

**NETWORK WEAVER LEARNING LAB
(NWLL) EVALUATION**

**Sowing Seeds
Cultivating Growth
and Harvesting Learning**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Executive Summary
15	I. Introduction and Purpose
16	Defining Key Terms
17	II. Design: Setting the Table
17	The Weavers
17	Program design
18	Program Elements
18	Table 1: Group Experiments Hypotheses
20	Principles of Cooking: Theoretical Grounding for Practices
21	Five Elements of a Thriving Justice Ecosystem
22	Developed Networks
22	Liberatory Practices
23	III. Approach: Mixing the Ingredients
23	Building community
24	Generative openings
25	Integrating the elements
25	IV. Results: Digesting the Learning
26	Table 2: Weaver Competencies
29	Connecting with Others in the Lab
29	Beyond the Lab
31	V. Learning through Experimentation
31	Cross Experiment Take-Aways
36	VI. Revisiting the Lab Purpose and Goals
38	Table 3: The Lab Convenings
39	VII. Learning for the Field
39	1. Structure as supporting spaciousness
39	2. Experimentation as a technology and skill
39	3. Inner work as collective work
40	4. Network leadership as weaving roles and processes
40	5. Generative tension as an opportunity for change
41	VII. Closing
42	Appendix A: The Weavers and Designers
43	Appendix B: Methods and Data Sources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

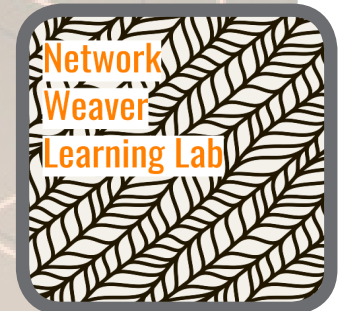
This is a critical time in our history as a movement where our ability to advance change requires a look at the root causes of violence and the complex systems and perspectives that prevent us from creating sustainable change. This is not possible without a space to engage in courageous conversations around our own relationships with race, class and power...

—Maricela Rios-Faust

The Network Weaver Learning Lab (NWLL or the Lab) launched right after the 2016 presidential election that marked a deepening polarization and growing intolerance in our country. For social justice leaders this divide raised the urgency of coming together within and across movements to protect communities under attack, restore themselves, and envision and strategize for a different future. The NWLL was an opportunity for a group of sixteen network leaders, including those working to address relationship based violence (RVB) and the related intersectional issues, to learn together and rethink strategies for creating change.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE LAB

This Lab grew out of two earlier efforts: **The Strong Field Project** (SFP: 2010-14), anchored by **CompassPoint**, brought together leaders across California as a catalyst for change and to strengthen the domestic violence field during a time when statewide funding was waning and the needs of the field were increasingly complex. Around the same time, the **Network Leadership Innovation Lab** (2012-15), led by the **Management Assistance Group** (MAG), explored the intersections of organizations and networks with leaders of national networks, using group action learning projects as the basis for cross movement building. CompassPoint and MAG came together in a new partnership to continue this network learning in California with the NWLL.

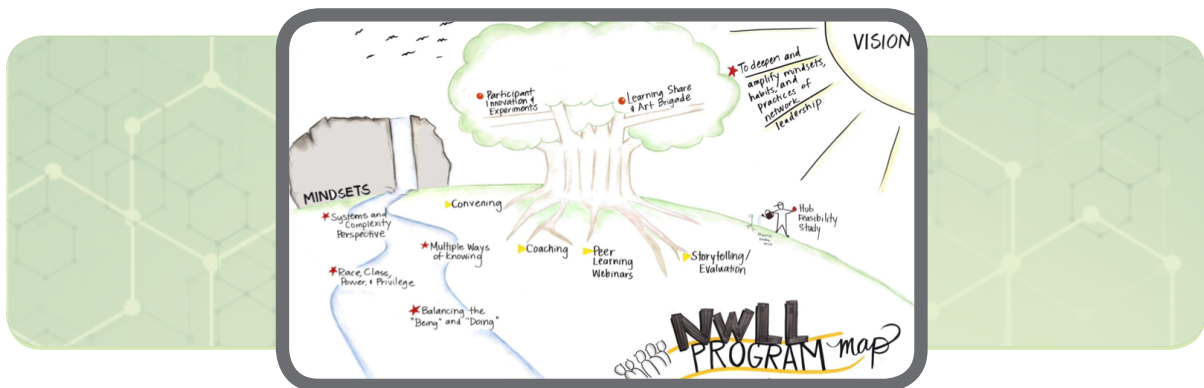


The Lab participants and designers, co-created a vibrant space to explore and experiment with ways to prevent and abate relationship-based violence, one that centered love and liberation over fear and white dominant patterns and the status quo. Like most issues, RBV lends itself to an intersectional approach to addressing the root causes of violence in relationships, families and communities. The Lab built on the connections between people and movements, inviting the group to engage with complex problems and courageous conversations. This evaluation shares the journey of the Lab, one that supported network leadership through building community and relationships, delving into generative tensions, and iterating through experimentation—all paving the way to transformative learning.

NWLL AND EVALUATION REPORT PURPOSE

The Lab's purpose was to deepen and amplify the mindsets, habits, and practices of effective adaptive network leadership. It was designed differently from more traditional leadership programs that focus on individual capacity building, instead focusing on building the relationships, collaborative competencies, and synergies that come from bringing together social justice leaders.

Another Lab goal was to contribute to an evolving understanding of networked leadership in the broader field by sharing the learning from the collective experience and experiments. This evaluation report captures the process and outcomes of the program by describing the co-creation of the Lab, the learning that ensued, and the ways the leaders are taking their experiences back to their organizations and networks.¹ To conclude, the report synthesizes the learning with five promising practices for the fields of leadership, organizational, and network development, as well as for networked movement building more broadly.



In addition to this report, the Lab shares its learning through two distinct but related mediums: 1) an electronic cookbook titled *"Weaving Together a World Without Violence: A Collection of Principles, Practices and Recipes for Healing,"* and 2) a feasibility study that outlines a few prototypes for potential network spaces that would build off the learning of this Lab to continue to advance the movement to end relationship-based violence in California. Together the three pieces—evaluation, eBook, and feasibility study—create a complementary set of resources for supporting an integrated ecosystem of network leaders and practices working to end relationship based violence and the intersectional inequities that enable it to continue.

THE DESIGNERS AND THE WEAVERS

...When things are paired they highlight the flavors and textures of one another...Preparation and sourcing ingredients makes the best dishes. When are you able to understand the parts and then see them as a finished cohesive whole? It makes the outcome that much more surprising and powerful.

—Dia Penning

¹ This evaluation would not have been possible without the brilliance of the Network Weavers, the NWLL Design team, and the funding by the Blue Shield Foundation of California.

Referring to Lab members as “participants” or “leaders” fails to capture their various of roles and positions. Instead they were referred to as “Weavers” (shortened from “network weavers,”), people who facilitate, connect, and support coherence among networks working towards a broader collective goal or movement. Most of the Weavers came from organizations, with a few working independently as clinicians or consultants. All were based in California and participated in multiple networks, including local and state-based, as well as some with national reach.

The group of weavers—including the faculty/facilitators—were predominantly People of Color; many were queer and some gender nonbinary. Most were working at the intersections of relationship-based violence prevention and other social justice movements such as reproductive health, restorative justice, racial justice, LGBTQ/trans rights, human trafficking, refugee and immigrant rights, advocacy for youth and survivors, among others. The mix was important as it embraced the intersectionality of issues and identities—and distinguishes this Lab as a People of Color, queer, mostly cisgender female, and gender nonbinary space that included allies.

A place where belly laughs are abundant, people are seen, all beings are loved and nourished and able to thrive. We live liberation!

-The shared vision the group defined together during the Lab about the kind of world they want to live in.



DESIGN: SETTING THE TABLE

Intentional adaptation is the heart of emergent strategy. How we live and grow and stay purposeful in the face of constant change actually does determine both the quality of our lives, and the impact we can have when we move into action together.

—adrienne marie brown, Emergent Strategy

In this evaluation of the Lab, the report draws on the process of cooking, not simply as a metaphor but rather as a language that echoes some of the relationship and community building strategies that became important in the Lab. As will be seen, the sharing of meals and food, the related stories, and connecting to their source of land and nature, were important and even seminal ways for connecting with ancestors, family, and the Weavers.

The Lab’s underlying principles—such as, leadership is not a position or a static state, it is about being and doing, and that the only way to effect meaningful social change is by addressing race, class, privilege, and power—grounded the program. Experimentation and co-creation were also central to the Lab, providing a stance and space for testing out ideas while putting them into practice.



...These principles enabled me to not only stay present and connected, but to hold space around me and for others when needed most.

—Melissa Powless Chacon

Principles of Cooking

Several frameworks, that were complemented by readings, videos, poetry, and journals, were offered to the weavers and were threaded throughout the Lab. Three fundamental frames were: **Five Elements of a Thriving Ecosystem, Developed Networks, and Liberatory Practices**. The books *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Kimmerer and *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne marie brown were heavily drawn upon as resources for understanding adaptability and interdependence in ecosystems and communities. Naming concepts, network mindsets, practices, and “ways of being” helped to cultivate shared references, understanding and language. The Weavers each used the ones that resonated most for them individually, and collectively they became referred to as the “Principles of Cooking.”

These principles, coupled with a commitment to emergent design, allowed the facilitators/faculty to adapt and follow the energy and curiosities of the group. The program was anchored by four, 3-day convenings, interspersed with webinars, coaching support, and group experiments. The design team focused on the bigger purpose and held the planned agendas and structures more lightly, drawing back as the learning process and convenings progressed; it was then that the Weavers took more ownership of the Lab. By the end of the program, the Weavers led most of the convening content design and facilitation.

APPROACH: MIXING THE INGREDIENTS

Being with everyone, building the sacred container, embodiment work...these are the kinds of practices that will help us move the movement, all of us together.

—Convening 3 evaluation



BUILDING COMMUNITY

Fundamental to the Lab process was building a community of trust in which learning and practices could emerge. Selecting the right mix of weavers helped create a strong container to hold the group process, enabling the group to gell relatively quickly. A strength of the Lab was the use of different modalities (movement, art, being in nature) that honored and embodied multiple ways of knowing and fostered connection. Sharing and cooking food, storytelling, ritual, and what the group referred to as “deep hanging out,”² were also foundational to the Lab culture. Food helped the group to get to know each other in another way, deeply connecting them to their senses, families, and histories—all helping to set the tone and a pace that valued and centered relationship building. At the final convening, one of the experiment groups led a session where the group literally stitched together a quilt of stories embodying the individual gifts that make the collective whole.

GENERATIVE TENSION AND OPENINGS

[With] generative tension it is important to be clear on what we are doing, bringing it to practice. How to sit with it and not solve it... [It is] about ritual, about healing together.

—Aja Duncan

The vision of the Lab was not to avoid discomfort, but rather to embrace it as a way to move towards liberation. During the Lab the group was very aware of, and sought to engage in/with, hard conversations and truths that existed in the group, as well as in their networks and communities. The term, “generative tension” was used to describe the noticing and holding of these differences as they arise, and building through them together for deeper understanding. This practice and process were seen as necessary for advancing intersectional and transformative change. An example of building through generative tension happened in the full group at the final convening when a a complex conversation surfaced organically. The paradox of holding male perpetrators of color accountable, yet maintaining understanding and compassion, triggered and raised a difficult conversation about race, gender, power, responsibility, and love.

Rather than shelve a difficult conversation that was not a part of the original agenda, the group decided to make the space to hold the tensions. Such a brave collective step can be painful and uncomfortable; but resisting or avoidance will inhibit collaboration. Using this opening to walk into tension together showed the commitment and capacity of the group to shift from oppressive practices and habits of white dominant culture (ex. not pausing to name and hold the tensions openly) to generate connection and greater understanding. Many would have liked for it to happen sooner, while others acknowledged that the time and process to get there were necessary.



² Quality time with individuals and groups that builds a strong foundation for authentic and lasting relationships. The time together can be structured, however it is often informal and without a particular agenda.

RESULTS: DIGESTING THE LEARNING

I love the part about food...I had no idea we would go there. Food just became such a powerful way for us to start thinking about healing...When we started to talk about food, we started to know each other in a different way because we started actually to tell stories about our connection to food, what we grew up with, why it was important to us.

