Resource Paper

Care during COVID-19:
A Virtual Asian American and Pacific Islander Photovoice Project

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with rising anti-Asian rhetoric and violence fostered by government leadership. The Visualizing Our Identities and Cultures for Empowerment project based at the University of California, Irvine trained student researchers in the photovoice methodology to document the experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Described as "ethical photography for social change," photovoice seeks to democratize knowledge production and to enact social justice. This approach of community participatory action research and community-centered archival creation could serve as a model for other Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions that embrace the mission of "service" as well as "empowerment" and "care" for marginalized communities.

INTRODUCTION

"What does love look like in a time of hate" (Ng, 2021)? Novelist Celeste Ng answered this question in the *New York Times* (NYT) by curating a series of photographs and stories. The question was and is particularly timely. Her feature appeared a few weeks after the Atlanta

shooting that resulted in the deaths of six Asian American women. That same day, a national report was issued, noting the exponential increase of racialized attacks on Asian Americans, particularly women (Jeung et. al, 2021).[1] And a week after the NYT feature appeared, eight more people—four of them South Asian American—were killed in Indianapolis.

The question of what love or care looks like in a time of pandemic and hate was explored by VOICE (Visualizing Our Identities and Cultures for Empowerment), a photovoice project based at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) over the course of the 2020–21 academic year.[2] Photovoice is a participatory action research (PAR) method pioneered in public health. Led by an interdisciplinary team of faculty, staff, and consultants from Asian American Studies, Public Health, and the UCI Libraries' Special Collections and Archives, VOICE recruited twenty-four UCI undergraduate student researchers and partnered with six Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations in Orange County (OC) (To et al., 2022). Our initial goal was to photo-document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAPI communities and to record, analyze, and share the affective stories of individuals experiencing trauma, loss, and survival. As many of these communities came to be blamed by political leaders as the source of viral contagion, VOICE became a vehicle to express self- and collective care.

We offer our insights on this photovoice project, a method described as "ethical photography for social change" (PhotoVoice, n.d.). We believe VOICE serves as a model for teaching, research, archives creation, and community engagement. Our approach of PAR and community-centered archives[3] creation can serve as a model for other designated and aspiring Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs).

The AANAPISI title foregrounds the mission of "service," a term that emphasizes the responsibilities of educational institutions to meet the needs of communities traditionally marginalized in academia. We believe AANAPISIs also embody two other mandates, empowerment and care, both of which have individual as well as collective connotations. Empowerment equips and guides AAPI students to actualize goals and seek social justice. While service implies meeting the needs of students, empowerment suggests that the long-term goal of education is to build desire and capacities for change. Similarly, fostering care within educational institutions can be conceptualized as self-care as well as collective care. In "Radical Care: Survival Strategies

for Uncertain Times," Hiʻilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese discuss how care could be interpreted and utilized in multiple ways. For example, the idea of "self-care" can be "susceptibl[e] . . . to neoliberal co-optations" that focus on individual self-management through "vapid consumption" and "wellness ideology" (Hobart and Kneese 2020, 3). In contrast,

> Care strategies used by individuals and groups across historical periods and in different parts of the world [can address] when institutions and infrastructures break down, fail, or neglect. Reciprocity and attentiveness to the inequitable dynamics that characterize our current social landscape represent the kind of care that can radically remake worlds. (ibid.)

Thus, both empowerment and care have the radical potential to address individual needs but do so in a collective context that recognizes structural forms of inequality.

Feminist of color scholars and activists have been at the forefront of advancing the concept of radical care. Women and queer individuals, particularly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), have been and continue to be tasked to provide care, either through (under) paid occupations or unpaid familial labor. This has never been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic (King et al., 2020). Consequently, the notion of self-care recognizes the importance of sustaining the life and health of those often regarded as unworthy of care but held responsible for the care of others. In the words of Black lesbian feminist writer Audre Lorde, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde, 1988, 131).

As we reflect on the achievements of VOICE, which sought to document the collective experience of a public health pandemic in the midst of a racial crisis in the United States, we recognize how important the concepts of empowerment and care were for the overall project. COVID-19 fostered an overwhelming sense of loss of control and life disruption. AAPI communities endure the lived reality of being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Pacific Islanders, having been harmed by institutional racism in the U.S. healthcare system and its failure to recognize them as distinct peoples, experience COVID-19 infections and death rates six times higher than any other racial group (Barboza & Poston, 2020). Furthermore, Asian Americans have developed the anxieties of being targeted for economic, social,

cultural, and physical reprisals. In this context, the ability to document and share stories empowered us to convey a collective sense of care. These expressions of care framed our strategies for ethical practices of photography and documentation, the post-custodial practice of creating community-centered archives, the value and practice of mentorship through research and pedagogy, and reciprocal relationships with community partners.

