings are based on interpretive, qualitative analysis, it is possible that other interpretations may exist.

Future research should investigate resilience using Photovoice, but with a greater number of participants and from a variety of different service providers. Future studies using Photovoice might explore to what extent the treatment program which serves participants affects their attitudes and ideas about their resilience. It would be interesting to see if participant data varied greatly with a slightly different research design, such as using only one or two prompts to generate photo images, or extending the research schedule over an increased period of time. Examining how audiences respond to a Photovoice exhibit, in which participant images and interview text is displayed for an audience, could increase knowledge about the potential impact of the methodology on public awareness and decision-making.

Though this research sought to highlight the perspectives and understandings of survivors of human trafficking, so much remains to be learned. Survivors have unique knowledge and insights that are needed to better inform both service and policy interventions. Scholars should give attention and priority to the perspectives and knowledge of those who have been impacted by human trafficking in order to improve anti-trafficking efforts.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer

***Exploring Resilience with Photovoice
-A Participatory Photography Project -***

Hello! My name is Sue Lockyer and I'm a graduate student at SFSU in the Communication Studies Department. I am conducting a Photovoice research project on resilience, and I am inviting you to participate because as a survivor
you are an expert in resilience.

With Photovoice, you creatively document your perspectives on resilience through photos in a safe and nurturing environment.

If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

- take photos that tell a story about your strengths, accomplishments and resilience (we won't use pictures of you).
- help create photo prompts and project goals as a co-researcher.
- attend 3 meetings and 1 interview with me for a total time commitment of 6.5–8 hours over an 8 week period.

Benefits of participating:

- increase your awareness about your own resilience, and document your life on your own terms.
- gain research experience.
- receive a small stipend for your time and effort (Total of \$45 in the form of debit cards: \$20 at the end of the 2nd meeting and \$25 at the end of the last group meeting).
- receive enlarged prints of your photos OR a self-published booklet of your and the groups images.

No photography skills needed - there is no way to do this project wrong!

Your digital images will be securely stored on Box, San Francisco State University's approved, secure cloud storage service and will not be shared with others without your approval and written consent.

Have questions? Want to learn more about participating in this project? Join me for a brief

Informational Meeting

555 Ellis St. on Saturday, 12/15/18 at 11:30am.

Please feel free to contact me at 650-678-5658 or nlockyer@mail.sfsu.edu if you would like to participate in this project or if you have any questions whatsoever. Thank you!

Appendix B

Sample Photo Prompts

This list serves as a starting point for a group discussion about photo prompts. Participants will discuss, add and/or subtract from this list of suggested prompts⁴, and collaboratively choose four photo prompts.

What makes you feel powerful?

What motivates you?

What kind of relationship(s) has helped you

What is your ideal self?

What strength, skill, knowledge or belief has helped you the most?

What does self-care look like for you?

What does coping look like for you?

How do you fit in to your community?

What is your greatest strength?

What makes you feel healthy?

What does personal growth look like for you?

When do you feel connected with friends and loved ones?

How do you handle tough experiences?

What does “normal” look like for you?

What does your strength look like?

What does a healthy and meaningful relationship look like?

What does it look like when you feel competent? accomplished?

How do you adapt to change?

⁴ Prompts are informed by: Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The construct of resilience: Implications for interventions and social policies. *Development and psychopathology*, 12(4), 857-885.

What is good about your life?

Show what bouncing back means to you.

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Greeting

Explanation of purpose and format of interview

- Review:
- confidentiality of data
 - risks/benefits
 - safety plan and support resources if needed
 - voluntary nature of participation
 - GOAL: learn from you - IDEALLY as a conversation
 - feel free to ask me any questions

Begin Recording

Interview: 1 – 1.5 hours

(Warm-up)

Why do you want to share your story with Photovoice?

In general, how did you decide what to photograph?

Are there photos you see as the most important or meaningful? (preliminary sort)

For each photo:

What do you see here?⁵

don't forget follow-up Qs /

probes

What is happening?

don't leave things implicit:

How does this relate to your life?

– “can you say

more?”

Why does this strength (skill/knowledge/belief) exist?

⁵ A modified version of the SHOWed technique, a well-established method for guiding photovoice discussion, is used to discuss each photo (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

What does the photo capture about your capacity to bounce back?

What does this image mean to you?

Who were you thinking of when taking this photo? Why?

What are some key words that come to mind when you look at this photo?

What story does the photo tell about your life?

How does the photo capture your perspective on resilience?

Which photos relate to questions a, b, c, d, e (on Photo Instructions)?