—Ada Palotai

As the Lab evolved, so did the learning and impacts for the Weavers. The Weavers are carrying forward their relationships, along with learning and practices, to advance their work and develop new transformative spaces. When asked at the end of the Lab about their sense of their capacity to evolve beyond the NWLL, Weavers ranked a 3.73 out of 4 (being the highest), a strong indicator of continuing the Lab learning and taking it further. Post Lab evaluation data gathering has shown that six months later many of the Weavers are still absorbing and integrating what they learned through numerous applications. The results are organized by levels: individual, connecting with others, and beyond the Lab—although they tend to overlap, not falling neatly into these simple categories.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

Hurt people hurt people. Healed people heal people. Healing in this time can be a privilege for those with the material, financial—including health insurance—and emotional means. I want to make healing more accessible to those with less access.”

—Maria Dominguez



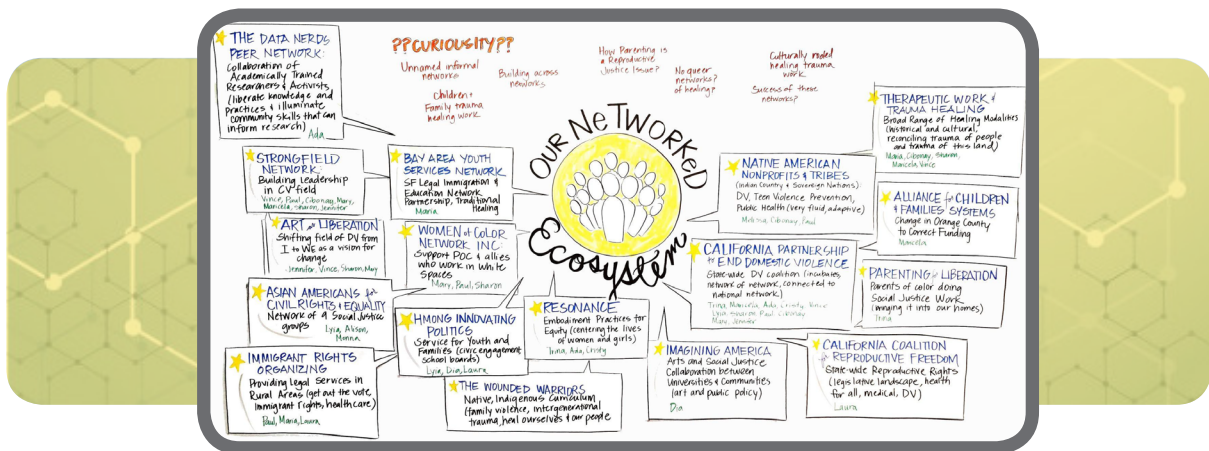
Many capacities are needed for network weaving, and while most are applicable to leading organizations, there are added challenges of balancing network and organizational interests. The learning from the Lab supported the Weavers' in deepening a number of capacities, in particular inner work that enhances their abilities to lead networks. The kinds of competencies that were fostered and practiced most in the Lab were: healing and care (ex. ability to address incidents of violence and empathy), holding complexity (ex. ability to hold paradox and multiple perspectives), embracing conflict and change (ex. ability to facilitate hard conversations and sit with discomfort), vision and purpose (ex. ability to share one's story and take a long term perspective), and liberatory practices (ex. leaning into one's power, supporting others in theirs, and knowing when to pull back).

One of the most valued impacts of the Lab was recognizing and tapping into multiple ways of knowing. Weavers shared how drawing on indigenous and/or ancestral knowledge and lived experiences bring forth tremendous resources. They expressed greater awareness of emotions felt in the body and how these impact their ability to lead and show up more fully, to be more present and clear.

Another important part of the Lab was the space for healing; the Weavers saw healing oneself as essential to being in right relation with and service to others. They demonstrated how by sharing one's stories, traumas, and hopes—and really hearing the same from others—they experienced stronger connection and opportunities for healing. Related to this is the ability and the willingness to be vulnerable in network spaces, which can be transformational. This sometimes invisible capacity to step into vulnerability is the basis for courageous conversations, and allows Weavers to model connection for more authentic collaboration.

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Moving from personal healing and growth to collective action as a group is not automatic, easy, or simple. The Weavers created a shared vision that articulated how they wanted to be together and the kind of world they envisioned. As a complement to structured sessions, “deep hanging out,” fortified the authentic and lasting relationships needed for collective action.



The Lab content, frameworks and container fostered the transparency, relationships and trust needed to take risks together through experimentation and generative tensions. The Weavers' readiness and willingness to step into complexity and embrace discomfort together stimulated powerful learning about remaining in connection with others in conflict, rather than separating or shutting down. This kind of community and care took collaboration to a much deeper and more enduring level.

BEYOND THE LAB

[There is a] ripple effect that this community of practice can have; we have a majority people of color, many who self identify as LGBTQ, who are working on the ground in a variety of sectors, who are bringing in their whole selves, and who want liberation, healing, and belly laughs for all.

—Mary Martinez

Weavers are integrating their learning into their counseling, teaching, and leadership practices radiating out to their networks working on RBV and related issues. While impacts outside the Lab can take more time to be visible and take hold, some Lab experiences and ideas have already been introduced to networks. An early example was with Art as Liberation, a Strong Field alumni project, where there was a crossover of people and ideas from the Lab in their June, 2018 conference of artists and activists using art as a medium for transforming community and survivor narratives about RBV.

Conversations are continuing post Lab in various ways:

- * one group is continuing their connections through an active Facebook page where members share ideas with each other;
- * the Bay Area group continues to meet for meals in community;
- * a writing group of People of Color has formed, getting together once a month to create a space where they can write.

Related projects and curricula are also being developed:

- * The Habit Dashery experiment group sought funding to continue their learning, behavior change and overall experiment and work together.
- * A cluster of Weavers are developing parent training that dissects how anti blackness shows up in spaces of learning, even when explicitly stated as spaces of justice. They are most interested in deepening their practice of what it can really look like to disrupt and call out habits of white supremacy in a group that one feels committed to.
- * Another Weaver carried the freedom of experimentation into work that was focused on engaging black men and boys in ending violence against women and girls.

An exciting result of the Lab is the development of a few prototypes for a network space that would be the backbone support for continued experimentation, co-creation, and collaboration for the NWLL and other network projects in the movement to end relationship-based violence in California. A few of the Weavers began forming their ideas by cooking together and posing the question “How might we support healing, experimentation, collaboration and emergence?” They are proposing two different possibilities that could be stand alone or work in harmony with each other: 1) a science lab as a combined virtual and in-person Lab space, and 2) a community kitchen that could be an incubator model of a social enterprise that supports different projects to take off and grow.

RESULTS: LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION

Each experiment was a small act of courage that led to more insight, and creativity towards a next iteration of experimentation.

—Sharon Turner

Experimentation—a mindset and practice that encourages and tries out new ideas, methods, and iterates with rigor, and without necessarily knowing the outcome in advance—was a core component of the Lab. This approach and the emergent experiments provided frameworks and opportunities for Weavers to explore areas of interest in small groups during and in-between the convenings. They served as the bridge between doing the internal work and complex systems change, requiring the Weavers to get more agile with an experimentation stance in order to advance change in complexity.

All the groups used writing and journaling as a method of exploration, expression, and sharing. In one way or another, they each tapped into indigenous and/or ancestral knowledge; connected with nature, land, and food; challenged dominant practices; and addressed sustainability. Each of the experiments took some time to get traction and momentum, evolving at their own pace. Initially most of the experimentation groups were not sure of where they were headed and found it confusing to not have a direction more defined. They learned to tolerate, and even embrace, ambiguous end-results as part of the iterative process toward complex systems and behavior change.

EXPERIMENT GROUPS HYPOTHESES



Flip the Script, Script Flipped ✨ If we “flip the script” from why aren’t movements working together to—how do we create the conditions for movements to work together—then we will strengthen our respective visions towards ending relationship based violence.



Writing our connection to the land ✨ If we are in deep connection with land, then we are able to be present for other ways of living and being, ones without violence.



Habit Dashery ✨ If we explore the tension between what we want to build and what we want to deconstruct, then we will each be able to move deeper into liberated practice in the ways that make sense for each of us.



Let Us Talk 'Bout Our Roots ✨ If we use food as a catalyst for deepening relationships, then we will be able to make space to connect across difference.



Heal the Healers ✨ If we take our own healing medicine and share that experience with our community, then we’ll create a microcosm of community care and healing—and deal with our own exhaustion, burnout, or limited time.

A striking outcome of the experimentation process was that groups took different paths but arrived at many shared learnings and conclusions. While not all experiments started by explicitly centering RBV, in one way or another all groups explored the impacts of violence and trauma on the Weavers, their communities, and clients—and healing became central to all of them. Most of the groups felt there was not enough time to fully do the experiments as they had envisioned, and some Weavers wanted more time in the convenings for hands-on working sessions. But overall, the experiment groups (their hypotheses, actions and reflections) spurred some of the Lab's richest learning, and continue to serve as a reference for ongoing collaborations beyond the Lab.

RESULTS: LEARNING FOR THE FIELD

In networks, mutual accountability and support is much more reliant on relationships and the ability to hold tension and heal from rupture together, than it is on organizational contexts where there are formal structures and policies in place to regulate some of this and set norms. Therefore there was and needs to be an emphasis on the people, the weavers themselves.

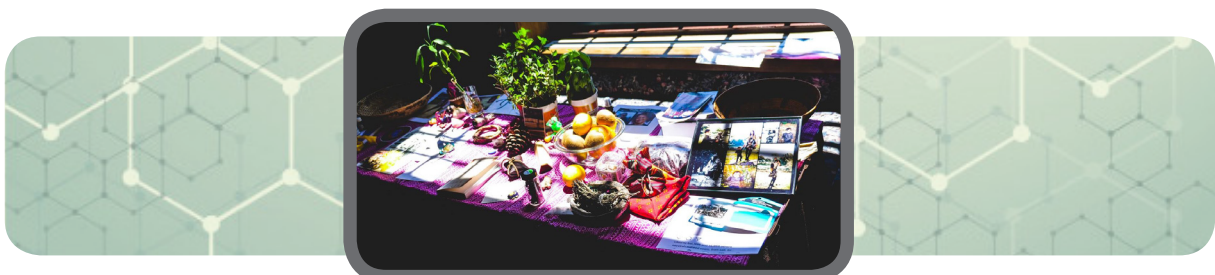
—Elissa Sloan-Perry

The Weavers' experiences during the Lab validated some of what we know about network weaving; they also contribute to the learning of the field. Through synthesizing and highlighting the many learnings of the Lab, the following five promising practices surfaced.

1. STRUCTURE AS SUPPORTING SPACIOUSNESS

With programs that adapt and emerge as they are implemented, it is important to decide at the design stage what the primary purpose (and competencies, in the case of leadership development) will be, and over the arc of the program continue to refer back to those core tenets. Building in responsiveness can become a shortcoming if it is unclear to participants or not communicated enough. There may be unspoken, or sometimes spoken, changes that can create confusion or divergent expectations about purpose or process.

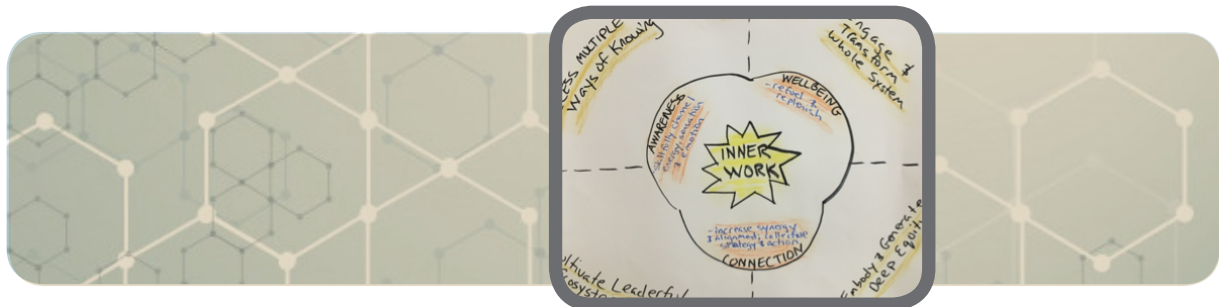
Promising Practices ✱ The right amount of emergence will create both the conditions for spaciousness and the structures to hold process. In the Lab, this meant focusing more on the people connecting with each other and with new ideas, and less on specific or planned results. Loosening agendas to provide open space, with feedback loops, helped to strike this balance. The ability of facilitators to read group dynamics, incorporate feedback, and respond, sometimes in real time, is part of the art of emergence. In addition, repeating the shared vision, principles, and agreements is especially helpful with projects that have a more fluid structure.