Locating VOICE

UCI is located on the unceded homelands of the Acjachemen and Tongva peoples and has been a federally recognized AANAPISI since the winter of 2016 (UCI Office of Inclusive Excellence, n.d.). The three-term average for 2020–21 statistics indicate that Asian Americans constitute approximately one-third of the student body with 9,658 undergraduates and 944 graduate students out of 31,903 total students (UCI Office of Institutional Research, n.d.). However, the numbers and percentages for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are much lower with an average of only 65 students, constituting 0.2 percent of the entire student population. The University of California system further disaggregates Asian American students into seventeen specific ethnicities and an "other" Asian category (University of California, n.d.). The top five ethnicities include Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, and Asian Indian. Pacific Islander students also are disaggregated into five specific ethnic groups (Hawaiian, Guamanian/Chamorro, Samoan, Fijian, and Tongan) with two "other" categories. The three largest Pacific Islander groups that are not part of the "other group" are Hawaiian, Guamanian/Chamorro, and Samoan.

UCI is situated in OC, which is home to the second-largest Pacific Islander and third-largest Asian American community in the country. OC also is the third-largest county in California, and sixth largest in the United States, with vast diversity among 3.2 million residents including 21.7 percent Asian Americans and 0.4 percent Pacific Islanders (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021. The first known case of COVID-19 in California was found in OC, and by fall 2020 death rates were higher among Asian Americans (25.3 per 100,000) and Pacific Islanders (38.9 per 100,000) compared to non-Hispanic Whites (23.6 per 100,000) (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2020).

Since the start of the pandemic, scientists, news media, and scholars have tried to understand COVID-19's impact on AAPIs in terms of health, social, and economic outcomes. The COVID-19 syndemic[4]

exposed our country's long-standing health and mental health inequities due to poor housing, low wage employment, and structural racism affecting AAPIs in aggregate, and has had devastating effects among AAPI ethnic groups (Morey et al., 2020). The stereotype of Asian Americans as the "model minority" obscures what COVID-19 has exacerbated, that AAPI communities are largely invisible to health researchers and policy makers due to a lack of data and research, among other factors. While COVID-19 continues to expose gaps in disaggregated race/ethnicity data, its effects have frustrated many to identify and mitigate COVID-19 related health disparities for Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans (Ah Soon et al., 2020).

The disproportionate health impacts of COVID-19 on AAPIs are compounded by racial antagonism toward Asian Americans. OC's rapidly changing demographics have led to its transformation from a majority Republican county since 1936 to a "blue county" in 2016. In 2020, registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans, yet pockets of the county remain deeply conservative. Despite or because of the racial/ethnic diversity in OC, Asian American residents have been subject to racial harassment and violence (Orange County Human Relations Commission, 2020). The California Department of Justice reported that hate crime "events" directed at Asian Americans across the state increased by 125 percent from 2019 to 2020, with March and April 2020 as the highest months reported. The special report, "Anti-Asian Hate Crime Events during the COVID-19 Pandemic," acknowledged the persistence in underreporting of hate incidents among AAPI communities (California Department of Justice, 2021). From an elder being targeted by racist hate mail in a Seal Beach retirement community to Olympic athlete Sakura Kokumai being harassed in a park in the city of Orange, anti-Asian violence in this moment surfaces the persistent systemic racism in this country (Beachum 2021; Smith, 2021).

Scholars, journalists, and community organizers are among the most vocal in highlighting this moment within the longer history of systemic xenophobia. Asian Americans are cast as perpetual foreigners and regularly scapegoated during times of national crisis (Lee, E., 2019; Lee, R. G., 1999). Against this legacy of racism and reinvigorated scapegoating, Asian Americans have mobilized to educate, resist, and fight to dismantle this system of oppression. Throughout OC, Stop Asian Hate rallies arose within the more racially mixed communities of central OC to the more white-dominant South County neighborhoods. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are caring for each other and

our communities through everyday forms of resistance by continuing to offer services, food, and vaccines to the most vulnerable among us. From the longer histories of Indigenous struggle and resilience to more contemporary Asian American and Pacific Islander migration, displacement, and place making, OC's racial politics is indicative of broader national debates about American identity and belonging. Our VOICE project activated students to understand and communicate the felt experiences of AAPIs through the analysis and sharing of photographs and stories.

Photovoice as PAR Methodology

Although disaggregated data on COVID-19 infection and mortality rate reveal the magnitude of health inequity undergirding the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on AAPI communities, it does not demonstrate the insidious ways in which these health inequities have been structured and experienced. As a PAR method developed by Wang and Burris (1997), photovoice was strongly influenced by documentary photography, empowerment concepts, feminist theory, and health from a model that emphasizes physical, mental, social, biomedical, economic, and cultural factors as health determinants.