(Initial Analysis)

- Is there anything your photos have in common?
- Is there anything you see that repeats in your photos?
- What key words come to mind as you look at your photos?
- When you look at your photos together, what stands out for you?
- Which of these go together for you? Why? What would you call this category?
- Which photos do you like the most? the least?

(Project reflection questions)

- What did you learn about yourself in the project?
- What was it like for you to take photos from your daily life?
- Who needs to hear your story?
- What other reflections or comments about the Photovoice experience would you like to share?

(Wrap-up)

What other thoughts do you have about your photos?

(If applicable) Do you plan to have involvement in the photo exhibition? Why or why not?

Thank you for your work and for participating in this research!

End Recording

Appendix D

IRB Protocol Approval

San Francisco State University
Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Exploring Resilience with Photovoice: A Participatory Photography Project

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this research is to learn about how people bounce back after difficult experiences.

Sue Lockyer is a graduate student at San Francisco State University. Sue is doing research for a master's degree thesis. The faculty supervisor for the project is Dr. Christopher J. Koenig, Professor Department of Communication Studies.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a successful graduate of San Francisco SafeHouse. All participants will: be adults (18 years or older), identify as female, be in a stable and independent living situation, not currently be experiencing severe mental illness, speak English, and have access to email.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

1. Come to 3 group meetings and 1 individual interview with Sue at a time we agree on together. We will meet at San Francisco SafeHouse for a total of 6.5–8 hours over 8 weeks.
 - Orientation meeting (1.5 hours): You will learn more about the project details, talk about photo prompt ideas, ask questions, and (if you agree) sign consent forms.
 - Planning meeting (1.5 hours): You will learn about basic photography skills, talk about safety and photography, discuss storytelling ideas, choose photo prompts with the group, talk about and decide on how images will be presented at the end of the project.
 - You will be asked to take about 20 photos that tell a story about your strengths, accomplishments and resilience during the two weeks between the Planning meeting and the Interview. You will email your photos to Sue before the Interview.
 - Interview with Sue (1 – 1.5 hours): You will meet with Sue at a time we agree on together to talk about your photos and what they mean to you.
 - Culminating meeting (1.5 hours): You will share key photos and what they mean to you with the group. You will also be asked to share your thoughts and feelings about the project together with the group.
2. Agree to not take photos of people's faces (including your own) or photos that show where you are.
3. Agree that Sue Lockyer may contact you after the interview if she has follow-up questions.
4. Agree that Sue Lockyer may use the data from this study to produce academic manuscripts and/or articles, and other materials related to the findings. Materials will be shared to help increase and improve knowledge and advocacy for survivors.

C. RISKS

You may feel uncomfortable when you think back on your life in this project. But you will be encouraged to focus on your strengths, self-care strategies, and accomplishments to help avoid this. Sue and San Francisco SafeHouse will make a personalized safety plan for you, in case you want additional emotional support. Also, San Francisco SafeHouse case managers and residential counselors will be available to support you during the project. You can stop participating in the project at any point.

Exploring Resilience with Photovoice: A Participatory Photography Project
Sue Lockyer

Possible risks include psychological and/or emotional discomfort while reflecting upon your life in response to the photo prompts, semi-structured interviews, and group meetings. To minimize discomfort, this project will take a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approach that prioritizes your physical and emotional safety, maximizes your choice and control within the research project, emphasizes resilience and works to minimize the possibility of traumatization. This involves focusing on your strengths and competences, protective factors related to positive outcomes in the face of adversity, and processes that may contribute to or account for the protective factors.

In our interview, you will be encouraged to focus on your strengths, coping skills, strategies for self-care, and accomplishments rather than past experiences. If past experiences seem overwhelming, we will create individualized safety and support plans in partnership with a qualified mental health provider from San Francisco SafeHouse who will be available 24/7 to support participants throughout the research project. You will be free to discontinue participation at any point of the research project.

To minimize the potential risk of loss of privacy: interviews will be conducted in a private room at San Francisco SafeHouse. You will be offered a choice to be identified by your actual name or by a name you make up (a pseudonym) for the research report and any exhibition or presentation related to the project. Unless you give written consent to use your real identity, your identity will not be included in any aspect of the data collected or the resulting research report. To ensure your privacy, I will ask that you not take photos of people (including yourself) or photos that show your physical location.

Because the final culminating meeting will include discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect your privacy. The researcher will begin the meeting by asking you to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the meeting confidential. She will then ask you to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential. At the end of the meeting, the researcher will remind you at the end of the research period not to discuss the material with outsiders.

