With substance abuse and the poverty issues… I think that if we deal with those issues at a young age, parenting skills for younger mothers and fathers, those things that lead to violence, those things that lead to individuals going out to sell drugs because of the fact that they don't have money or they want that authority. And I think if we deal with those issues, even though the violence is there, but looking in the future, being proactive, if we deal with those issues I think that the violence will decrease…

Multiple causes of domestic violence were cited by group participants.

(1) Power and control: the abuser perpetrates violence in order to meet his or her need for power or control.

And because [the abuser's] self-esteem is low, it becomes important, even though it's not a conscious kind of importance, that everyone around him feels a little bit lower.

(2) Drug abuse or drug trafficking: when there is not enough money to go around, drug trafficking becomes an attractive way to make money. Group members were concerned with the violence that results from drug deals gone bad, as well as violence that stems from use or abuse of substances.

(3) Racism: this is an issue that causes frustration among the stigmatized group. Racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression were viewed as "setting up a cycle" where poverty, violence, and other social ills are incorporated.

(4) Poverty: lack of financial resources can keep women in dangerous situations or keep families from being able to move from violent neighborhoods.

(5) Perpetuation of violence in the media

(6) Kids being written off in schools

…this year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Brown versus the Board of Education. And whether or not that was truly in our best interest, it's debatable. But the reason I'm saying schools is because now we have our children who are attending schools and are being taught, and in some terms controlled by people unlike them… who don't really care what is happening to them and if a child is having some problems, it's real easy to say, well they need to go here because they're unteachable.

(7) The lack of certain resources or community commodities was seen as an originating factor for domestic violence. The community was seen as suffering from deficits in the following areas:

• Education: the lack of fatherhood programs and pregnancy prevention education was mentioned by the group.

• Church influence and involvement: participants felt that the African American community has gotten away from its foundation of church teaching and involvement and the teaching of the Bible.

• Availability and support of father figures:

The definition of family and community has changed… the support systems that perhaps existed at one time that don't exist anymore because people have migrated, you know, we don't know our neighbors anymore

I truly believe, especially in the African American community if you look in the prisons and you get the statistics, there's so many African Americans in there and the rate is so high of those that did not have fathers, which came from fatherless homes. And I don't think that's just coincidence.

- Community support systems: the changing community has developed different societal norms and the support that used to exist has disappeared.

The definition of family and community has changed... the support systems that perhaps existed at one time that don't exist anymore because people have migrated, you know, we don't know our neighbors anymore... and the societal expectations are broader and more diverse which offers a lot more options as it relates to choices that people can make which has not strengthened the community necessarily as much as it has weakened some of the systems.

- Individual self-respect: the group tied this to low self-esteem in women, causing them to make poor relationship choices and potentially stay in destructive or harmful relationships.

The consequences discussed by the Children and Youth focus group were varied. High rates of crime, pregnancy, and school-age dropouts were mentioned as concrete and measurable results of domestic violence. The problem of crime in certain areas or neighborhoods was seen as not only dangerous to inhabitants but could also lead to a lack of governmental involvement in neighborhoods and an inability to attract businesses to the area. Stereotypes were also listed as a consequence of domestic violence in the African American community. Stereotypical beliefs could be spread among those outside the community, as well as among community members themselves. One group member elaborated that domestic violence could fuel and perpetuate a helpless mentality within the community. Tension between races, emotional illnesses, and the lack of role models were other consequences of concern that group members noted.

...we don't have the role models that we need to model and mentor. We have them, but we don't have enough. And a lot of times we don't have enough of that because people don't want to go back, because they're not sure of how to deal with the issues that crime causes, and also it reduces the number of available people that are like people that have a vested interest in the community and the youth and the maintenance of good emotional and mental health.

They also believed that the elderly population was one group that especially suffered in the face of violence in the community, as they were prone to become prisoners in their homes due to fear of what might happen to them upon venturing into the neighborhood.

There are different consequences for men and women regarding domestic violence involvement, according to the Children and Youth respondents. Some group members thought men could recover more easily than their female counterparts and were capable of still remaining important within community.

Men bounce back. He can still be looked up to as being an outstanding person in the community. Even though I committed a violent act against a female. And she is going to go down. It's going to look like... she caused it to happen.