The fundamental goal of PAR is to disrupt the hierarchy of knowledge production as a component of social justice. This is accomplished by community partnership and centering the voice of those directly affected by issues. The partnership allows for community members to fully participate in shaping the project design, implementation, and collection of stories yielding "data" that are authentic to communities' lived experiences. In summary, PAR is "grounded in lived experience, developed in partnership, addresses significant problems, works with (rather than simply studies) people, develops new ways of seeing/interpreting the world (i.e., theory), and leaves infrastructure in its wake" (Bradbury & Reason, 2003, 156).

Photovoice represents a popular PAR method for engaging students as participants in the documentation of experiences (Marcus et al., 2011; Peabody, 2013). Photovoice can be particularly effective for students and youth as it enhances what they perceive to be valuable research-related skills. It could also be used without any prior in-depth knowledge of the topic and involves a process that can be easy to understand and implement (Tanjasiri et al., 2013; Wang and Burris, 1997). Photovoice has also expanded its PAR methodology as an ideal

archival and pedagogical tool to document the lived experiences of AAPI communities (Cooper et al., 2017; Robinson-Keilig et al., 2014).

Photovoice embraces research principles that also are at the heart of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Ethnic Studies that seek to critique and minimize power hierarchies in research contexts. Doing so means recognizing university-based and community members as co-constructors of knowledge. In addition, the research questions the process of collecting "data" and analyses of the gathered information are generated collectively through group dialogue. Finally, photovoice projects seek to explicitly inform social change through policy-directed dissemination and follow-up. The photos and stories make visible experiences and structures of social inequality, working to change hearts and minds to work toward just solutions.

THE VOICE PROJECT

Documenting History with Care and Consent

VOICE aimed to train students to become photo-ethnographers to document stories of resilience and resistance through the eyes of the AAPI community.[5] The photographs created through VOICE challenge the way the media perpetuated and enabled anti-Asian rhetoric when reporting on COVID-19. Photographs of Asians wearing masks and even unrelated images of Chinatowns across the country were often used as headline images making Asians the "face" of the pandemic (Burton, 2020; Roy, 2020). Approaching photography and storytelling through photovoice, in contrast, offers the possibility of a decolonial and activist research methodology. Photovoice seeks to empower those most marginalized by existing power hierarchies, so that they may share their worldviews and narratives.

VOICE is also an attempt at queering the colonial practice of documenting the Other through photographing ourselves, Asian American and Pacific Islanders in OC. Photography has long been used as a pseudoscientific tool of colonialism to document the Other. These photographs created by white colonizers and settlers often portrayed Asians and Pacific Islanders as grotesque, exotic, or fetishized beings. What happens when we only see ourselves represented through this lens? How does this shape our understanding of ourselves and the visual narratives surrounding our communities? The founder of Women Photographers, Daniella Zalcman, states that "by consuming a disproportionate number of [white] male-created images, we come to understand the world as interpreted by the [white] masculine

experience. . . . Photographs don't just tell us stories, they tell us how to see" (Dodd & Jackson, 2019). Therefore, self-representation in photography is an act of resistance. Not only does it allow BIPOC communities to reclaim their agency, but it also allows them to reclaim their own visual narratives. For example, during the summer of 2020 at the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, many advocated for Black photographers to document the protests for the Black community to be able to tell "their own history in real time" (Beltrán Villamizar, 2020).

Additionally, VOICE sought to challenge the lack of ethics and care through consensual photography and storytelling about AAPI communities. Many photographers advocate rethinking photographic practices and normalizing informed consent to ensure those photographed understand where their images could be published and how they could be used (Aushana and Pixley, 2020). Informed consent practices emphasize a photographer's social responsibility and center power and dignity for those photographed. Photographer Savannah Dodd states that,

> Dignity in photography is about representing people as individuals, with their own personalities, aspirations, and life experiences. Dignity is about telling their story—not a story that is created from stereotypes or based on the photographer's assumptions. (Dodd, 2021)

Consent also challenges the ways in which photography collections documenting marginalized communities were created. In collections across archives, galleries, museums, and libraries today, there are countless images of Asians and Pacific Islanders photographed through the lens of a white male gaze. Too often, these images were taken without the consent of those photographed. For instance, following the wars and displacements from Southeast Asia, numerous photographs, often by government and aid workers, documented the conditions of refugee camps. Some refugees were photographed while having medical exams while others were using the commode.[6] It is likely that those photographed were unaware of how these images were used and circulated or where and how they exist in archival collections today.

In our photovoice training with student researchers, we emphasized an informed consent approach where they were required to thoroughly explain how the photographs from VOICE would be shared and how these photographs would be preserved and archived

for future uses. We also emphasized practicing through a lens of cultural sensitivity, with an understanding that different cultures have various relationships to photography and privacy. Student researchers were then required to obtain completed consent forms.[7] It was through these conversations that the person photographed was both encouraged and empowered to have a say about their privacy and how they wanted to be represented. These forms of care were integral to our project as it was through an informed consent approach that a relationship of both trust and care was created between the photographer and the person photographed. Thus, we centered the person, their dignity, and their story.