You will be asked to sign a Photographic Release Form. All photos will be reviewed by the researcher to ensure that there are no images of people, images that show location, or images of illegal or pornographic activities.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will hold interviews in a private room, where no one else will be able to hear. To help with notetaking, and with your permission, the interview will be audio recorded. All participants will agree to keep confidential information shared in meetings that involve multiple participants. You will choose to be identified, or choose another name (not your own) to be used in the project. Your identity will not be included in any aspect of the project, unless you provide written consent.

We will keep all data confidential and will not use any identifying information (unless you give written consent). Digital photo images will be stored on Box, SFSU's approved, secure cloud storage service. Papers will be stored in a locked desk in the faculty office of Dr. Christopher J. Koenig. Only the researcher and Dr. Koenig will have access to the data. All digital research data will be de-identified and stored in a computer with full disk encryption and password-protection indefinitely for future analysis.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS

San Francisco State University
Institutional Review Board

Approval Date 10-03-2013

Expiration Date 10-02-2014

Protocol No. H13-15

(415) 338-1093

Exploring Resilience with Photovoice: A Participatory Photography Project
Sue Lockyer

There are no direct benefits of participating. But there are studies showing that people who have gone through difficult times can benefit from sharing their experiences in projects that focus on the positive.

F. COSTS

There will be no cost to you for participating in this project.

G. COMPENSATION

If you participate in this project, you will receive a total of \$45 in debit cards. You will get a \$20 card at the end of the Planning Meeting, and \$25 at the end of the Culminating Meeting.

H. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is not to participate in the research.

I. QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Sue Lockyer about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you can contact Sue by email at slockyer@mail.sfsu.edu. Also, you can contact the project advisor, Dr. Christopher J. Koenig at cjkoenig@sfsu.edu or (415) 338-3174. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, you can contact the Human and Animal Protections at SFSU protocol@sfsu.edu or (415)338-1093.

J. CONSENT

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to choose not to participate in this research, or to leave the project at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on your present or future status at San Francisco State University and/or San Francisco SafeHouse.

Signature _____
 Research Participant

Date: _____

Signature _____
 Researcher

Date: _____

San Francisco State University
 Institutional Review Board
 Approval Date 10-03-2012
 Expiration Date 10-03-2015
 Protocol No. H-19-13
(H19-208-1093)

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

San Francisco State University Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Exploring Resilience with Photovoice - A Participatory Photography Project -

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this research is to learn about how people bounce back after difficult experiences.

Sue Lockyer is a graduate student at San Francisco State University. Sue is doing research for a master's degree thesis. The faculty supervisor for the project is Dr. Christopher J. Koenig, Professor Department of Communication Studies.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a successful graduate of San Francisco SafeHouse. All participants will: be adults (18 years or older), identify as female, be in a stable and independent living situation, not currently be experiencing severe mental illness, speak English, and have access to email.

A. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

1. Come to 3 group meetings and 1 individual interview with Sue at a time we agree on together. We will meet at San Francisco SafeHouse for a total of 6.5–8 hours over 8 weeks.
 - Orientation meeting (1.5 hours): You will learn more about the project details, talk about photo prompt ideas, ask questions, and (if you agree) sign consent forms.
 - Planning meeting (1.5 hours): You will learn about basic photography skills, talk about safety and photography, discuss storytelling ideas, choose photo prompts with the group, talk about and decide on how images will be presented at the end of the project.
 - You will be asked to take about 20 photos that tell a story about your strengths, accomplishments and resilience during the two weeks between the Planning meeting and the Interview. You will email your photos to Sue before the Interview.

- Interview with Sue (1 – 1.5 hours): You will meet with Sue at a time we agree on together to talk about your photos and what they mean to you.
 - Culminating meeting (1.5 hours): You will share key photos and what they mean to you with the group. You will also be asked to share your thoughts and feelings about the project together with the group.
2. Agree to not take photos of people's faces (including your own) or photos that show where you are.
 3. Agree that Sue Lockyer may contact you after the interview if she has follow-up questions.
 4. Agree that Sue Lockyer may use the data from this study to produce academic manuscripts and/or articles, and other materials related to the findings. Materials will be shared to help increase and improve knowledge and advocacy for survivors.

B. RISKS

You may feel uncomfortable when you think back on your life in this project. But you will be encouraged to focus on your strengths, self-care strategies, and accomplishments to help avoid this. Sue and San Francisco SafeHouse will make a personalized safety plan for you, in case you want additional emotional support. Also, San Francisco SafeHouse case managers and residential counselors will be available to support you during the project. You can stop participating in the project at any point.