...we don't have the role models that we need to model and mentor. We have them, but we don't have enough.

Others thought that it was harder for men to recover once exposed as abusers. They also believed that males suffered upon entrance into the criminal justice system as a result of pre-existing stigmas.

> *I think that the men definitely have the worst consequences when you look at it from [the criminal justice aspect] because of the fact that they already have that stigma on them when they come into the court system so they're already, the judge is usually just going on past history and experiences so that person's more apt to be put into prison or to continue that cycle of being put in prison whereas a female would have better opportunities as far as being able to go on probation and enter some other programs.*

The loss of the male within the home was seen as having a huge impact on the entire household. Respondents thought that women were prone to be targets for blame, more likely to receive assistance, help or resources, and suffered a greater loss financially. Participants thought women had to deal more with indoctrination from the past that might cause them to stay or make them feel that they should keep the family together at all costs. Males and females, according to the group, lose credibility upon the disclosure of a domestic violence problem, and both parties could potentially gain a criminal record.

The first solution proposed by the group was the involvement of the entire community, specifically, more involvement on the part of the church and the school system. Having all stakeholders working together was seen as a vital component in reducing or eliminating the problem of domestic violence. Economic improvement, the eradication of racism and sexism, and changes in state and federal laws were other solutions deemed necessary by respondents. One noteworthy proposal was that more influence on the part of African Americans should be exerted, whether through organizations led by African Americans, or through more political involvement on the part of all members of the race.

> *I think we need more African American businesses and our own organizations. Because I think when white people get the funding, and their responsibility is to meet our needs, those needs go unmet sometimes.*

Mediation, conflict resolution, asset-building in the community, more male involvement, and more investment back into community from those who leave and have success were also seen as vital components of the response to domestic violence. One group member commented on the difficulty in getting successful community members to come back:

> *You look at the community, and you look at, in a lot of situations, the ones that make it out of those situations, the situations were so bad that they don't want to go back.*

The group then proceeded to discuss the ways in which their own organizations had attempted to respond to domestic violence within their community. Education for youth and families was one area of focus, consisting of how to create and maintain healthy relationships and skills in mediation and confrontation. Programs that were structured and where rules and consequences were enforced were seen as helpful in motivating both youths and adults to comply behaviorally. Alternative schools were one response that was seen as being potentially positive and negative. The negative aspect was that problem children are separated from the rest of the student body, though the fact that they are still able to get education was seen as a plus. A male fatherhood group, a voluntary family support service, and prevention programs were other responses named by group participants.

We are the experts as to what is best for our people. For our community. We are the experts, and if you want to know what we need, come to us.

There were several obstacles named by the Children and Youth group. A lack of unity among community entities was one problem, and the lack of negotiators and mediators was closely related to this issue. Additionally, competition and intimidation between organizations was named as problematic in the effort to eliminate violence.

> *…there's so much competition amongst the church and I see that as an obstacle because, you know, the competition focuses on the kids that come to my church. Not the churches getting together and, let's see all of these kids and what kind of program we can do to start mentoring, pool our resources and mentor kids from all over the county. Not just those that come from this area.*

The resultant negative attention garnered by domestic violence was another obstacle in its eradication. Denial by community members or officials, the lack of money and resources, and the lack of properly educated and equipped leaders were also noted by participants. Among community members, the idea sometimes exists that if the problem is not in the individuals own 'backyard,' he or she does not have to deal with it, according to one respondent. Another participant described self-hatred and internalized oppression as the major obstacle to overcome in the search for a solution to address domestic violence in the community. Overall, participants agreed that to find effective solutions they must be consulted to provide the knowledge and in-depth information necessary for change.

> *We are the experts as to what is best for our people. For our community. We are the experts, and if you want to know what we need, come to us.*

Greenville - Community Activists

Community Activists play an important role in the Greenville, North Carolina area. They are those individuals who take part in advocacy, are involved and invested in local programs, and have dealt with community members and local leaders alike. This range of experience gives them a wealth of knowledge and a familiarity in the arena of domestic violence within their community. Their perspectives equip them to participate in the dialogue surrounding the causes, consequences and other variables involved in the issue of domestic violence and to lend their own ideas and opinions to shaping the group discussion.