Archiving Our Present for the Future

Similar to previous photovoice projects, our team recognized the power of photography as a means of telling stories and documenting particular events and perspectives. Additionally, we wanted our student researchers to look beyond the contemporary moment that these images were produced and circulated to anticipate how future researchers might learn about the unprecedented events and experiences of the pandemic. Therefore, we partnered with six community organizations working in AAPI communities whose histories are not well represented in archives to address the silences and historical erasures so prevalent in past and ongoing practices of archives creation.

The VOICE student researchers became co-creators of knowledge that will become part of a research university's special collections. They played a key role in generating the descriptive metadata that will inform how future generations will make meaning out of these photographs. In preparation for archiving the photographs, each student completed an archival worksheet that required them to use a file-naming convention, provide relevant metadata such as location and date of the photographs, as well as do additional research to locate their photograph within the historical context it was created. For instance, one student researcher shared that, prior to the project,

> [I] . . . never really had any reason to think about my community in the ways that I did. To be able to document this moment in history is truly an honor. It's hard to believe that through our photographs, stories of many people will be shared for generations to come. Each one of our photographs came together to create an even bigger, beautiful picture of not only our communities, but our world![8]

By involving our student researchers in every stage of knowledge creation, from generating relevant themes, to taking photographs, to contextualizing them, and then applying some aspects of archival description, we hope to instill in them a deeper connection to their research product. Care, in the archival context, extends to both the materials as well as the potential future user who we can begin to imagine as part of this community served by the photographs. Teaching our student researchers an ethos of care in their work with community organizations, combined with training them to care for records of AAPI experiences (the photographs), fostered a sense of purpose in their documentation work.

Teaching with Care Online

Due to the national shelter in place order, the VOICE project was implemented virtually. The VOICE organizing team approached building a sense of community online through an ethics of care that "describes a way of asking questions about justice through relationships and responsibilities" (Carlson & Walker, 2018, 785). This required self-reflexivity in our relationships to each other and our shifting responsibilities as the project developed. By teaching with care, it was imperative to be attentive to local and global events and be mindful of students' well-being and capacities. Photovoice as PAR empowered our student researchers, who held the responsibilities of collecting and documenting. It has the potential to not only tap into the creative imaginations of students but also capture realities that can be translated to impacts on youth empowerment and community change (Tanjasiri et al., 2013). What resulted were multiple levels of pedagogical care that included mentoring team dynamics, care toward students, students' care to the community, and care to each other.

As an organizing team, it was necessary to be attentive to each other in building relationships. We collaborated with a feminists of color collective organizing lens where faculty and staff were conscious of hierarchical structures that academic institutions often seek to normalize in their treatment of recent graduates.[9] To challenge this, circuits of care were generated through peer mentorship, as the consultants developed their own skills in facilitating, researching, and collaborative writing. Frequent team meetings using Zoom allowed for internal check-ins and provided a space for transparency where everyone on the organizing team could share feedback.

Meeting virtually also enabled us to remain flexible in our approach to implementing the VOICE project with students. Being mindful of our own emotional and mental capacities, as well as of our students', we adapted project timelines and rescheduled meetings to account for greater needs of relationship and community building. Between fall 2020 and winter 2021, we witnessed tumultuous events including but not limited to the hypervisibility of anti-Asian hate crimes, the 2020 presidential election, the Capitol Hill riots, the Atlanta shooting, and, of course, navigating the multiple phases of the COVID-19 pandemic—all while continually adjusting to remote learning. Conscious of the impact of these world events on students' well-being, it was critical to approach our student sessions as more than just a class but as a virtual community to hold space for open conversations. In our first session with student researchers, we developed community guidelines with students using Jamboard—a virtual whiteboard—that we often referenced where respect and maintaining open communication with each other were stressed. Jamboard was also used to brainstorm and organize research themes collectively with the students, community mentors, and organizing team (Figure 1).

Conducting VOICE virtually also allowed us to involve student researchers from across California to document experiences in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Francisco. The virtual nature of this project allowed for greater opportunities to collaborate and support the cohort of student researchers in their professional development. Meeting after our weekly Zoom sessions, interested student researchers were mentored to develop undergraduate grants and various online conference proposals.

Adapting photovoice online however, presented unique challenges such as inability to provide our student researchers with camera equipment; we also did not want any students to feel unsafe or feel obligated to go out in public to take photographs. Many students were unsure of how they could photograph the impact of COVID-19 from their homes. Our approaches needed to extend beyond traditional photography practices where we shared alternative methods of image making as students were encouraged to gather objects in their homes that could tell a story, create a digital collage, capture screenshots on their computers, or use photographs prior to fall 2020 that were relevant to the project's research themes.