2. EXPERIMENTATION AS A TECHNOLOGY AND SKILL

Networks rely on strong relationships, and taking action together requires trust and alignment of these relationships. The need to take time to build relationships and trust can be in creative tension with a desire to move to action. People engage and learn by doing, so staying too long in the meta-vision may feel abstract, or frustrating. With networks, moving into action may not be neatly signaled by a sequence of activities since there is rarely a single story or issue. When weavers can form groups based on their energy and interests, the relationships can lead into action and learning together.

Promising Practices ✱ Experimentation creates opportunities to move relationships into action. It is a stance and approach for testing out ideas and iterating based on what is happening in the process. The Lab showed how experimentation is an effective technology for group and self-discovery, one that can bring concepts to life. It is a powerful pathway to learning and capacity building, but it is not always an easy one. It differs from the usual logic models with discrete inputs and outputs. Measuring success can be harder, especially when failing is a critical part of the learning process. Experimentation requires reflection and analysis of outcomes and learnings, which is often skipped over when trying something new. Coaches can support experiment groups by providing tools, advising them to take a step back, or take on smaller pieces of their hypothesis. With experimentation it is also important to know when to move on, rather than hold onto an experiment that is not working or serving its purpose anymore.



3. INNER WORK AS COLLECTIVE WORK

While it is generally understood and accepted that people and organizations function in networked ways, the level of investment in networks does not always match the need to sustain the weavers or the networks. For leaders, network weaving often puts additional responsibilities on top of already full workloads. Investing in the people that make up the networks has exponential benefits, as weavers carry their knowledge and experience to multiple networks, and wherever they go.

Promising Practices ✱ Weavers expressed that paying attention to one's own inner life is a precursor to serving and collaborating with others—and sustaining themselves and their work. Anyone working in relationship-based violence will benefit from inner work, including exploring personal and collective traumas and resiliencies. Scaling up from internal reflection and practice to external or group practice can be difficult and even painful. Knowing one's triggers and reactions is a valuable capacity that can be cultivated in many different ways: writing, embodiment practices, coaching, relationship building, to name a few. Weavers found great value in “deep hanging out,” being in nature, and cooking meals together as ways to nourish themselves and profoundly connect with each other.

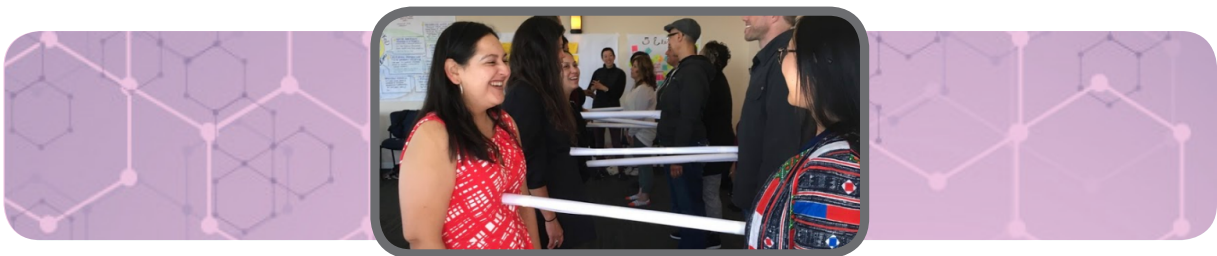
4. NETWORK LEADERSHIP AS WEAVING ROLES AND PROCESSES

When leading in networked spaces, it is necessary to name and communicate who is taking on particular roles, how they will work together, and what is happening in the group, especially as there may not be formal governance or communication structures. It will be important to determine explicitly how decisions will be made together—even before knowing the shape of the work. For example, being transparent and sharing decisions about how resources are divided, and the choices that were made, can help or hinder the openness, and thus integrated efforts of a network.

Promising Practices ✱ Making processes and roles visible is important to effective network weaving. Depending where the network and leaders are in their own processes, weavers will step in and out of roles at different moments. Valuing each role and understanding these shifts is vital to sharing leadership, including more voices, and encouraging new weavers to become more involved. This was demonstrated in the Lab as the facilitators/faculty and the Weavers blurred the lines of their roles—which in turn, enhanced ownership for the participants, and more deeply connected the faculty/facilitators with the group. Changing of roles, sometimes without much transition, can be demanding and even draining; thus it is helpful to factor in breaks to recover, and to coordinate with others to have those breaks.

5. GENERATIVE TENSION AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

Familiar habits of white dominant practices—individual, collective, and systemic—do not serve networks seeking social justice, rather they support the status quo, can be alienating, and are damaging. In networks (as anywhere) there can be avoidance, assumptions, or defaulting to white dominant patterns. For example, attitudes and practices that focus on efficiencies and perfecting, rather than accountability to those that are hurt or negatively impacted, can reinforce inequities and deter collaboration. This is counterproductive and harmful to groups of any racial composition, including internalized oppression found in groups of majority people of color.



Promising Practices ✱ Making visible white dominant patterns and supremacist values (in relationships, organizations, networks) surfaces the conflicts they create, and helps interrupt them. Replacing these deeply ingrained behaviors with an awareness of them will help to make choices to better reflect shared values. By consciously making these choices and taking responsibility for them, individuals and groups can break through counterproductive and harmful patterns—and is often where the depth of the work takes off. “Calling-in” people rather than “calling-out” their faults only, can be a significant shift in relationships and strategic thinking. Instead, valuing other ways of being and offering healing supports can build trust, infuse positive energy, and move groups to healthier relationships with each other. When moving intentionally into these kinds of tensions an instinctive desire can be to find some resolution, but sometimes that is not possible, and is not necessarily the end goal. Navigating generative tension, rather than avoidance, was one of the most impactful and transformative aspects of the Lab.

CONCLUSION

Whatever is in the way, is the way. Let's go there and explore it, unpack it. If we can align the mindsets with what we do, that is a practice...Outside of the pain is liberation, to practice being a different way with one another.

—Lupe Poblano, CompassPoint



To change inequitable systems that continue to deeply divide our society, networks across sectors and movements need to work together better. The Lab co-created a space to reimagine what this future could be. The Weavers' vision for ending relationship-based violence was to embrace loving relationships and generative practices as a way to move towards liberation. The Weavers committed to and experimented with ways to stop recreating inequitable systems, and to stop reinforcing white dominant patterns that are harming queer, low-income, and communities of color.

The Weavers cultivated learning and tended to healing through visioning, storytelling, cooking, experimentation, leaning into conflict, and thus transformative change. The Lab provided spaciousness to explore and see the whole person in the context of whole systems, in all their complexity, interconnection, and potential. The Lab also offered structures and practices to better understand and embody all that is required in network weaving including building from generative tension, tapping into multiple ways of knowing, and delving into hard questions through experimentation. The depth of the learning was made possible by the depth of the relationships formed. These connections continue as the basis for furthering the conversations initiated and ignited in the Lab.

The Weavers are carrying forward the Lab learning in their own lives, and as they lead more effectively and authentically with their teams, organizations and networks. The journey was simultaneously rich, and undone. While this iteration of the Lab has formally come to a close, many of the relationships, conversations, and practices that were seeded and mixed, are digesting and metabolizing as they continue to grow—even as others are budding and blooming.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Network Weaver Learning Lab (NWLL or the Lab) launched right after the 2016 presidential election that marked a deepening polarization and growing intolerance in our country. For social movements and networks, this divide raised the urgency of coming together within and across movements to protect communities under attack, restore themselves, and envision and strategize for a different future. The NWLL was an opportunity for leaders, particularly those working to address relationship based violence (RVB) and the related intersectional issues, to learn together and rethink strategies for creating change.

Sixteen California-based network leaders, along with the Lab designers, co-created a vibrant space to explore and experiment with ways to prevent and abate relationship-based violence, one that centered love and liberation over fear and white dominant patterns and the status quo. Like most issues, RBV lends itself to an intersectional approach by addressing systems and root causes of violence in families and communities. The Lab built on the connections between people and movements, inviting the group to engage with complex problems and courageous conversations.

This program grew out of two earlier efforts. **The Strong Field Project** (SFP), anchored by **CompassPoint**, brought together leaders across California as a catalyst for change and to strengthen the domestic violence field during a time when statewide funding was waning

and the needs of the field were increasingly complex.³ Around the same time, the **Network Leadership Innovation Lab** (NLIL) (2012-15), led by the **Management Assistance Group** (MAG), explored the intersections of organizations and networks with leaders of national networks, using action learning projects as the basis for learning and cross movement building. CompassPoint and MAG joined together to continue this learning in California with the Network Weavers Learning Lab.

The Lab was designed differently from more traditional leadership programs that focus on individual capacity building, instead it focused on building the relationships, collaborative competencies and synergies that come from bringing together social justice leaders. The design team, made up of facilitators and faculty from the anchor organizations as well as Lab participants, began meeting at the end of 2015 to develop goals (see text box). In addition to investing in the SFP alumni, the emergent program set out to:

- * **Deepen and amplify the mindsets, habits, and practices of adaptive network leadership among participants;**
- * **Learn from the collective experience and experiments, and share that learning with the broader field**

Another Lab goal was to contribute to an evolving understanding of networked leadership in the broader field by sharing the learning from the collective experience and experiments.

OVERALL NWLL LAB GOALS

- * Deepen and expand the understanding of what it takes to be a successful network leader, spread those learnings throughout the RBV field in California, and evolve our common understanding of leadership at the individual, organizational, and networked levels.
- * Promote collaboration among those working to end relationshipbased violence as well as collaboration across issue areas to get at impacting some of the root causes of domestic violence
- * Explore promising systems and practices that engage multiple perspectives and approaches to meeting the needs of survivors
- * Support domestic violence leaders to be collaborative, innovative, and systemic thinkers who cultivate the enduring relationships to enact network leadership and advance transformative change

³ led by Blue Shield of California Foundation in collaboration with California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, Jemmott Rollins Group, and Women's Foundation of California

Purpose and Roadmap of Report

The purpose of this report is to capture the learning from the Lab process,³ the impacts on its participants, and how they are applying their learning. This evaluation would not have been possible without the brilliance of the Network Weavers, the NWLL Design team, and the funding by the Blue Shield Foundation of California.

The report begins by describing who participated, outlining the design elements and approach, and

introduces the central principles and frameworks. With this background, the report shares the learning from the Lab process and then focuses on the impacts and learning on multiple levels—individual, connecting with others, and beyond the Lab. The report highlights the five group experiments that evolved and lifts up some cross-experiment takeaways. After revisiting the progress towards the Lab goals, the report concludes with learning for the field with five promising practices.

DEFINING KEY TERMS

Deep hanging out ✱ Quality time with individuals and groups that builds a strong foundation for authentic and lasting relationships. The time together can be structured, however it is often informal and without a particular agenda.

Experimentation ✱ A practice for learning based on an focused inquiry, defined success measures, and group synthesis of learnings that encourages finding innovative solutions through taking small risks and completing multiple iterations that continuously integrate previous learnings.

Network Weaver ✱ Leaders who facilitate, connect, and support coherence among networks working towards a broader collective goal or movement. They have experience that extends beyond an organization. In the Lab context, Weavers examine their own assumptions and practices; hold a race, class, power, privilege orientation; are in a learning and collaborative stance leading with curiosity; have lived experience of working across boundaries of race and class. They engage the following mindsets: multiple ways of knowing; systems and complexity perspective; balancing the “being” and “doing”; and race, class, power and privilege.