Eight members took part in the Community Activist focus group. Six women and two men composed the group and their ages ranged from thirty-five to fifty-nine. Their particular areas of expertise and professional roles include: workforce development, board member, safe house coordinator, corrections professional, family resource coordinator, and organizer.

The Community Activist focus group participants were first asked to name different types of violence in the African American community. Group members were able to easily describe several different types of which they were aware. Some of the types of violence that composed their list were: (1) violence against women, (2) the dangerous and violent activities associated with gang factions, (3) drug and/or alcohol-related violence, (4) violence perpetrated by youth and among youth and (5) violence perpetrated between members of different races.

The issue of youth violence was a topic of particular interest to this focus group. One participant stated that from her experience in the field, performance of an act of violence had become almost the equivalent of a rite of passage for the young black male population. Youth violence was inseparably linked to peer pressure and, respondents believed, was a means by which children have come to gain acceptance. Another respondent talked about the perpetuation of violence amongst children as a form of self-fulfilling prophecy:

> …I see our children following a cycle that's been created over the generations and continuing to keep the violence prevalent and watching outsiders let it occur because it's almost something that the Afro-American population just should do.

Gang violence was seen as a new and troubling phenomenon taking place within the Greenville community. It was described as a "very prevalent" problem and a topic that has been affecting the growth of North Carolina communities as well as one that has been influencing the conversations taking place between the local leadership figures in different cities.

Drug and alcohol-related violence in the African American community was also mentioned. One person with experience working in the domestic violence shelter noted that the women and children who come in due to drug or alcohol-related violence seem to be trapped in a cycle. This respondent stated, "They're coming in, they'll go back… [Drug use] has grown. It has gotten deeper and bad."
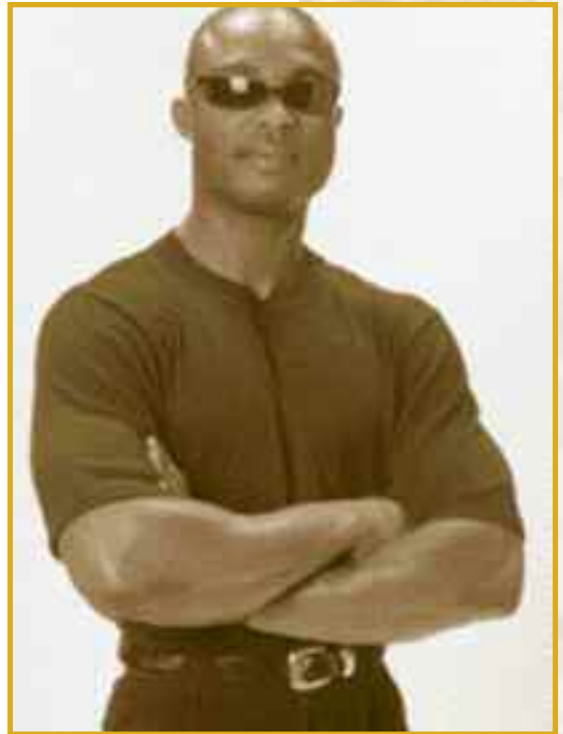
. *"Now we live in neighborhoods where we mind our own business… we've got to start minding other people's business."*

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Members also described as problematic the ongoing cycle of family violence where children are victims of violence or witness it in the home and go on to eventually perpetuate the same type of situation in their own homes, thus affecting generations to come. One participant expressed that the issue of domestic violence was a "huge question" that she always associates with her past history. She related her personal experience in the following way:

I suffered child abuse under my father, my father battered my mother. And it was part of a generational sweep, if you will, because I saw my uncles batter my aunts and they battered their children, you know, so it was just, it was part of the family. And as a child, I couldn't understand why we can't just teach peace in our homes. So you know, having experienced this in my own family, it's multi-generational, it's just so deeply ingrained into our families.

Group members were asked to prioritize the problem of violence in their community and discuss its relationship to other social problems. Violence within the African American community is "where everything begins," according to group respondents. Other problems included:

(1) The prevalence of joblessness in the community. "When a person, male, cannot find himself a job… it makes him feel less than a man."

(2) A lack of education, which is a problem that often leads to unemployment.

