

Assessing the Emotional Impact of Creating Records

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<http://www.communityarchiveslab.ucla.edu>

Land Acknowledgment

The Information Studies Department at UCLA acknowledges our presence on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples.

IMLS Grant: TAVP, SAADA, UCLA

- Texas After Violence Project (TAVP), South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA)
- 3-year (mid 2021 to mid 2024)
- \$750,000
- Community-led participatory action research
- Practice Component: TAVP and SAADA create digital participatory oral history projects
- Research Component: UCLA researches the impact of these projects on the storytellers, oral history givers, records creators

Research Questions

- **RQ1:** What is the emotional impact for members of minoritized communities to share their stories or create records for inclusion in archives?
- **RQ2:** What is the emotional impact of the quick adaptation to new digital technologies (e.g. online video recording tools) due to the COVID-19 crisis on record creators? Does it feel different to participate in online memory projects?
- **RQ3:** Building on the findings of RQ1 and RQ2, how can archives, including community archives, develop new tools and methods that best meet their communities' needs as memory projects increasingly go digital-only?

Spring 2022, 2023, and 2024

- UCLA research team conducted 18 one-on-one interviews
- UCLA research team conducts 2 focus groups (1 at each org)
- Each participant is paid \$100 from TAVP or SAADA for participation
- Each year, research is used to design new participatory oral history projects for implementation the next year

Preliminary Findings

- Participants described impact of sharing their story as “liberatory,” “affirming,” “cleansing,” “scary”
- Motivations for sharing story include being able to counter dehumanizing narratives, affecting change, offering a model for others, representing their community
- Most felt that sharing their story on Zoom vs. in person had little impact on the experience
- More participants from TAVP had experience sharing their stories, knew their interviewer beforehand

Emotional Impact of Stories: Affirmed

“One of the things that came out of...doing that interview and having the courage to go public about it—because at that point...I was afraid to publicly identify myself—but after the interview, it was like you know what, let me really assess this and then I decided to apply for asylum...The conversation was...really instrumental and made me realize that talking about these things doesn't have to be hard, especially if you have a safe environment, and we should talk about them.”

—INDIRA RAHMAN (SAADA)

Emotional Impact of Stories: Cleansed

“I teared up over you know, just reliving your whole story, reliving different parts of my life where I kind of just pushed it down...and, you know, the interview brought out a lot of emotion...Just going back to where it started, you know, the different times violence did play a big part of life and where it came from...she gave me time to kind of just get my thoughts together but it was as much for me as anyone else. Truly it does help, it cleanses you every time.”

—JAMES FIGUEROA (TAVP)

Next Steps

- June-August: Anna cleaning up transcripts
- September: Michelle coding for themes
- Fall 2022: Michelle & Anna present back to SAADA & TAVP audiences
- 2023 and 2024:
 - TAVP and SAADA will develop more responsive projects based on what we learn
 - We will create training materials and toolkit for archivists, CBA practitioners, and others that center project findings on the emotional impact of digital records creation and best practices for mitigating harm for record creators
 - More interviews and focus groups with new participants at TAVP and SAADA

Questions, suggestions, and participants?

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