Liberation ✱ a state of being in which one is free from all forms of oppression; liberation can be personal and/or communal; a deep connection to self, body, mind and spirit (from blog on Move to End Violence). A broader term—the movement to end violence—signals an expansion to moves beyond a simple gender analysis to include other forms of social domination and the web of social issues that impact women and people of color. The intersectional and structural perspectives have an emphasis on liberation for change.

Medicine ✱ Medicine is used with the Native American meaning to be a presence and power embodied by a person, place, event, or objects shared through spirit, power or energy.

Race, Power and Privilege (RPP) ✱ Unpacking levels of oppression (systemic, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized); Seeing and understanding the role of social-location-based power in broader systems; Seeing and understanding how laws and power create “race;” Applying a racialized lens (rather than a color-blind one) with a focus on looking at the role of white privilege and white supremacy in order to understand our current context.

Relationship-based violence (RBV) ✱ Sometimes used interchangeably with Domestic Violence (DV), gender based-violence (GBV), or intimate partner violence (IPV). This term was used intentionally in the Lab to focus on the intersectionality of identities and issues relating to violence. Violence can be in the form of physical, verbal, emotional, economic and sexual abuse.

The field ✱ The broader RBV, GBV, DV, IPV and related social justice movements—intentionally taking a cross movement perspective.

³ The evaluation followed the evolution of the Lab closely, offering opportunities for reflection and feedback loops over the arc of the program

II. DESIGN: SETTING THE TABLE

[I appreciated] the design team's flexibility/responsiveness, because we embodied what we are practicing—experimentation—and that led us to a breakthrough.

—Weaver Evaluation

[I] really enjoyed that it wasn't only Executive Directors, [it was] good to have other leaders... There is more diversity with positional power, so much richer.

—Cibonay Jimenez

The Weavers

Referring to Lab members as “participants” or “leaders” fails to capture their various roles and positions. Instead they were referred to as “Weavers,” (shortened from “network weavers”) people who facilitate, connect, and support coherence among networks working towards a broader collective goal or movement. Most of the Weavers came from organizations, with a few working independently as clinicians or consultants. All were based in California and participated in multiple networks, including local and state-based, as well as some with national reach. Half of the 16, were alumni of the Strong Field Program, with the other half not having met prior to the Lab. The Weavers had different positional powers and roles in their organizations bringing different perspectives from running and organization or network, and from those with closer connections with communities (See Appendix A for list of Weavers).



The group of Weavers—including the faculty/facilitators—were predominantly People of Color; many were queer and some gender nonbinary. Most were working at the intersections of relationship-based violence prevention and other

social justice movements such as reproductive health, restorative justice, racial justice, LGBTQ/trans rights, human trafficking, refugee and immigrant rights, advocacy for youth and survivors, among others. The mix was important as it embraced the intersectionality of issues and identities—and distinguishes this Lab as a People of Color, queer, mostly cisgender female, and gender nonbinary space that included allies.

Program design

The Lab's emergent design and delivery was guided by key principles and definitions that were identified early in the design and were intended to help create the conditions for the group to learn (See Principles for more detail on fundamental concepts and frames).

NWLL PRINCIPLES

- * Leadership is not a position or a static state;
- * Leadership is about being and doing;
- * The Lab is centered on and values experimentation and co-creation;
- * Movement building, frameworks, and systems change efforts are key to address root causes to ending RBV;
- * Learning is mutual among participants and the facilitation team (that we all bring diverse wisdoms that collectively create a platform for transformative change);
- * The only way to effect meaningful social change is by addressing race, class, privilege, and power and all the ways these impact the work.

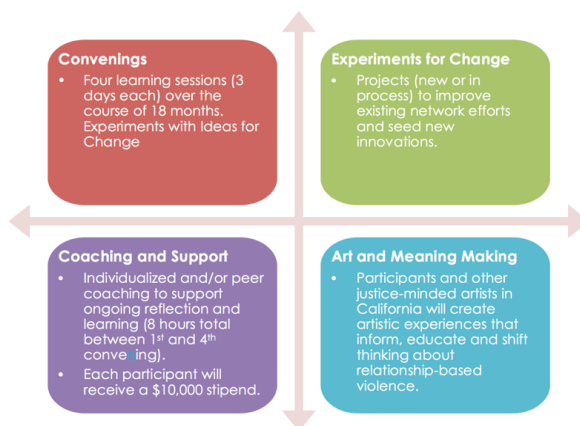
The design approach was adaptive and co-creative, sometimes changing in real time to follow the energy and interests of the group. Ongoing feedback loops were embedded in the evaluation, webinars, design team meetings, and individual conversations. As the convenings progressed, the Weavers led the process more and the design gravitated to reflect the capacities and opportunities of the group. By the end of the program, the Weavers led most of the content design and facilitation.

Program Elements

The program had four elements as illustrated in the graphic. Between convenings, Lab activities and connections were maintained through group experiments, webinars, and (in some cases) informal gatherings.

1) Four in-person convenings

The program hosted four convenings to set a foundation for learning and co-creation, engaging with the whole of complex systems, forming and testing out ideas through group experiments, grounding and connecting network principles to network practices, and harvesting the learning from the experiments and the Lab overall (See *Table 3: The Lab Convenings for more detail*).



The program consists of four convenings, coaching and support, experiments change, and art and meaning making.

2) Learning Through Experimenting

Participants first committed to personal-level experiments for their own exploration. At the second convening, three group experiments emerged to address a collective interest and a need within the field of relationship-based violence. In the third convening, an additional two experiments were designed and the original three groups created new iterations based on their learnings. Groups worked inside and outside the convenings and received coaching to galvanize around a compelling hypothesis, to design and test an experiment, and to reflect on their learnings (See *Table 1: Group Experiments Hypotheses*).

TABLE 1:

GROUP EXPERIMENTS HYPOTHESES

“HOW MIGHT WE END RELATIONSHIP-BASED VIOLENCE”

See Learning from Experimentation for more about the results...

Experiment Group

Flip the Script, Script Flipped ✱ The intersectionality of IPV/Relationship based violence, and looking at what conditions need to be present for movements to work together.



Hypotheses

Iteration 1 ✱ How might we create the conditions to be present for movements to work together?

Hypothesis ✱ If we “flip the script” from why aren’t movements working together to—how do we create the conditions for movements to work together—then we will strengthen our respective visions towards ending relationship based violence.

Iteration 2 ✱ How might we catalyze cross movement dynamics and relationships that accelerate an integrated approach to collective liberation?

Hypothesis ✱ If we uncover the areas of cross-movement synergy, values, and practices around anti-violence work, then we have a launching pad for working toward collective liberation.

Iteration 3 ✱ How might we make the learnings of our experiment tangible? How might we engage our network on these questions, learnings artistically?

Hypothesis ✱ If we engage in Artistic practice as a way of knowing, then our many stories become a guide for to work together to “feed the people, feed the land, and feed our imaginations, telling us how we might live.”

Experiment Group

Writing our Connection to the Land ✱ Relationship



between IPV and violence/trauma to the earth and trauma resulting from environmental and toxic events.

Hypotheses

Iteration 1 ✱ How might we explore the practice of healing ourselves and giving medicine back to the earth as a parallel or metaphor for healing our families and communities?

Hypothesis ✱ If we are in deep connection with land, then we are able to be present for other ways of living and being, ones without violence.

If we each write about our engagement with healing and land, then we can better identify connections and differences in approaches for trauma and healing work moving forward.

Iteration 2 ✱ How might we network weave with other people working on issues of climate (environmental and political) and harm reduction — particularly around intimate RVB.

How might we take learning from climate justice and climate resilience and integrate it into our work and personal resilience moving forward?

Habit Dashery ✱ Share our exploration of living into Liberatory practice and working with generative tension. Practice together.



Iteration 1 ✱ How might liberated relationships with self and others de-center whiteness and interrupt white dominant culture habits?

Hypothesis ✱ If we explore the tension between what we want to build and what we want to deconstruct, then we will each be able to move deeper into liberated practice in the ways that make sense for each of us.

Experiment Group

Let Us Talk 'Bout Our Roots ✱ Healing and what



is possible about power shifting when we engage with food and others over food.

Hypotheses

Iteration 1 ✱ How might we center food as a vehicle for our individual and collective liberation?

Hypothesis ✱ If we center food and relationship, then we shift power to community and choice.

If we use food as a catalyst for deepening relationships, then we will be able to...make space to connect across difference.

If we use food as a point of connection and connectedness, then we will be able to have difficult conversations about generative tensions around how white supremacist habits show up, even in predominantly POC spaces; or around privilege, equity and justice.

Heal the Healers ✱ Using our own wisdom to heal and support ourselves in the same manner that we support our clients.



Iteration 1 ✱ How might we apply our wisdom as healers — including how to develop and create support — to our own experiences of exhaustion, burnout, or limited time?

Hypothesis ✱ If we take our own healing medicine⁵ and share that experience with our community, then we'll create a microcosm of community care and healing—and deal with our own exhaustion, burnout, or limited time.

⁵ Medicine is used with the Native American meaning to be a presence and power embodied by a person, place, event, or objects shared through spirit, power or energy.

3) Coaching and supports

In addition to in-person convenings, the NWLL Included opportunities for coaching to support ongoing reflection and learning in the context of network weaving. Coaches were recruited based upon: their experience coaching leaders, particularly in a social justice and complex systems change context; their capacity to hold equity, race, liberation perspective and the ability to unpack levels of oppression (systemic, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized); and their familiarity with networked leadership approaches, challenges and opportunities (particularly the similarities and differences in mindsets), and practices.

The structure for the delivery of coaching was co-determined between the design team and the participants. There were 109 coaching hours provided for 14 participants. Some of the Weavers continued with existing coaches, allowing for continuity and fit. The experiment groups also benefited from ongoing coaching in the second half of the Lab to help refine their hypotheses and in support of their learning.

Coaches worked with the Weavers on many different topics including: generational healing as a way to support present and future work; structural pathways to change; exploring possibilities for what could be different in the work; strong affirmations for the Weavers and what they would not stand for such as, toxicity, abuse; shedding encumbrances and things leaders absorb at expense of their own wisdom; uplifting strong sense of self and connection

to community and land; Intersectionality within oneself and importance of how we show up and operate; opening and unfolding outward; and navigating across movements.

4) Sharing learning and the art brigade

Centering the importance of art in making meaning was a clear commitment of the design team and advisory group. In advancing community understanding and advocacy, art helps imagine an alternate future - one in which relationships and communities address conflict in healthy ways. Therefore, in addition to the evaluation, the Lab also shares its learning and art brigade or e-book created by the Weavers and other justice-minded artists in California. Also a feasibility study, based on research on networks and the results of the Lab, puts forth 1-2 prototypes for thinking about the resourcing and continuation of the Lab learning (*See Beyond the Lab*).

PRINCIPLES OF COOKING: THEORETICAL GROUNDING FOR PRACTICES

...These principles enabled me to not only stay present and connected, but to hold space around me and for others when needed most.

—Melissa Powless Chacon

Being among the sisters provides a visible manifestation of what a community can become when its members understand and share their gifts. In reciprocity, we fill our spirits as well as our bellies.

—Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass



Several fundamental frameworks relating to network weaving were threaded throughout the Lab, along with a collection of readings, videos, poetry and other resources. The books—*Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer and *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne marie brown⁶—were heavily drawn upon as well. The two books artfully illustrated the inherent interdependence, adaptability, and reciprocity in nature, which can also be seen in network weaving relationships and in social systems. For example, the group referred often to the ancestral Native American story of the Three Sisters which was described in *Braiding Sweetgrass*. The author describes how squash, corn and beans (the sisters) grow together and provide support and sustenance for each other, as well as for the land, and the people that inhabit it.

Naming central concepts created shared language and references, and together over the evolution of the Lab, they were referred to as the “Principles of Cooking.” Here we summarize three of them: The Five Elements, Developed Networks, and Liberatory Practices.