Possible risks include psychological and/or emotional discomfort while reflecting upon your life in response to the photo prompts, semi-structured interviews, and group meetings. To minimize discomfort, this project will take a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approach that prioritizes your physical and emotional safety, maximizes your choice and control within the research project, emphasizes resilience and works to minimize the possibility of traumatization. This involves focusing on your strengths and competences, protective factors related to positive outcomes in the face of adversity, and processes that may contribute to or account for the protective factors.

In our interview, you will be encouraged to focus on your strengths, coping skills, strategies for self-care, and accomplishments rather than past experiences. If past experiences seem overwhelming, we will create individualized safety and support plans in partnership with a qualified mental health provider from San Francisco SafeHouse who will be available 24/7 to support participants throughout the research project. You will be free to discontinue participation at any point of the research project.

To minimize the potential risk of loss of privacy: interviews will be conducted in a private room at San Francisco SafeHouse. You will be offered a choice to be identified by your actual name or by a name you make up (a pseudonym) for the research report and any exhibition or presentation related to the project. Unless you give written consent to use your real identity, your identity will not be included in any aspect of the data collected or the resulting research report. To ensure your privacy, I will ask that you not take photos of people (including yourself) or photos that show your physical location.

Because the final culminating meeting will include discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect your privacy. The researcher will begin the meeting by asking you to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the meeting confidential. She will then ask you to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential. At the end of the meeting, the researcher will remind you at the end of the research period not to discuss the material with outsiders.

You will be asked to sign a Photographic Release Form. All photos will be reviewed by the researcher to ensure that there are no images of people, images that show location, or images of illegal or pornographic activities.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will hold interviews in a private room, where no one else will be able to hear. To help with notetaking, and with your permission, the interview will be audio recorded. All participants will agree to keep confidential information shared in meetings that involve multiple participants. You will choose to be identified, or choose another name (not your own) to be used in the project. Your identity will not be included in any aspect of the project, unless you provide written consent.

We will keep all data confidential and will not use any identifying information (unless you give written consent). Digital photo images will be stored on Box, SFSU's approved, secure cloud storage service. Papers will be stored in a locked desk in the faculty office of Dr. Christopher J. Koenig. Only the researcher and Dr. Koenig will have access to the data. All digital research data will be de-identified and stored in a computer with full disk encryption and password-protection indefinitely for future analysis.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits of participating. But there are studies showing that people who have gone through difficult times can benefit from sharing their experiences in projects that focus on the positive.

F. COSTS

There will be no cost to you for participating in this project.

G. COMPENSATION

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H. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is not to participate in the research.

I. QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Sue Lockyer about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you can contact Sue by email at nlockyer@mail.sfsu.edu. Also, you can contact the project advisor, Dr. Christopher J. Koenig at cjkoenig@sfsu.edu or (415) 338-3174. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, you can contact the Human and Animal Protections at SFSU protocol@sfsu.edu or (415)338-1093.

J. CONSENT

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to choose not to participate in this research, or to leave the project at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on your present or future status at San Francisco State University and/or San Francisco SafeHouse.

Signature _____
Research Participant

Date: _____

Signature _____
Researcher

Date: _____

Appendix F

Pseudonym Form

You may choose to use a pseudonym, instead of your real name, for this project. In this case, your photo images and interview comments will be connected with the pseudonym of your choice.

Or, you may choose to be identified by your real name in this project. In this case, your photos and interview comments will be connected with your real name.

The list of participant pseudonyms will be kept separately from the consent forms in a locked cabinet in the office of the researcher's supervising faculty, Dr. Christopher J. Koenig (Humanities Building 434).

Please write the name you choose to use in this project below:
(You can choose to use a name that is not yours, or you may choose to use your own name):

Appendix G

Photo Release Form

As part of this project, we will be taking photographs. Please initial in the spaces below what uses of these photographs you consent to, and sign at the end of the release form. Photos will only be used in the ways you consent to. Your name will not be identified in these photos.

1. _____ Photographs can be reviewed by the Sue Lockyer.
2. _____ Photographs can be included for presentation in a public exhibit.
3. _____ Photographs can be included for presentation in a self-published booklet that will be shared only with research participants, a San Francisco SafeHouse advisor, and Sue Lockyer.
4. _____ Photographs can be included in reports, presentations or publications for an academic audience.
5. _____ Photographs can be included in reports, presentations or publications for related nonprofit, advocacy or policy groups.

Name _____

(Signature)

(Date)