In the analysis of their photographs, student researchers were divided into different focus groups based on their community mentor

sign up. We used the breakout function in Zoom to create these meeting spaces where students often felt more comfortable to be on camera. While technical mishaps did occur during these sessions, one student, upon reflection, shared that our flexible approach created "a supportive and positive environment," and our weekly sessions were something to which the student looked forward.

Lastly, the all-virtual format required digital dissemination of the VOICE images and narratives. Several modes were selected by the students, such as a project website to showcase an online exhibition of their curated images.[10] Students also created an Instagram account, a public exhibition launch using Zoom, and Facebook livestream. Both the VOICE Instagram page and website continue to exist as an informal digital archive of the project.

The project organizing team members also mentored a subgroup of five student researchers to apply for a small grant from UCI's undergraduate research opportunity program. As a team, we supported students as they collaborated and developed an online curriculum on photovoice for middle school and high school teachers to implement (Figure 2). This subgroup of student researchers then had the opportunity to put the curriculum in practice by facilitating four Zoom class sessions to twenty middle school and high school youth in an after-school research program titled Vaping among Multicultural Orange County Students.[11]

The pedagogy of care that we adopted as a coordinating team was replicated by our VOICE student researchers. They became experts of photovoice by developing a curriculum plan and in turn empowered another team of youth researchers to apply the methodology and advocate for change. The cascading practice of mentorship expanded beyond our immediate project as VOICE student researchers became teachers.

Community Partnerships and Mentorships

AANAPISIs have a unique opportunity and responsibility to AAPI communities, and our VOICE researchers built upon our extensive connections with community-based organizations (CBOs). Almost all members of our coordinating team have regular contact with Asian American and Pacific Islander nonprofit organizations in OC. We collaborated on previous programming and research projects and shared common goals of educating and empowering students. For instance, one of our VOICE consultants is a program coordinator for one of the

CBOs. Our VOICE project structured this community collaboration into the design and implementation of research.

The community mentorship team consisted of representatives from six local CBOs: the Cambodian Family, Korean Community Services Health Center, Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Pacific Islander Health Partnership (PIHP), South Asian Network, and Vietnamese American Cancer Foundation. After the organizing team recognized the cultural backgrounds of the students who expressed interest in and were selected for the project, we invited one of these organizations and requested that community mentors of a particular ethnicity be involved with VOICE.[12] Together, we participated in a five-day training on photovoice. While we discussed how to use the methodology to structure this study, we hoped that the training would enable our community mentors to adapt photovoice for their future projects. In recognition of the time and labor of participating in the training and mentoring UCI students, we provided $1,000 stipends to each CBO for the community mentors' involvement.

We prioritized community mentorship throughout the project, because we recognized that our student researchers, despite their own cultural and racial backgrounds and their interest in community engagement, were not fully aware of various challenges and needs faced by broader AAPI communities. The project started with multiple sessions for community mentors to present about their organizations and communities' assets and challenges to our students. Community mentors shared knowledge as well as photographs that conveyed community concerns and assets. Through these sessions, community mentors equipped student researchers with information and perspectives needed to understand community-centered research themes that were subsequently explored through photography.

Although we did not have any Pacific Islander (PI) students in our group, the community mentor from PIHP played an active role in introducing our students to PI cultural practices and health disparities faced by the PI communities. The VOICE mentor who worked with PIHP reflected that the methodology of sharing stories might have resonated strongly with island practices of "talking story." The guidance of community members was deeply appreciated by VOICE student researchers. While some students elected to work with organizations that reflected their own cultural backgrounds, other students chose to explore communities beyond their own. PIHP mentors taught our

students the significance of story sharing, collectiveness, and community practices from PI perspectives.

Most importantly, students learned about issues faced by their "own" and "other" ethnic communities. For example, one student researcher of South Asian background reflected:

> So I would say the biggest thing I learned was the diversity [within the AAPI communities]. . . . Even within our South Asian community, there's so much diversity, you know, each person was from a different culture in our research project. It was so interesting to . . . see you know, how the Filipino community reacted, or how the Vietnamese community reacted. And it was just so interesting to see, like, we always talk about the AAPI community as this big group. And we all lump them together. But there's . . . so many different individual experiences for each person in that community. (Student Researcher Interview a., 2021)

The group discussion and analyses of images created connections between students and community members as well as between people of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Throughout VOICE, students reflected on their own existing relationships with their communities. Training our students to practice an ethics of care to develop new relationships with community mentors had a lasting impact. One student expressed that,

> Meeting with community members of different ethnicities and hearing what each community organizations does widened [*sic*] my view of what type of struggles various communities are going through. . . . Learning what an ethical researcher is and playing that role has taught me the importance of being honest to what is portrayed by the community itself. Doing that results in research that will eventually and hopefully be used to benefit the community.