Five Elements of a Thriving Justice Ecosystem

The **Five Elements of a Thriving Justice Ecosystem** relates closely to another frame, The Network Mindsets,⁷ which attributes key roles and characteristics to working effectively in networks. During the Lab, the design team gravitated towards using the Five Elements as a guiding framework. MAG has defined these elements as:

Advancing Deep Equity * Deep equity is being in the continuous and ongoing practices necessary for people and the planet to experience

love, dignity, and justice. It is not a destination. Deep equity draws on recognizing and healing the negative impacts of our identities, stepping into the positive impacts of our identities, as well as the power of difference to access deeper understandings, approaches, and ways of being to transform people, institutions, and systems.⁸

Cultivating Leaderful Ecosystems * Leaderful ecosystems are mutually supportive and highly equitable. They are systems where power is continuously built, shared, and moving. They recognize and grow leadership that supports, complements, and supplements toward a desired future state.⁹

Valuing Multiple Ways of Knowing * Multiple ways of knowing include the many ways we understand and engage with the world such as through our experiences, art, ancestral wisdom, learnings from the natural world as well as the more rationalist approaches often overprivileged by U.S. dominant culture.¹¹

Influencing Complex Systems Change * Complex systems change is change that is advanced when we are able to see both the whole system and its details, and embrace experimentation and emergence as principles of moving forward. This work requires simultaneously holding the priorities of individuals, organizations, and networks.¹²

Creating the Space for Inner Work * Inner work is our individual and collective practice of nurturing health, vitality, clarity, and wholeness in ourselves as people and as a people. It is what keeps us connected to our ability to be our better selves.¹¹

⁶ 2017. brown, adrienne marie. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. AK Press.; 2013. Wall Kimmerer, Robin. *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Milkweed Editions.

⁷ Adapted by Elissa Sloan-Perry from from Marty Kearns and NetCentric Campaigns.

⁸ Click here to read more on deep equity in MAG's Nonprofit Quarterly article: Pursuing Deep Equity and this blog “Seeing, Reckoning, & Acting: A Practice Towards Deep Equity.”

⁹ Click here to read more on leaderful ecosystems in MAG's Nonprofit Quarterly article: Cultivating Leaderful Ecosystems.

¹⁰ Click here to read more on multiple ways of knowing in MAG's Nonprofit Quarterly article: Multiple Ways of Knowing: Expanding How We Know.

¹¹ Click here to read more on complex systems change in MAG's Nonprofit Quarterly article: Influencing Complex Systems Change and this blog Being Strategic and Nimble When You Aren't In Control.

¹² 2017 Sheryl Petty, et al. *Toward Love, Healing, Resilience & Alignment: The Inner Work of Social Transformation & Justice*. Nonprofit Quarterly. May.

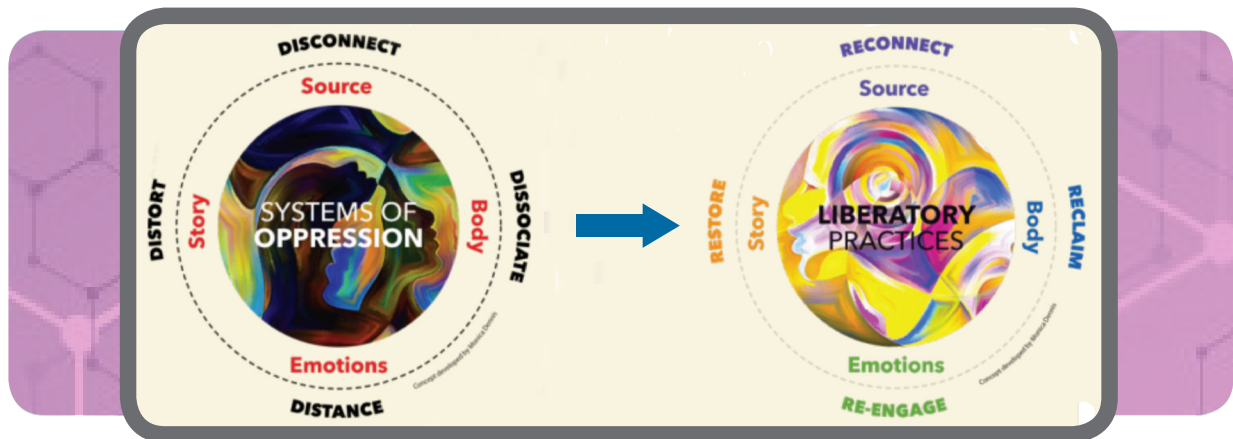
Developed Networks

The **“Developed Network”** names seven patterns and components of many networks that also help them to function and be effective. The model names five roles within a network, all necessary and important to network building, action, and sustainability:¹³

1. **Drivers** * move the work along
2. **Principles** * hold the boundaries and protocols of the group when making high-level decisions
3. **Weavers** * connect the dots, make meaning, and facilitate the “whole being more than the sum of the parts”
4. **Operationalists** * attend to logistics and infrastructure
5. **Supporters** * show and do what needs to be done, contribute to the work and its progress, and help make meaning without a formal role

Liberatory Practices

The NWLL program drew on Liberatory Practices developed by Monica Dennis.¹⁴ This systemic analysis of structural racism was shared through the Move to End Violence, a ten-year movement building program for social change. It illustrates racism’s relationship to intersecting oppressions and shows how to move from these oppressive systems to liberation. Referred to as the Four D’s of Oppression (Disconnect, Dislocate, Distance and Distort) and Four R’s of Liberation (Reconnect, Reclaim, Re-engage, Restore), it provides language for conversations about the tensions around oppressive practices both within and across relationships, communities and networks.



Moving From Oppression to Liberation | The 4D’s of Oppression and the 4R’s of Liberation

Source: Monica Dennis, Move to End Violence

¹³ Adapted by Elissa Sloan-Perry from from Marty Kearns and NetCentric Campaigns. There are also 7 Elements of networks identified in this framework.

¹⁴ Spirit of a Woman Consulting and Move to End Violence.

III. APPROACH: MIXING THE INGREDIENTS

The NWLL's shared vision statement developed at the second convening by the group: **A place where belly laughs are abundant, people are seen, all beings are loved and nourished and able to thrive. We live liberation!**

Having set the background and foundation for the Lab, we now turn to the process and its results. The focus is the impacts on and the learning of the Weavers; however, the learning of the design team and faculty will also be included in this section. The Lab approach and process were not only a means to reaching end goals and outcomes, they also hold substantial learning and therefore should be considered as an unfolding outcome. We present the outcomes in three areas: *Approach, Results, and Learning for the Field.*



Building community

When I think of engaging with networks what resonates the most is the investment in relationships, and relationship building overall. It's finding folks who you share something in common with, whether it's the overarching end goal of liberation or sharing hair product secrets... and then building from there.

—Mary Martinez

Much has been written about the importance of relationships and building trust when collaborating. The Lab was no exception. What was unique and positive for this group, and contributed to its formation, was the majority being people of color and women-centered. Selecting the right mix of weavers helped create a strong container to hold the group process which helped the group to gell relatively quickly. The NWLL application helped to select people who understood: letting go of the expert mentality, examining one's own assumptions and practices, holding a race class power privilege orientation, being in a learning and collaborative stance, leading with curiosity, having organizing experience that extends beyond the organization where on staff, having lived experience of working across boundaries of race and class, and having policy experience.

One way the group culture formed was through the ritual of building and dismantling a collective altar each convening and with it, sharing personal stories. With the rituals came offerings of writing and other gifts. Yoga, tai chi, music, and dance were ways the group grounded and celebrated together. Cooking and gathering around food became part of the community culture. Upon the request of the Weavers, two of the convenings had potlucks, a distinctly different experience than the usual conference or restaurant dining environments. In the Bay Area, one experiment group self-organized to meet for meals between the convenings.

Food and shared meals became a guiding metaphor for one experiment group and eventually for the Lab. This all helped to set the tone and a pace that valued relationship-building and trust. The group came to call this community building "deep hanging out" (*See definition in Defining Key Terms*). The importance of this outcome is evident in their early initial connection that grew over time, and their desire to stay connected has continued post-Lab.

Generative openings

I have been a part of many social justice groups and we always fall back into which group had it off worst and I have found that we treat each other with violent words as a means to protect ourselves; This is not bridging across borders.

—Weaver evaluation

Getting comfortable is one of the habits that needs to be interrupted... What is coming up is safe space vs. brave space - people have an expectation of safe space, where there is no discomfort. Who said we were going to be comfortable? Who told that lie?

—Ada Palotai

The vision of the Lab was not to avoid discomfort, but rather to embrace it as a way to move towards liberation. The group expressed a desire for spaces to be real with each other, to questions things together and break down relationships of power. During the Lab, structured conversations and open spaces sought to surface and dig into the “hard/courageous truths about the movement/network/field that haven’t been spoken.” These truths and differences can raise tensions, however addressing them is not only about discussing grievances, it is more about opening up for greater understanding. As a practice it exercises the muscle of holding and building through generative tension, which can be uncomfortable and hard. This group found that they had a tendency to touch upon some of the tensions present, and then pull back, never fully diving in. The group expressed a desire “go there,” but the means and method took some time to develop.

The Weavers were very interested in “generative tension.” This practice and process were seen as necessary and fundamental for advancing intersectional and transformative change. One such tension played out in the final convening when one of the experiment groups led a session that purposely focused on the multilayered

issue of vaccinations, challenging individual and cultural assumptions and beliefs. In a fishbowl format, the experiment group engaged in conversation on the topic, each sharing their ideas. The larger group sat around them, and together they observed and paused to discuss what was coming up for people.

Another opening came up more spontaneously at the final convening in a large group discussion of how communities and weavers can hold male perpetrators of color accountable, while not “throwing them away.” The topic presented complex and highly triggering issues that raised a difficult conversation about race, gender, power, responsibility, and love. Connecting male dominance with white supremacy was a powerful experience for some of the Weavers. Instead of putting it off or not leaning into tensions for lack of time or space, the group agreed to continue the conversation into the next day.

Making it a priority of directly addressing the tensions, other parts of the previously planned agenda were cut out to make space for this conversation. Failing to do this can hold back social movements and networks, so they wanted to encourage working on this together. The next day the group came back to the conversation—aware, with open hearts—calling-in everyone.

Differing perspectives on what groups need in a particular moment and how to get there can lead a group to gravitate towards the lowest common denominator; with the right foundation, it can instead take the group to another level. It was important to name the tensions and any discomfort in shifting practices. Walking into generative tensions together was about trusting each other and moving away from habits of white dominant culture. Many would have liked for it to happen sooner, while others acknowledged that the time and process was necessary in order to “get there.”

Integrating the elements

Around the midpoint of the program, the design team noticed that convenings had become the focus in many ways, rather than the overall Lab scaffolding. A lot of resources and energy were allocated to the convenings, which were highly valued and seen as absolutely necessary, but they were not intended to be the only place for connecting and learning. The main constraints were, as usual, time and money, where the costs of convenings take up most of the budget.

Webinars served as a touch-point for the Weavers rather than generating content and were reduced the second half of the Lab as the Weavers connected more through their experiment groups. There was ongoing communication, interactions and coaching in between convenings that contributed to a shifting of the lines between faculty and Weaver roles (*See Learning for the Field, #4*). The one-on-one coaching, a confidential relationship where Weavers addressed both Lab and non-Lab issues, was very much appreciated, but was also somewhat disconnected from the program. The Weavers shared that individual program elements were interesting and useful but the connections between them were not always clear.

The design team concluded that narrowing to fewer pieces of core content and going deeper with fewer frames and activities was a more effective strategy. There could have been greater program consistency and clarity had the designers communicated more with the group about programmatic shifts. As the experiments became more of the focus of the Lab, more resources devoted to experiment coaching could have been helpful. Post Lab interviews showed that the Weavers took what resonated from each aspect of the Lab, using the parts of the different frameworks and program elements that worked best for each of them.

IV. RESULTS: DIGESTING THE LEARNING

... I imagined us huddled together determining how best to organize our work on mutually agreed upon policy objectives or something to that effect. Ha! I believe what actually happened was so much more meaningful. I was able to develop genuine relationships with my new sisters by DEEP HANGING OUT. This happened through ceremony, movement, art and food.

—Vincent M.

I have been raised to put others before me, that my comfort and needs were secondary to everyone around me. Dismantling this way of thinking is a long journey and was something I had been working on before I joined NWLL, but I felt myself soaking in the learnings and concepts and I felt myself growing braver.

—Lyia Ong Jalao

Moving from the Lab design and implementation process sharing, we now turn to the impacts of the Lab, with examples of how the Weavers applied their learning. The findings are organized by levels—individual, connecting to others, and beyond the Lab—although they do not always fall neatly into these categories.