(3) The loss of identity for the African American male, the overall devaluation of African American lives, and an undercurrent of anger in the community.

I think years of little boys trying to move from being little boys into young males, they're dealing with all kinds of impulses and anger and trying to just become the men who they're supposed to be. I don't think that society is trying to help them. So I think that all of this anger, putting our men down, is perpetuated by the school and the communities they live in…

(4) The workings of the judicial system:

Our judicial system is a problem. Because it already says to them, we're going to get you. And so, the African American man feels as though he's a target, a sitting target. And he's explosive, and he's ready to retaliate.

These three issues were all inseparably linked to violence in the African American community in the group discussion. In order to accomplish any sort of progress whatsoever in eradicating these problems, participants felt, violence must be addressed first.

Four causes of domestic violence in the African American community were noted in the Community Activist group:

(1) Unmet needs: the first cause that group members talked about was that certain individuals act out because of unmet needs due to deficiencies within the family, such as an absent father or mother figure. One participant noted, "…the reality is we're craving for what we did not get in the family."

(2) Legacy of violence: the history of violence through slavery and oppression for African Americans was viewed as a contributing factor to violence. "We have to really go deep into ourselves with this historical violence that was lodged on us. We are a product of people who were owned by other people."

(3) Helplessness: a third cause of violence was described as a quality of learned helplessness permeating the African American race. One respondent stated this concern by saying:

As a community of African Americans, we've looked to other folks to cure our ills… I'm sick of us thinking that people that don't look like us can fix us. We've been who we are all of these years, the answers are with us.

(4) Concept of manhood: the group noted that many black males are being raised by women, and struggle to define manhood. As adults, men may believe that being a man means being tough and not expressing weakness:

Afro-American men view manhood as being tough because this is… a shield that they have had to develop in order to exist and so they take that toughness into the home with them. And not knowing that the greatest men are those that can cry and are sweet and gentle, they feel that they have to be tough and hitting on the kids and hitting on the woman helps them identify with being a man.

The consequences of domestic violence that were of concern for this particular group of respondents centered around the damage that has been inflicted upon the image of the African American race as a whole and in particular, the destruction of the African American man. Not only were these image-related concerns damaging to the way society views the African American race, but respondents thought this issue was also damaging to the self-perceptions and self-esteem of this particular population. What people see and hear about themselves from society influences what they believe about themselves.

In addition, the economic consequences of domestic violence were also mentioned. The breakdown of the family often leaves members with little to no resources, and they are left having to rely on assistance.

> *…the first thing I noticed when I started working in domestic violence is when the woman comes to the shelter, she is indigent. She has no means of support whatsoever. She's on zero. So then, the next step is that you start accessing the system. You have to go to DSS, you have to get on food stamps, you have to get Medicaid, you've got to then find a way to help her become self-sufficient.*

Group participants believed that consequences of involvement with domestic violence were different according to gender, in that men could also be affected as victims of battering in the home, and that they may actually suffer more than their female counterparts upon disclosure. Members also discussed the reasons behind why battering of males by females occurs. One reason was previous exposure to violence and the determination to not be vulnerable:

> *What I've witnessed is that the women that batter that I've talked to say that they saw their mother get battered and they will never batter, they will fight before they allow somebody to fight them. So if there's an argument or something gets heated, instead of it just being a heated argument, they lash out in retaliation first to let you know, I'm drawing that line here and you're not gonna hit me and let me show you why.*

A number of solutions to domestic violence were suggested in the discussion that took place in the Community Activist group. The three main categories of responses to violence were education, involvement, and exposure. Education in the form of life skills training, and education geared specifically towards children and women were seen as necessary solutions. This type of preventive response, participants felt, might stem the tide of violence in the community. One woman shared her approach to educating her son in the home:

> *…I have learned that you have to give [your children] the reality that, and the perception that there's a different type of reality than what they see in the streets. And then they can sort of interface with others and decide how to act out… and what controls to put on themselves.*

Overall, participants shared that in their own lives, they desired for their children to take their cues from home instead of from what they see on the streets or in the media.