Through dialogue and care practices, teachers, students, and community mentors engaged in a mutual humanizing process that acknowledged each other's consciousness and historicity. Importantly, as described by Paulo Freire in his model of problem-posing education, dialogue cannot exist in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people (Freire, 2000). Education, as a liberating praxis, is a continuous struggle to transform human relations through dialogical learning and teaching grounded in love, care, and commitment to others. VOICE exemplifies the concept of horizontal teaching/learning

through community partnership, radical care, and love that fostered community in a virtual space and a time of crisis.

Forms of Care in Documenting AAPI Communities

Through the process of online training and community mentorship, the student researchers archived a total of forty-eight images. The photographs were collected around five main themes: health and care, family, community, resilience, and business. Each topic reveals various forms of self and collective care. For this article, we focus on health and mental health, familial care, and care for the community.[13]

Health and Mental Health

Although previous photovoice studies have focused on health inequities and creating social change, few have applied it to mental health research (Glaw et al., 2017). The VOICE students embraced the opportunity to photograph health, mental health, and care access among AAPIs during a pandemic. Common subthemes found in the photographs included emotional and mental health impacts of social isolation, multigenerational caregiving, and access to health care resources. For instance, one student researcher captured a "still life" of ginger, lemon grass, salt, garlic, and a bottle of pain-relieving oil. This photograph demonstrated how, for that student's parents, traditional medicine was more favorable and trusted. The student further commented that the image also conveyed the lack of information as well as misinformation about COVID-19 and preventive measures, due to the barriers in accessing healthcare resources in Asian languages.

Another student researcher shared the quandary of home hospice care. A black-and-white digital photograph depicted an empty hospital bed in the middle of what appears to be the family's living room (Figure 3).[14] The bedsheets are crumpled, where one pillow sits at the top of the bed. While at the end, there are various smaller pillows piled on top of each other. Instead of sharing an identifiable image of her grandmother at home hospice, the student conveyed the presence of a member of the household that needed the facilities depicted in the image. Nearby the hospital bed are the family's couch and a leather reclining chair. While people are absent in the photograph, the family's presence and care for their grandmother can be felt. In their storytelling description, the student questions how other elders in the community are coping with COVID-19 due to restrictions preventing family members from visiting nursing homes. They reflect that

because their family is fortunate enough to have access to health technology, such as an oxygen tank (not pictured), they're able to care for and attend to their grandmother. Under the theme of health and care, students also explored the impact of COVID-19 on their own mental health. For example, another student chose to share a photograph of their desk with scattered homework and a work schedule beside their laptop, which reflected that person's emotional state while navigating remote learning at home. Some claimed that taking photographs enabled them to analyze their mental health in a way they had not done before, gaining valuable insights for themselves.

Familial Care

Family constituted another primary theme focused upon by student researchers as well as community organization partners. Weaving together narratives of the differential impact of COVID-19 on AAPI communities with stories of intergenerational care, students came to see the ways they are positioned relative to others in their own families and communities. For example, one student researcher shared a photograph of their friend's old room devoid of people and furniture. The student explained that because their friend was an essential healthcare worker, they had to move out of their family home and live elsewhere. This act of care was done to protect their family members from any potential risk of contracting the virus.

While some students reflected on the challenges that family members faced, such as isolation and loneliness resulting from separation from their loved ones, others noted their privilege in being able to spend more time with family and benefitting from their care. For instance, a color photograph depicts the hands of a grandmother in mid action, making samosas from scratch at home. The student researcher shared that due to her normally busy schedule, she didn't have a great deal of time to spend with her grandparents. However, during the pandemic, her grandmother shared her cooking skills and recipes (Figure 4). These photographs reveal the range of actions of care between and for family members.

Care for Community

Given the social distancing protocols during the pandemic, public spaces to convene public gatherings were closed. Former places of community gatherings and annual celebrations became generative sites for understanding the disparate impacts of COVID-19 and exploring the culturally specific strategies of care and resilience among AAPI

communities. Student researchers shared images of desolate public meeting places, ranging from quiet food courts in Los Angeles Koreatown, to off-limits teen lounges and cafes in Sacramento, to empty student resident housing at UCI.

Another common space that was photographed was religious space, which became quiet due to the restrictions of indoor gatherings and social distancing. One student researcher shared a colorful image of an empty Sikh temple in Santa Ana that was taken at a low angle to "emphasize the social distancing dots on the floor" (Figure 5). The student expressed that while they were not Sikh, they noticed how different religious communities were responding to the pandemic. That individual shared that as a member of the Christian community, social distancing and face masks weren't required at their gatherings. Upon further reflection, the student noted,

> I got to learn a lot more about Sikh values . . . [and] compared to like, my own experience and the religious background I come from . . . the day at the Sikh temple was really eye opening, and it was so cool to get to interact with a different culture. (Student Researcher Interview b., 2021)

Through this process, the student gained insights into different religious traditions and pandemic responses.