Many capacities are needed for network weaving, and while most are applicable to leading organizations, there are added challenges of balancing network and organizational interests. The learning from the Lab supported the Weavers' in deepening many different capacities, in particular inner work that enhances their abilities to lead networks. We heard how they are integrating the learning into their personal lives, their current work, and some are building off the ideas and practices in new ways and in different spaces.

The competencies were organized as: Healing and care, Holding complexity, Embracing conflict and change, Vision and purpose, and Liberatory Practices.

This is not an exhaustive list of competencies, but one that lifts up those explored the most in the Lab. Table two shares, the weaver competencies and offers examples in their own words, of how the Lab

has impacted the Weavers; it is followed by a description of a few of the key competencies that were highly valued and central to the Lab.

What are the weavers doing, and doing differently, as a result of the experiments and Lab?

Vince: I felt very affirmed by the process and became increasingly self-aware of additional areas of growth and future **directions for my healing**.

Trina: A key learning from the lab was the lessons around the three sisters. I have been applying the learnings around roles and contributions to collaborations and partnerships in not only working relationships but also in my family. The three sisters really demonstrated for me that we all have a role, and can contribute our unique gifts and strengths. No one role is more important than the others and one person doesn't have to know how to do it all. The **focus on gifts** and strengths helps me to look at what I do really well and not to focus on what I can't do as a deficit.

Sharon: Experiment design is now part of my repertoire of **facilitation** skills. I learned that experimentation moves us towards our vision of a world without violence and with collective liberation.

Paul: I am still processing...I have given Emergent Strategy as **gifts to my staff** and we will read it together, to use it to be more intentional with our projects in the future.

Monna: I thought [the Lab] was going to be like any other convening experience, and then we walk in and people are like, BAM, inner work... You've got to do the inner work for the systems change we are working for...and I felt there was no easy out for self-examination, specifically in organizations looking to end domestic violence and sexual violence. There can be this habit of deficit...and **strengths based leadership** is an antidote to that.

TABLE 2: Weaver Competencies

Healing and Care

- * Self-care and collective-care
- * Ability to do inner work and healing
- * Being vulnerable, overcoming fears
- * Ability to address incidents of violence
- * Empathy
- * Connecting healing to taking action
- * Humor (not so much sarcasm)

Holding Complexity

- * Understanding of RPP
- * Ability to hold multiple perspectives at once
- * Seeing the whole and the intersections of people, groups
- * Holding paradox
- * Non binary thinking

Embracing Conflict and Change

- * Ability to sit with discomfort and messiness
- * Ability to hold and build from conflict or tension
- * Calling-in, bringing up issues
- * Facilitating hard conversations

Vision and Purpose

- * Ability to share one's story
- * Working from abundance perspective
- * Ability to take a long term perspective
- * Working from purpose
- * Balancing organizational and network interests or priorities

Liberatory Practices

- * Showing up as one's best, authentic self
- * Knowing and leaning into your power— knowing when to pull back
- * Tapping into multiple ways of knowing
- * Curiosity and willingness to learn
- * Embracing new perspectives
- * Recognizing pace – when to slow down or pick up
- * Mindfulness

What are the weavers doing, and doing differently, as a result of the experiments and Lab?

Melissa: I found a place to reflect about my ancestors teachings in a world that usually doesn't do this; this experience included healing, visioning, and a safe place to listen and connect with others —**medicine** that I will keep for my entire life and give myself permission to share with others knowing that these ingredients are gifts for a recipe we all receive nourishment from!

Maria: Deep hanging out contrasts so much with interactions that are not relational...I got to the Lab and realized we are all connected to relationship-based violence. There is a **higher practice in building relationships** as you tackle something so institutional and difficult. If you don't take the time to build relationships it recreates the harm. I am bringing that into practice in my work; it avoids being in court.

Maricela: I am noting when there are **voices missing** and identifying ways in which we can hear from them. An agency example—we are working on developing focus groups and other ways of gathering information from those most affected by domestic violence. Our strategy invites the question about who doesn't access our services and how we might hear from them?

Mary: I'm part of these programs and projects and many times it can be hard to bring back the learnings. This lab felt different though; it really resonated. The lived experience of it. How do you bring learnings back when the community of practice doesn't feel completed? However, last summer we [W.O.M.A.N., Inc.] worked on a Theory of Change, and after concentrating on the **experimental learning** such as the assumptions and hypothesis, I was able to understand the process better. Staff agreed we needed to focus on healing, specifically ancestral healing, and in the community. It is helping me work on how I show up in places—how much space I am taking, and work toward having a better understanding of how and why others might be showing up in specific ways.

Lyia: I felt myself **growing braver**. The growth is not an outward change, it was insular. I took steps towards spiritual healing, something that I would not have done, if not for some guidance and stories. I found myself more whole than before and it was not something I had ever expected I would do.

Laura: I would love to continue the experiment. It gave us an opportunity to talk with people outside the network. Important ideas came up about **expanding the network** around collective liberation. [I'd like] to share how we got from violence prevention to liberation. .

Jennifer: I am trying to gather up these learnings and share them out with social justice minded mental health clinicians. The system is very heteronormative, we translate ourselves through a dominant field. I hope to create **spaces for the clinicians**. A lot is how grants are written, it is still very white dominated. I want to take these experiences to support healing and food as medicine, and share them outward.

Dia: I am **developing curriculum** and projects that hold integration at their core-how to be a better parent by investigating anti-blackness, what it means to be a yoga teacher in a compartmentalized world, and the intersections between yoga philosophy and movement building.

Cristy: ...I felt resistance to wanting to dig into it. And then I realized I'd been practicing recognizing this resistance in our Habit Dashery experiment and I was able to shift it. I was able to just notice it, allow it to come up and say to myself, "oh this is interesting—you can let yourself go into the places where you've felt shame and you will be ok." I found myself **grounding and centering** and coming back to have the conversation without resistance and with an openness.

Cibonay: [I take forward] the focus on **unlearning** and being ok with not doing things with how we've been trained. [It is] not about controlling things. For example, I am an epidemiologist, so [this means] being ok with not having all the information, and seeing how it plays out.

Ada: I am stepping more fully into my own gifts, one of which is truth telling. To lean courageously into generative tension in order to emerge on the other side feeling unburdened and renewed, feeling powerful, and able to connect more authentically; [I am] leaning into complexity and simultaneity—trying to sit with and hold that many things can be true at the same time, even when they seem to be competing with each other—**holding paradox**.

By its very nature, the relationship-based violence field is filled with tensions and stresses. Many of the Weavers experienced violence in their own communities and homes growing up, sometimes by those that they loved. The Weavers saw healing oneself as essential to be in right relation with and of service to others. According to the Weavers, "providers, organizers and leaders may be the hardest on ourselves and put ourselves last," ... and that "sometimes it can be more comfortable examining others than oneself." They talked about using different healing practices in the form of meditation, play, being in nature, therapy, and cooking, to support and sustain themselves.

The Weavers found that the capacity and the willingness to be vulnerable in network spaces can be healing and liberating. In many ways professionals are trained to present only strengths or to shut down certain emotions. They agreed that allowing oneself to be vulnerable, particularly in a group, can be an act of resistance or radical vulnerability. The Weavers demonstrated how by sharing one's stories, traumas, and hopes—and really hearing the same from others—they experienced stronger connection and opportunities for healing. This sometimes invisible capacity to step into vulnerability is the basis for courageous conversations and authentic

relationships, allowed Weavers to model connection for more authentic collaboration.

Another transformative practice was recognizing and tapping into multiple ways of knowing. Weavers saw this as a major and positive outcome that became part of the group culture. They shared how drawing on indigenous and/or ancestral knowledge and lived experiences brings forth tremendous resources. They also expressed greater awareness of emotions felt in the body. Noticing how when one is triggered, feeling it viscerally in the body, and responding with curiosity and compassion, was instructive and grounding for the Weavers. It helped them to show up more fully in all kinds of spaces, and be more fully present.

We saw the process unfold in the convenings, as the Weavers experienced moving from the tendency to speak from the "head" (or mind and intellect) to include the "heart," (or intuitive knowing). Having greater facility to do this helped them to hold tension, complexity, and paradox—all of which are found in networks. These ways of being and competencies are useful to working in the field of RBV, and any social justice movement, where the personal and systems are interconnected.

Connecting with Others in the Lab

At Arts as Liberation we read the poem “We are the ones we are waiting for.” This set the intention of the “we.” How to show up for ourselves, and for each other.

—Jennifer Chen Speckman

When I think of quilts there is each individual piece coming together for the whole. There is a beauty and the quilt is incomplete if a story is missing. It’s only if each individual adds their piece/story. Its wholeness. Quilts are where these stories are housed and shared with others.

—Maricela Rios-Faust

Moving from personal healing and growth to collective action as a group is not automatic, easy, or simple. The Weavers created a shared vision that articulated how they wanted to be together and the kind of world they envisioned. Laughing together can be contradiction to oppressive habits and promote healing and is a part of getting to know each other more. As a complement to structured sessions, the “deep hanging out,” fortified the authentic and lasting relationships needed for collective action.

The Lab content offered language, frameworks, and a container that fostered the transparency and trust needed to take risks together. The conversation about holding male perpetrators of color accountable, while also having compassion for them, challenged the group in many ways, and could have gone in many different directions. The relationships, the readiness of the group, and a structured and flexible container—which supported engagement with generative tensions—held everyone together. The Weavers’ willingness to step into complexity and embrace discomfort together stimulated powerful learning about remaining in connection with others in conflict, rather than separating or shutting down. This kind of trust, community, and care took collaboration to a much deeper and more enduring level.

Beyond the Lab

I started thinking about the trees coming together in community, they shelter and protect and nurture, and we need to do that for them. [It is] a metaphor for our community taking care of each other.

—Convening 4 notes

Experimenting became part of the program design in two Strong Field legacy projects including the Movement Mobilization Institute and Art As Liberation.

—Sharon Turner

Rippling outward from the Weavers into their networks, the Lab sought to generate positive impacts outside its own space. Weavers expressed the desire and a commitment to apply Lab experiences to reshape and build new practices, rather than repeat the same old ones. When asked about their sense of the Lab’s capacity to evolve beyond the NWLL, Weavers ranked a 3.73 out of 4 (being the highest), a strong indicator of continuing the Lab learning and taking it further.¹⁵ Lab experiences and ideas were introduced to networks in a variety of ways. One early example can be seen with was Art as Liberation, a Strongfield alumni project that used art as a medium for transforming community and survivor narratives about relationship-based violence. Several Lab Weavers helped design and lead their June conference and shared that it was enhanced by the crossing over of Lab Weavers and ideas.

Conversations are continuing post Lab, through various ways. One experiment group is stays connected through an active Facebook page where members continue to share ideas with each other. A writing group of People of Color has formed getting together once a month to create a space where they can write.

¹⁵ Collecting this data is difficult partly due to the limited scope of the evaluation and the time frame, and the intentional focus on the weavers as agents of change. Capturing how changes continue to manifest in networks over time is an area for future study and exploration.

Related projects are also being developed. The Habit Dashery experiment group sought funding to continue their learning, behavior change and overall work together. Another cluster of Weavers are developing parent training that dissects how anti blackness shows up in spaces of learning, even when explicitly stated as spaces of justice. This group seeks to create a culture of experimentation with the ability to adapt when something is not working and pivot to something different. They are most interested in deepening their practice of what it can really look like to disrupt and call out habits of white supremacy in a group that you feel committed to. Another Weaver carried the freedom of experimentation into work that focused on engaging black men and boys in ending violence against women and girls. Weavers are integrating their learning into their counseling and teaching practices as well that will have an impact on their networks working on RBV and related issues.

A cumulative and rich outcome of the Lab is an artistic expression of the Weavers, along with a few California social justice artists, sharing their learning through an electronic cookbook titled *"Weaving Together a World Without Violence: A Collection of Principles, Practices and Recipes for Healing."* The cookbook deck uses the food metaphor as a way of expressing concepts and sharing medicine with weavers and the field: it holds reflections and tools that invite and support weavers to foster healthier, more loving, liberated relationships and communities.

