



# *Defining Community Through Culture and Experience*

Presentation prepared for  
**Social Epidemiology Health Disparities Symposium**  
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# Partners

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## •Understanding Domestic Violence in Nine Ethnic Communities

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## •Domestic Violence Social Support Groups

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# Today's talk

- Review of two domestic violence (DV) projects defining community
- Ways we used CBPR to craft the project
- Steps taken to define community
- Benefits and challenges of a fluid definition of community

# Lessons from the Community Interview Project

- “A group of people with existing relationships who share a common interest.”

Common interests may include:

- Living in the same geographic area
- Similar ethnic or cultural background
- Relating and interacting socially with one another
- From Kone A, Sullivan M, Senturia KD, Chrisman NJ, Ciske SJ, Krieger JW. Improving Collaboration Between Researchers and Communities. Public Health Reports. 115: 243-248.

# Description of the project

- Qualitative descriptive CBPR using focus groups and individual interviews
- Understand cultural context of DV, access to, and satisfaction with, DV services among ethnic and LGBT survivors of DV
- Use findings to contribute to a coordinated culturally relevant response to women who are experiencing DV and improve Seattle's DV system
- Cultural communities: African American, Amharic-speaking, Cambodian, Filipina, Latina, LGBT, American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN), Russian-speaking, Vietnamese
- Funded by National Institutes of Justice

## Origin of the project

- Idea came from Seattle DV Council
- Initial plan was to gather prevalence data via telephone survey
- Stakeholders demanded addressing issues for marginalized communities *first*
- Decided to conduct focus groups to better understand DV experience

# Research project structure

- Project Advisory Group (PAG)
  - Advised on group selection
  - Helped with ideas for recruitment and ensuring safety
- Qualitative Research Team (QRT)
  - Bilingual/bicultural representatives from each ethnic group and researchers
  - Met at least monthly to plan and conduct research, analyze data and write findings

## Process of deciding on communities

- Initial grant proposal to NIJ: African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinas, AI/AN
- Additional funding through the city for more groups
- Stakeholder meeting of Seattle DVC to decide on additional groups
- Consideration of ethnicity, disability, marginalized groups (incarcerated women)
- Balance of stakeholder interests, population numbers, research constraints
- Final decisions by CBPR colleagues on project

# Description of the project

- Idea developed from previous NIJ-funded project on DV and access to services
- Pilot project to test feasibility of intervention in refugee and immigrant communities
- Social support and skill-building groups
- Cultural communities: Cambodian, Ethiopian, Russian-speaking and Somali
- Funded by CDC through Seattle's Urban Research Center grant

## Origin of the project

- Follow-up to NIJ funded project-met with partners to assess interest in continuing
- Solicited funding through Seattle Partners/CDC
- Partnered with ReWA
- Oversight by Seattle Partners board

# Research project structure

- PHSKC evaluation team  
(epidemiologists, anthropologists)
- ReWA intervention team  
(DV program manager and advocates)

## Process of deciding on communities

- Initial conversations between researchers and ReWA staff of which communities to follow up with
- Based on earlier research--wanted to include some of those groups
- Value in adding new cultural groups
- Balance of larger and smaller population groups
- Consideration of ReWA staff availability and expertise for particular groups

# Benefits of a fluid definition of community

- In keeping with CBPR process that involves negotiation and re-negotiation at all levels of any given project
- Allows for a deepening, ongoing understanding of what constitutes community
- Communities themselves are not static

# Challenges of a fluid definition of community

- Funders seldom allow the necessary time
- Additional challenges for a researcher of color working in her/his own community
- Strict research design does not always accommodate fluidity

# For more information:

## ***Cultural Issues Affecting Domestic Violence Service Utilization in Ethnic and Hard to Reach Populations***

<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/dv/dvreport.htm>

## ***We can help each other: Social Support groups for domestic violence survivors***

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## ***Seattle Partners for Healthy Communities***

<http://depts.washington.edu/hprc/SeattlePartners/>