Given the social distancing restrictions in public spaces, the use of private spaces, like the home, became more important to experience collective cultural and religious traditions. One student researcher shared a color photograph of their hand with henna that was just applied to celebrate the Muslim festival of Eid at home. The celebration during the pandemic felt starkly different compared to previous years. They noted that it "was the first time that I, as a Muslim, was not able to engage in any social activities in my community as a result of COVID-19" (Student Researcher Interview b., 2021). Despite not being able to go to the mosque to celebrate with their extended family members or greater community, the student appreciated being able to self-adorn, which her family members also engaged in, as an expression of collective celebration.

The vulnerability and honesty in the students' storytelling created a space to generate and sustain care. Following the students' presentations, the collective conservations between students, project leads and our community mentors both deepened the meaning of the images and constituted opportunities to express care for each other.

Through the process of taking photographs, student researchers were not only able to document different forms of care within their own families and surrounding communities, but they were also able to document these memories for themselves.

CONCLUSION

We return to the question posed by Ng, "What does love look like in the time of hate?" Similarly, what does *care* look like? Through the VOICE project, as team leads, we've explored what it means to develop and sustain caring relationships between ourselves. Care looked like continuing and solidifying existing relationships with our community leaders, which challenges the extractive university-community partner relationships. Care (and love) for our communities also meant sharing monetary resources where we could support our community mentors for their time and labor. It also meant sharing any potential funding resources to student researchers and guiding them in their own grant proposals.

In their photographs and storytelling descriptions, the students captured the various ways care looked like for them and their communities. These forms of care included the care and love for elderly family members attending to their health, to the care in sharing and exchanging family and cultural traditions. Peer-care was developed by openly sharing these experiences with one another for student researchers of different cultural backgrounds to learn from each other.

For the VOICE project, care looked like foregrounding the importance of ethics and consent. Being mindful about how we choose to represent ourselves and others, is an act of love. In the creation of community archival collection and stewardship, being intentional and deliberate about the way we collect photographs and stories and co-create our own historical records is caring about the future of these stories.

The COVID-19 syndemic created new opportunities for AANA-PISIs and other minority serving institutions of higher education to advocate for change and recognition. Our history is not just defined by acts of oppression but also by images and stories of resilience, care, and allyship. A coalition of our community mentors and research colleagues helped start LOVE (Love Our Vulnerable and Elderly), a digital food bank of AAPI supplies and food to distribute to isolated AAPI seniors and immuno-compromised patients (OC Love, 2020). Since June 2020, LOVE has distributed 1,000 AAPI culturally relevant

care packages a month. Another coalition of AAPI organizations in Los Angeles and Orange counties (to which some of our team leads belong) wrote advocacy letters to local health departments to disaggregate AAPI COVID-19 data. The group also provides resources to translate in-language materials, conduct outreach, promote education, and offer COVID-19 testing and vaccination to limited-English proficient AAPI communities. These collective efforts resulted in more than one million dollars of Coronavirus Aid and Relief Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act funding for AAPI communities (City News Writer, 2020; County of Los Angeles Public Health, 2020). And finally, all community mentors and researchers supported and signed on in support of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act and President Biden's Executive Order to reestablish the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (The White House, 2021).

Just as our student researchers and community mentors participated in different stages of photovoice, their roles in PAR also offer different benefits. One of the many potential benefits is the access to improve political power by enhancing one's own community through a vivid and specific way of taking pictures and telling stories (Wang et al., 1998). Photovoice supports the participatory strategy where participants contribute to effective change for a more just society (Park, 1993). Photovoice also embraces the participatory strategy that images contribute to effective change. Pictures can influence policy, and participants share their perspectives that make healthful public policy (Wang et al., 1998, 2004, 2008). This research study documented the reality of AAPI lives, engaged students in critical reflection about their experiences, articulated community concerns, and exhibited and archived their photographs and stories. We believe that VOICE is what love and care looks like in a time of hate.

Figure 1. Screenshot of Our Collective Jamboard Brainstorming Research Themes, VOICE, 2020.

Figure 2. Two Pages on Ethics from the PhotoVOICE Teaching Curriculum created by the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program Subgroup of Student Researchers (Kulkarni et al., 2021).

Figure 3. Photograph by Leyna Tran, VOICE, 2020.