The eBook, presented as a recipe deck or cookbook, explores stories of network learnings and deepening network leadership, in a format made accessible to other practitioners in the RBV and social justice fields. The medium is intentionally different from an evaluation report like this one, or other deliverables more commonly expected from projects like this.

The creators had to resist formatting the eBook to look like a familiar report or PowerPoint presentation. This tendency to gravitate towards known formats was an important insight. It suggests how learning can be expressed and transmitted in a medium that looks and feels different from traditional models, tapping into multiple ways of knowing and generative practices.

Another important result of the Lab is the development of a few prototypes for a network space that would be the backbone support for continued experimentation, co-creation, and collaboration for the NWLL and other network projects in the movement to end relationship-based violence in California. They began by posing the question "How might we support healing, experimentation, collaboration and emergence?" Their planning and ideation were integrated with the process of cooking together, which "allowed us to center into the heart and connection of the work. It allowed a certain humanity to the process and enabled us to continue to think outside the dominant narrative." They are proposing a science lab and a community kitchen that include different "possibilities in the way they can both play out individually and in harmony with each other." For example, the science Lab could be a combined virtual and in-person Lab space, and a community kitchen could be an incubator model of a social enterprise that supports different projects to take off and grow.

V. LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION

We were seeking something from perfection, rather than jumping into it a failing. Took a while to get started. We got a lot of networking done, even if it was not on topic. There was a lot of enthusiasm. We had different ideas on implementing.

—Cibonay Jimenez

Each experiment was a small act of courage that led to more insight, and creativity towards a next iteration of experimentation.

—Sharon Turner

Experimentation underpinned much of the Lab as an exploratory stance and innovative technology. The Lab supported a culture and practice of trying new things out with rigor and in collaboration. With experimentation there is no prescriptive timeline or outcome, and within a group there is not a prescribed single leader. Comfort with uncertainty is required, as well as openness to unexpected results. Thus the experiments evolved organically and were bumpy at times. The experiments served as the bridge between doing the internal work and complex systems change, requiring the Weavers to get more agile with an experimentation stance in order to advance change in complexity.

Flip the Script, Script Flipped



The intersectionality of IPV/ Relationship based violence, and looking at what conditions need to be present for movements to work together.

...we went from curiosity, to interviews, to a conference call group conversation that brought people from many different disciplines together and for a short time poured their hearts into a discussion about collective liberation.

—Sharon Turner

This group experiment had three iterations: First they interviewed leaders (including each other) from different sectors, and then led a webinar of 7 leaders exploring their learning questions. The final iteration was about sharing their learning with the Lab group. Important ideas came up about expanding the network around collective liberation, reflecting a shift in the DV field.

Final Convening: The session started with a walking meditation asking groups to reflect on what liberation means to them. This set the tone for connecting with their own struggles and the intersections with others. Next the group was given materials to craft the square of a liberation quilt, as an artistic practice form of knowing and doing together. They moved from Individual to collective with liberation with individual squares as way of interacting with the concepts on their own to create the whole. Many found themselves holding a tension between being able to process something intellectually, and express creatively.

Writing our Connection to the Land



Relationship between IPV and violence/trauma to the earth and trauma resulting from environmental and toxic events.

“The experiment gave us permission to find what we can find, [it is] easy to go on a disconnected path. I appreciate the medicine to remember to connect with nature when you can’t find it.”

—Convening 4 notes

This experiment group used prompts to write in choral with one another, cross fertilizing their thoughts and ideas. They had a series of questions like: How might we cultivate more reciprocal relationships with the earth to support our own healing and give healing back to the land in order to support our collective resilience? Each group re-experienced or remembered some trauma through the process, but shared that it felt stronger and more resolved as a result of being in their own individual process or practice, while also breathing into collaborating with each other.

They attended the *Conference on Preparing People for Climate Change in California: Conference To Launch a Movement to Make California the First Trauma-Informed Human Resilience Enhancing State in the U.S. for Climate Traumas & Stresses*. Their hope was to learn with indigenous groups about how they apply feminist indigenous knowledge to healing communities. At the conference, they saw some centering on climate justice and also some reinforcing of harmful practices. They learned that a lot can remain unsaid, and that support networks need to be set up in a way that does not mirror current oppressive systems which can be transactional and use a western lens of healing.

Final convening: Invited the group to take a walk and reflect on one’s connection and relationship with the natural world and how it has impacted or influenced one’s life and work in social justice.

Habit Dashery



Share our exploration of living into Liberatory practice and working with generative tension. Practice together.

We stepped into a lot of intensity. It is hard to communicate to others the power of being there, what it felt like.

—Jennifer Chen Speckman

The experiment grew out of Weavers wanting to explore more deeply into generative tension as a group with a liberatory stance. They logged, observed, and journaled about how they were actively interrupting white dominant habits.

Final convening: The group brought a organic conversation fraught with complexity to the larger group to practice stepping into generative tension together. They noticed (together, not in isolation) what was happening with the dynamics, habits, tensions. For example, they talked about showing up fully, rather than shutting down and honoring one's felt experience and internal wisdom (heart) rather than intellectualizing or rationalizing (head). They discussed antidotes to the habits of while supremacy like sharing power and holding paradox.

The group is seeking to secure more funding to continue the conversations and experiments that they feel were unfinished, hoping to offer lessons to the broader field.

Let Us Talk 'Bout Our Roots



Healing and what is possible about power shifting when we engage with food and others over food.

Sharing stories around food is a highway to connection. Didn't take a lot of effort to connect this way. Being with each other was powerful, healing. We stepped into it. And it was hard.

—Jennifer Chen Speckman

Engaging with food was a chance to talk about the power of story and building of trust. Some of the group organized Bay Area gatherings over meals, helping to forge strong relationships. To the extent that it was possible at more conventional meeting spaces, cooking together became a part of the Lab culture and way of being together.

Let Us Talk 'Bout Our Roots

They found that food can be a symbol and modality of how we negotiate internal and external world. With food one can find: connection, mindfulness, community building, and allyship with the earth. Food can also be weaponized, a privilege, triggering, and disconnect us from the earth and our culture.

Final Convening: The group offered a basket of food related items and asked to pick one and share what it brought up for you. The experience sparked memories, sensations, and stories. Everyone had some empowering moment and a bodily experience—whether out of a fond or difficult experiences and feelings.

Heal the Healers



Using our own wisdom to heal and support ourselves in the same manner that we support our clients.

The power of vulnerabilitybeing in your own core... witnessing that place of your own healing, is huge medicine.

—Convening 4 notes

Each member chose a healing wisdom that they often share with clients and applied it to their own growth and support. They shared what they were learning and provided accountability support via texts and with updates every two weeks.

Final Convening: The shared their writings about their experiences. They asked the group to reflect on what medicines they suggest for others that might be helpful for one's own growth and healing. And asked, how to begin tomorrow?

The Weavers discussed how they all have healing abilities and ways to heal. Being able to notice the difference between coping and healing can be transformative. There was “beauty and tenderness” in being fully present for each other as people shared their healing practices. One Weaver observed that when a story is shared, there can be tendency to turn inward instead of a turning towards others. Bringing your whole self forward to be with fully present and witness someone's healing can be powerful medicine in itself.

Cross Experiment Take-Aways

Initially the experimentation groups were not clear on where they were headed, and found it confusing to not have a more defined direction, beyond the high-level question of “How might we end (RVB)?” Groups had to learn to tolerate, and even embrace, ambiguous end-results as they collaborated and acknowledged feeling their way as a part of the iterative process toward complex and systems behavior change. One person described the group as “meandering,” and noticed that getting lost was needed to find the way. Experiments moved at different paces and had different styles. Learning came more immediately for some; for others, the value of the process unfolding only became clear later. Everyone shared an appreciation of the experiment journey together, even when the path to their destinations was not clear.

Most groups used writing as a method of exploration and some drew on imagery as a means of expression. Another conducted interviews of movement leaders and then held focus groups for researching and testing their hypothesis. One group found that the templates guiding the experimentation process were too rational and linear. For them, it was “not working with the way we were learning.” Other groups used the experiment logs as a way of sharing and collecting their ideas in a centralized digital space, one that complemented their phone and in-person conversations.

Drawing on sources of indigenous and/or ancestral knowledge for oneself and for the field was other common theme, as was connecting with nature, land, and food. Together the groups found powerful personal and collective stories through these themes, sparking reflection and grounding the experiments. Using these different mediums and sources with the experiments generated deep thinking and learning that culminated in the final convening where each group shared its practices with the whole group.

A striking outcome of experimentation process was how groups took different paths but touched upon common themes. The full group Lab vision of “living into liberation” as a way of preventing and addressing RBV, was manifested in all the experiments. While they each had a different focus such as connection to the land, relationship to food, and cross movement collaborations, in one way or another all groups explored the impacts of violence and trauma on the Weavers, their clients and their communities. Unnamed at the start, healing became central to all, with harm to individuals, families, and communities being connected to systems of oppression and white dominance. Choosing such universal themes reflects how important it is with in the relationship-based violence and related fields to be rooted in liberatory practices.

Another theme of shared experience and learning was bringing one’s “whole self” to the network, organization, and even family. Weavers noticed habits, patterns, and coping mechanisms where they compartmentalize, pull back, or check out. They also noticed their fears of imposter syndrome, triggers of past traumas, or feeling vulnerable, that can get in the way of being fully present with oneself and others.

Most of the groups felt there was not enough time for the full experiment as they envisioned, and some Weavers wanted more time in the convenings for hands-on working sessions. Faculty reflected that bringing the concepts of the Lab more intentionally to the experiments may have helped to move along the processes. Several of the Weavers expressed that there was the feeling of “not being done” with the experiments. Similar to the generative tension discussed earlier was the sense of “just getting started.” This may reflect the momentum of experiments coming together in the second half of the Lab as the Weavers sharpened their experiments through iteration and practice. Overall, the experiment groups (their hypotheses, actions, impacts and reflections) spurred some of the Lab’s richest learning, and continue to serve as a reference for ongoing collaborations beyond the Lab.

VI. REVISITING THE LAB PURPOSE AND GOALS

...We must solve these problems together, in community, with all of us doing our best thinking around what is best and what works for the whole, and not just for the few. We all do harm, despite our best intentions. What matters is what we do with that knowledge, and the steps we take to both mitigate harm, and to repair when harm has happened. And to do all of that from a place of radical love, and from a place of faith. I love the community we are building and the connections I feel with my peers.

—Ada Palotai

To evaluate and summarize results, we now circle back to the Lab goals and purpose, highlighting where the program started and where it landed. The designers came to see that the purpose of the Lab written in the grant proposal was in effect a vision statement and overly ambitious. The design team came to see the purpose as: creating a space for leaders to develop their thinking and practice and to explore and experiment together on ways to advance the movement to end relationship-based violence. This purpose was operationalized and guided by the four overarching goals described below.

Goal 1 * Deepen and expand the understanding of what it takes to be a successful network leader, spread those learnings throughout the relationship-based violence field in California, and evolve our common understanding of leadership at the individual, organizational, and networked levels.

The capacities and “ways of being” of a successful network leader described previously (healing and care, holding complexity, embracing conflict and change, vision and purpose, grounded and open) were all cultivated and practiced in the Lab.

The Weavers referred to these consistently in their Lab conversations and evaluations as part of their learning journeys. They spoke of how they were applying or embodying them, in their personal and professional lives. There was an appetite to connect the internal learning with external weaving through networked solutions. More explicit connections with the external (networks, systems, etc.) could be an area for more attention in future Labs.

Goal 2 * Promote collaboration among those working to end relationship-based violence as well as collaboration across issue areas to get at impacting some of the root causes of domestic violence.

With the group vision centering on liberation, the root causes of relationship-based violence stayed central to the Lab. The group unpacked the issues in a variety of ways—through healing, systems analysis, and challenging white dominant practices. Structured and informal conversations, and experimentation helped the Weavers to find nexuses of interests.

Being part of a cohort from different issue areas naturally encouraged cross-sector relationships and connections. One experiment group focused specifically on understanding cross-sector collaboration, and another group crossed issues by participating in a Climate Change conference as part of their experiment. Collaboration was a natural part of their relationships, the curricula, and their strategizing together.