Greater involvement of both individuals and local organizations was another solution. Individuals could be utilized as role models within the community and have an impact on the lives of youth who need mentors and direction. One participant acknowledged that African American men in particular should step up in leadership roles. Neighborhoods are no longer what they used to be, and one member of the group expressed the opinion that people in the community should be more involved in each others lives. "Now we live in neighborhoods where we mind our own business… we've got to start minding other people's business." Respondents noted that churches could get involved by addressing the issue through education, advocating and helping within their communities. Overall, religious organizations could be helpful by acknowledging and addressing that violence is a real problem that affects everyone, regardless of age, sex, or socioeconomic status. In order to address violence, one participant noted that the problem must be exposed and its taboo must be removed:

> There's also still the sector of our African American community that thinks that right now other issues may be more important. For instance, if you talk about black-on-black crime, you could probably fill this room. But if you talk about domestic violence, people don't seem to just jump in like they do about other things, so I think… we've got to bring the issue of domestic violence back to people's attention because… it exists in all sectors of society. You know, from the educated to the undereducated families, and you know, when somebody's getting beat, that's usually the family secret. And we've got to help it not be the family secret so that healing can take place. And the only way to help healing to take place is to kind of get those taboo labels off of it.

Participants in the group mentioned several programs in which they were personally involved or of which they were aware. Among the responses and programs currently existing within the community were a fatherhood initiative, the Open Arms Ministry, and a family violence center. A program for ex-offenders who are re-entering society (The Going Home Initiative or Project Re-entry) is a national effort that addresses issues like substance abuse, housing, and transportation needs. In addition, programs such as Today's Teen Women, the sisterhood agenda, and the Titus 2 program are trainings specifically geared for females. The training, Silent Cry from the Pews: Domestic Violence and the Faith Community, was another currently existing solution that the community was utilizing to address the issue of domestic violence.

Programs such as Today's Teen Women, the sisterhood agenda, and the Titus 2 program are trainings specifically geared for females.

When asked to pinpoint obstacles to eliminating the problem of domestic violence in their community, respondents cited the inability of family members to effectively and honestly communicate, particularly about their needs or expectations within a relationship. They also explored the idea that the atmosphere of the community had changed over time. With the occurrences of violence within the community has come the invasion of feelings of fear and isolation.

> *…especially being here in North Carolina, some of the rural communities, some of the families, you can be in the middle of a field really, you know, and this horror could be going on and no one can hear you. No one can see you.*

In addition, feelings of shame for those who experience or are affected by violence are also crippling to the well-being of individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Shame prevents those involved from recognizing the problem, seeking help and resources, and changing the situation. Additionally, according to respondents, the inability to improve ones situation economically and the lack of access to helpful resources are other obstacles to addressing and eliminating domestic violence within the African American community.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Rural communities are a vital part of the landscape that is the United States of America; and, rural southern communities encapsulate much that is special to the nation's social and economic history. This report is unique among research because it points to the need to find creative, culturally sensitive responses to domestic violence in the African American community of rural eastern North Carolina. The report presents the ideas of respondents selected from the African American community in 40 rural counties and analyzes their perceptions about the types, causes, solutions, and barriers to violence and domestic violence. Their voices are reflected in this community assessment project report. The report examines those policy issues that can make a difference in the lives of children and families and communities that are struggling to deal with domestic violence. Respondents in this eastern North Carolina assessment strongly asserted that domestic violence requires a multi-pronged approach, one that is particularly sensitive to issues of racism and silence. These rural participants spoke of individual responses to violence that ranged from revenge ("She glued him") to quiet resolve ("Hurting people hurt each other"). Domestic violence requires that we address and respond to the complex and compound issues, particularly substance abuse, mental illness, economic inequity, unemployment, and racism that surround it. In rural communities it is imperative that the multiplicity of intervention points, i.e., individual, couple, family, group, community, and societal intervention be acknowledged to ensure a sustained change effort. A sustained effort is essential if the community is to develop and maintain policies that create opportunities for economic prosperity, while also protecting groups, and establishing safety nets to eradicate domestic violence in the African American community.