Excerpt from their archival worksheet:

> We have been extremely fortunate to have access to and be pro-
> vided various health technologies, such as the pictured hospital
> bed, and non-pictured oxygen tank and supplies. Due to these
> resources, we have been able to be present for my grandmother,
> 24/7, and provide as much care for her as possible. As can be seen
> in the photograph, the bed is located in a large area, the living
> room, with a large patio door leading to the backyard. This photo-
> graph offers insight towards how elderly people, specifically those
> with pre-existing conditions prior to the pandemic, may be coping.
> (Tran, 2020)

Figure 4. Photograph by Rhea Jandu, VOICE, 2020.

Excerpt from their archival worksheet:

> This offers a more uplifting perspective on what staying in
> quarantine at home in a multigenerational household could be
> like—passing down traditions and bonding between genera-
> tions. . . . The virus caused harm in many ways, but allowed for
> me to be with my family and create a memory such as this that I
> will always cherish. (Jandu, 2020)

Figure 5. Photograph by Micherlange Hemsley, VOICE, 2020.

Excerpt from their archival worksheet:

> [T]he value in Sikhism of "sewa," selfless service, was evident in my visit. Members who worked at the temple greeted and conversed with my friend and I as we photographed the space, served us tea and prasad (a sweet traditional dish served at Sikh temples after worship). As a person who is not Sikh, my experience interacting and learning more about the religion helped me understand who the values of Sikhism relate to the community's response to COVID-19. (Hemsley, 2020)

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NOTES

1. Pacific Islander community leaders, including those in OC, have critiqued the lumping together of AAPIs (such as "STOP AAPI Hate"), when the racialized violence has been targeting Asian Americans.

2. VOICE was supported by the University of California, Irvine, Office of Inclusive Excellence intramural grant, Are We in This Together? Advancing Equity in the Age of COVID-19, *Amerasia Journal*, the Civic Engagement Sub-Grant given to the UCI Humanities Center by the Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance, and the UCI Humanities Fellow funds.

3. Community-centered archives are principles of archival work developed by UCI Special Collections and Archives that seek to empower historically marginalized communities to build their own archives on their own terms. See https://ocseaa.lib.uci.edu/.

4. Syndemic: A set of linked health problems involving two or more afflictions, interacting synergistically, and contributing to excess burden of disease in a population. Syndemics occur when health-related problems cluster by person, place, or time. Note: This term is appropriate in the context of the United States, see Richard Horton's "Offline: COVID-19 is not a pandemic."

5. The methods and outcomes of VOICE are described in our forthcoming manuscript, "Through Our Eyes, Hear Our Stories: An Interdisciplinary Photovoice Approach to Document Asian American & Pacific Islander Student and Community Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic" to be published in the *Health Promotion Practice Journal* (To et al., forthcoming).

6. Examples of these photographs can be found in the Scire Collection of photographs of Vietnamese refugees, MS-SEA034, from the UCI Libraries Southeast Asian Archive. This collection of photographs of a Vietnamese refugee camp at Camp Pendleton, California in 1975 were taken by Tran Qui Hung, a former South Vietnamese Air Force Lieutenant on behalf of John A. Scire, a former Marine Corps Captain. Despite Hung being Vietnamese and, therefore, not taking photographs through a white gaze, the photographs he took of others still raise questions and concerns about ethics and consent.

7. VOICE was determined to be exempt from IRB review for students from UCI under category 1 (student evaluations fall under common educational practices) and for the public under category 2 (observation of public behavior such that individuals cannot be identified and/or identification does not put them at any risk).

8. This quote and others throughout the article, unless referenced as a student interview, were gathered from students' responses in the post-test survey collected by the VOICE Project in December 2020. Additionally, we discuss more in-depth about how we used Zoom in adapting photovoice online in our forthcoming manuscript (To et al., forthcoming).

9. The authors identify as 1.5 generation Chinese Venezuelan American, 1.5 generation Vietnamese American, 1.5 generation Chinese, second generation Vietnamese Canadian, second generation Korean American, and Vietnamese.

10. To view the project website visit https://sites.uci.edu/voice/.

11. ¡VAMOS! is organized by University of California, Irvine, Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program, Orange County Asian & Pacific Islander Community Alliance, and Anaheim Union High School District. For more information visit: https://www.trdrp.org/funded-research/.

12. After reviewing applications, twenty-four student researchers were selected to participate in the photovoice project. Our organizing team took into account ethnic/cultural balance in selecting the student researchers, which included non-AA participants. Unfortunately, we did not have Pacific Islander applicants. Overall, we prioritized students with a commitment to community work and interest in the research method, which yielded a diverse group of students ranging from first year to fifth year with majors in Science, Social Science, Public Health, and Humanities.

13. The other two themes are explored in our forthcoming manuscript (To et al., forthcoming).

14. We received consent to publish the names of student researchers alongside their photographs and to share excerpts of their storytelling descriptions from their completed archival worksheets.

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