The intersectionality of the group and the program design built-in multiple perspectives and approaches. The Weavers brought substantial understanding of trauma informed work to the Lab where they also had the space to process their own healing, becoming even more attuned to the needs of survivors. The Lab content and container provided language, lenses, and spaciousness for exploring different practices and patterns that can be applied to individuals, communities, and networks.

Wrap around of resources and supports were offered to the Weavers during the Lab: individual and experiment group coaching, webinars, articles and readings, stipends for participating, and in-person intensive convenings. The webinars served mostly as a touchpoint for the group that were used less as the experiment groups became more active. The convenings were ranked highly as foundational experiences (*See: The Lab Convenings*). Coaching between convenings was seen as very supportive, even when what was discussed was not directly related to the Lab. Some Weavers were able to continue with their current coaches, which was seen as a “tremendous” benefit. There was a suggestion that more dedicated coaching for the experiments would have been useful.

37

TABLE 3: THE LAB CONVENINGS

The rankings of the convenings in the table below, show the retreats meeting their goals, with a dip in the third convening and a strong finish where things came together more. Some highlights are shared in the Notes column

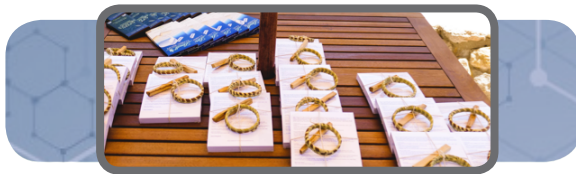
	Score or Average	Scale (all 1-4)	Notes
<p>Convening 1 * Setting a foundation for learning & co-creation to build the learning community and relationships of trust.</p> <p>Overall, how effective was the learning content of the convening?</p>	3.64	<p>1=Poor</p> <p>2=Fair</p> <p>3=Good</p> <p>4=Excellent</p>	<p>Some of the strengths were: What was your experience with the different modalities incorporated into the agenda (movement, art, writing, audible, and storytelling)? 3.79</p> <p>Did the content/process build on your understanding of racial equity and liberation (race, power, privilege) and how it impacts you and your work? 100% - yes</p>
<p>Convening 2 * Seeing and engaging with the whole of complex systems (eg. systems thinking/mapping, polarity work, identifying big assumptions, etc.). Experiment groups were formed.</p> <p>Overall, did we advance this learning and sharing?</p>	3.71	<p>1=Strongly no</p> <p>2=Somewhat no</p> <p>3=Somewhat yes</p> <p>4=Yes</p>	<p>The strongest elements were:</p> <p>Engage multiple ways of knowing 3.86</p> <p>Create a shared vision of the desired future state ranked highest with 3.79</p>
<p>Midpoint evaluation</p> <p>We value your time, energy, and commitment. how valuable has the NWLL been for you so far?</p>	90	100	With 9 respondents
<p>Convening 3 * Further testing out the ideas and processes of the group experiments; Grounding and connecting network principles to network practices, and designing the remainder of the Lab.</p> <p>How much did we move towards our convening goals?</p>	2.83 avg.	<p>1=Not much,</p> <p>2=A little</p> <p>3=Very much</p> <p>4=A lot</p>	<p>The overall goals ranked lower than the approach and mindsets: How much did the Lab convening space support experimentation, learning, honest conversations? 3.71</p> <p>The opening, the sharing stories and experiments were the highest ranked elements at 3.57</p>
<p>Convening 4 * Harvest the learning from the experiments and the Lab overall with each other, by integrating their knowledge and experience. Consider the applications to their networks and for sharing with the broader field.</p> <p>Did we meet the convening goals?</p>	3.75 avg.	<p>1=No</p> <p>2=Somewhat no</p> <p>3=Somewhat yes</p> <p>4=Yes</p>	<p>The convening goals ranked higher than the convening elements: Generative tension conversation ranked highest at 3.6, followed closely by the Experiments and debrief process at 3.53</p>

VII. LEARNING FOR THE FIELD

The success of any intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener... that tending out ourselves and the “being-ness” of network weaving is central to the doing.

—Elissa Sloan-Perry, MAG

The Weavers’ experiences during the Lab validated some of what we know about network weaving and added to our understanding of what is needed to best support weavers. In this final section, we translate the findings into implications for the field, lifting up five promising practices.



1. Structure as supporting spaciousness

With programs that adapt and emerge as they are implemented, it is important to decide at the design stage what the primary purpose (or competencies, in the case of leadership development) will be, and over the arc of the program continue to refer back to those core tenets. Building in responsiveness can become a shortcoming if it is confusing to participants or not communicated enough. There may be unspoken, or sometimes spoken, changes in expectations that can create added pressures.

Promising Practices * The right amount of emergence will create both the conditions for spaciousness and the structures to hold process. This meant focusing more on the people connecting with each other and with new ideas, and less on specific or planned results. Establishing shared vision, principles, and agreements for guiding groups can all help to ground and communicate emergent projects that have less structure. These serve as an anchor as the work pivots and changes. Real time feedback helps to strike this balance: the ability of facilitators to read group dynamics and respond, sometimes in real time, is part of the art of emergence. In addition, repeating the shared vision, principles, and agreements is especially helpful with emergent projects that have a more fluid structure.

2. Experimentation as a technology and skill

Networks rely on strong relationships, and taking action together requires trust and alignment of these relationships. The need to take time to build relationships and trust can be in creative tension with a desire to move to action. People engage and learn by doing, so staying too long in the meta-vision may feel abstract, or frustrating. With networks, moving into action may not be neatly signaled by a sequence of activities since there is rarely a single story or interest. If there is a rigorous design process where people can form groups based on their energy towards a specific inquiry, followed by predetermined reflection points, the relationships can lead into action and learning together.

Promising Practices * Experimentation creates opportunities to move relationships into action. It is a stance and approach for testing out ideas and iterating based on what is happening in the process. The Lab showed how experimentation is an effective technology for group and self-discovery, one that can bring concepts to life. It is a powerful pathway to learning and capacity building, but it is not always an easy one. It differs from the usual logic models with discrete inputs and outputs. Measuring success can be harder, especially when failing is a critical part of the learning process.

Experimentation requires reflection of outcomes and learnings, which is often skipped over when trying something new. Coaches can support experiment groups by providing tools, advising them to take a step back, or take on smaller pieces of their hypothesis. With experimentation it is also important to know when to move on, rather than hold onto an experiment that is not working or serving its purpose anymore.

3. Inner work as collective work

While it is generally understood and accepted that people and organizations function in networked ways, the level of investment in networks does not always match the need to sustain the weavers or the networks. For leaders, network weaving often puts additional responsibilities on top of already full workloads. Investing in people that make up the

networks has the exponential benefits as weavers they carry their knowledge and experience to multiple networks, and wherever they go.

Promising Practices ✱ Weavers expressed that paying attention to one's own inner life is a precursor to serving and collaborating with others—and sustaining themselves and their work. Anyone working in relationship-based violence and social justice networks will benefit from exploring their traumas and resiliencies. Scaling up from internal reflection and practice to external or group practice can be difficult and even painful. Knowing one's triggers and reactions is a valuable capacity that can be cultivated through writing, embodiment practices, counseling, and other methods or resources. Weavers found great value in “deep hanging out” and cooking meals together as ways to nourish themselves and profoundly connect with each other.

4. Network leadership as weaving roles and processes

When leading in networked spaces, it is necessary to name and communicate who is taking on particular roles, how they will work together, and what is happening in the group, especially in networks without formal governance or communication structures. It will be important to determine explicitly how decisions will be made together—even before knowing the shape of the work. For example, being transparent and sharing decisions about how resources are divided, and the choices that were made, can help or hinder the openness, and thus integrated efforts of a network.

Promising Practices ✱ Making processes and roles visible is important to effective network weaving. Depending where the network and leaders are in their own processes, weavers will step in and out of roles at different moments. Valuing each role and understanding these shifts is vital to sharing leadership, including more voices, and encouraging new weavers to become more involved. This was demonstrated in the Lab as the facilitators/faculty and the Weavers blurred the lines of their roles—which in turn, enhanced ownership for the participants, and more deeply

connected the faculty/facilitators with the group. Changing of roles, sometimes without much transition, can be demanding and even draining; thus it is helpful to factor in breaks to recover, and to coordinate with others to have those breaks.

5. Generative tension as an opportunity for change

Familiar habits of white dominant practices—individual, collective, and systemic—do not serve networks seeking social justice. Rather they support the status quo, can be alienating, and are damaging. In networks (as anywhere) there can be avoidance, assumptions, or defaulting to white dominant patterns. For example, attitudes and practices that focus on efficiencies and perfecting, rather than accountability to those that are hurt or negatively impacted, can reinforce inequities and deter collaboration. This is counterproductive and harmful to groups of any racial composition, including internalized oppression found in groups of majority people of color.

Promising Practices ✱ Making visible white dominant patterns and supremacist values (in relationships, organizations, networks) surfaces the conflicts they create, helping to interrupt them. Replacing these deeply ingrained patterns with an awareness of them will help to make choices about behaviors to better reflect shared values. By consciously making these choices about our behaviors, and taking responsibility for them, individuals and groups can break through counterproductive and harmful patterns—and is often where the depth of the work takes off.

“Calling-in” people rather than “calling-out” their faults only, can be an important shift in relationships and strategic thinking. Valuing other ways of being and offering healing supports can build trust, infuse positive energy, and move groups to healthier relationships with each other. When moving intentionally into tension an instinctive desire can be to find some resolution, but sometimes that is not possible, and is not necessarily the end goal. Navigating generative tension, rather than avoidance, was one of the most impactful and transformative aspects of the Lab.

VIII. CLOSING

To change inequitable and complex systems that continue to divide our society, networks across many sectors and issue areas need to work together better. Weavers were committed to stop recreating old systems that are not working, that reinforce white dominant behaviors, and that are not serving queer, low-income, and communities of color.

The vision of the Lab was to step into practices that move towards liberation. Social justice leaders working to end violence are longing for healing—for their clients, for their communities, and for themselves. The Lab co-created a spaciousness to explore and see the whole person and whole systems in all their complexity,

interconnection, and potential. The Lab also offered structures to explore network weaving: generative tension, multiple ways of knowing, and experimentation were some of the more powerful practices.

The Weavers are carrying forward the Lab learning to their teams, organizations and networks by tapping into their ancestral knowledge, challenging old patterns, and bringing new ideas and practices for ending relationship based violence. While this iteration of the Lab has formally come to a close; many of the relationships, conversations, and processes that were seeded and mixed, are digesting and metabolizing as they continue to grow—even as others are budding and blooming.



APPENDIX A: THE WEAVERS AND DESIGNERS

THE NETWORK WEAVERS



ADA PALOTAI



CIBONAY CORDOVA JIMENEZ



CRISTY CHUNG



DIA PENNING



JENNIFER CHEN SPECKMAN



LAURA JIMENEZ



LYIA ONG JALAO



MARÍA DOMÍNGUEZ



MARICELA RIOS-FAUST



MARY MARTINEZ



MELISSA POWLESS CHACON



MONNA WONG



PAUL BANCROFT



SHARON TURNER



TRINA GREENE BROWN



VINCENT M

FACULTY - FACILITATORS

AJA DUNCAN
MAG

MICHELLE GISLASON
Consultant

ALISON LIN
MAG

ELISSA SLOAN-PERRY
MAG

LUPE POBLANO
CompassPoint

SHARON BRIDGFORTH

TRACY NYGUEN PERRY

APPENDIX B: METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Methods

- * Observations and reviewing notes (coverings, webinars, design team meetings)
- * Pre-program survey and application review
- * Written and oral evaluations analysis
- * Monthly Reflection Calls with key staff
- * Viewing and analysis of videos and transcripts transcripts from convening 4
- * Post Lab interviews with 7 Weavers, and emails requesting impacts

NWLL Data Sources	Date
Applications for 16 participants	
Preconvening 1 survey/reflection	
Covering Agendas	
Convening Notes	
Network Map	From Convenings 1 and 2
Post Convening Evaluations	
Mid point evaluation	
Memory Keepers	
Webinar notes	
Webinar 1	
Webinar 2	July 28, 2017
Webinar 3	Oct, 16, 2017
Webinar 4	December 4, 2017
Monthly staff reflection calls	
Experimentation design logs	ongoing
Experiment summaries	
Art Brigade- eBook	