Social context is all-important when making strides to resolve any issue. Many African Americans do not concur with the majority race's definition of domestic violence; they feel that their circumstances place them outside the parameters of the definition and, consequently, make the available interventions irrelevant to them. That violence is a natural occurrence spurred by pressures of helplessness and social and economic oppression was discussed and debated by focus groups in this experience. Many respondents validated this concern. The task then becomes finding ways to define domestic violence that reflect the values and messages of this minority community. Such is critical if we are to fully addressing the issue. Relevant definitions are essential. Definitions set parameters for legal and non-legal situations by creating perceptions as to what is and is not domestic violence, while also establishing an agenda for change. What was agreed upon in the eastern North Carolina focus groups was that by helping black communities define this issue for themselves, policies and treatment can be developed that more accurately reflect the needs of African Americans.

Service providers and policymakers often underestimate issues of racism, and contemporary discrimination, concerns raised again and again in the focus groups. A history of racism and social deprivation have left irreparable scars on black people, who present as marginalized and demoralized when faced with the need to on community responses to violence. Having to negotiate living in a discriminatory and often hostile society creates feelings of powerlessness and internalized oppression that greatly impact relationships in homes and communities. It is not known just how much issues of racism and contemporary discrimination affect African American relationships. More research is necessary before targeted interventions can be developed to address these broader issues. But, the task of collecting more data must be undertaken because without formally addressing these issues, service providers and policymakers cannot truly eradicate domestic violence in the African American community.

Especially being here in North Carolina, some of the rural communities, some of the families, you can be in the middle of a field really, you know, and this horror could be going on and no one can hear you. No one can see you.

The historical context was repeated time and again in this report as a component that must be understood if one plans to change the tide of violence in rural North Carolina African American homes. The suggestion that history impacts intimate relationships was mentioned frequently; but, there is little research that has been conducted to illuminate the ways in which history impacts African American intimate relationships. Research is needed to explore the intricate relationship between history, historical African American responses, and current trends of domestic violence in the African American community. As participants discussed, the historical context is interwoven throughout these relationships, and thus, indicates the need for greater study.

Some eastern North Carolina counties have African American majorities in population. These county areas frequently are marked by high levels of poverty and high out migration of educated, young blacks. Those who remain may have entrenched loyalties to family and friends. They often enable perpetrators of domestic violence by rationalizing their behavior and by regularly providing shelter to endangered family members instead of encouraging shelter services, treatment, and/or legal action by the victim. One reason for this behavior can be attributed to the large physical distances between treatment facilities and shelters. Another reason may be the dire social and economic circumstances of an impoverished population.

The differential treatment experienced by African American men and some African American women that was mentioned in other communities also was noted by respondents in eastern North Carolina. Child welfare programs, law enforcement, and the judicial system in particular, were seen as particularly differential to women. Reference was made to the large number of Black men and the increasing number of Black women in prisons as a cause of single parent families. In addition to tracking this inequity, protocols need to be established that protect African Americans from the question of abusive use of power. Efforts must be made to rebuild positive relationships within the African American community, to develop the supportive networks that teach and mentor young men and women. Many African American women do not report violence because they do not want police or a child welfare worker to remove their partner and primary support person or their children. The woman may also choose not to call law enforcement into a violent situation because of fear of police brutality or dual arrests. Consequently, in addition to addressing the systemic inequities that exist, there also must be a clear effort to strengthen the relationships and trust inside and outside communities of color through leadership changes, imposed accountability, and the generation of sustained efforts of quality, concerned, and consistent services in African American communities.

We've got to bring the issue of domestic violence back to people's attention because... it exists in all sectors of society.

The limited services available for domestic violence prevention and intervention were discussed across each of the groups. Ideally, treatment services should be community developed and community based; they should be geographically rooted in the community. Services should be provided by community members or those with a history of working in the community. This established relationship is important if helping communities are to feel that the providers have integrity and a history of being responsive and caring. Such ideas are necessary if the services are to be trusted and utilized. This is an issue of particular concern in rural communities. Services simply are not available. Most treatment facilities and shelters are strategically placed in urban and suburban locations, but there is no urban population center in eastern North Carolina. In the forty county eastern North Carolina region, treatment facilities were described as sparse. Some services were as far as 3 or 4 counties away or as far as 100 miles from a site of violence. There is an obvious need for funding for community-based organizations in rural communities if geographic realities are to be addressed. Culturally sensitive organizations that have a successful history with the community should be given opportunities to receive funding while developing their infrastructure. Such actions will nurture the minority organizations by providing funding opportunities in place of funding more established organizations that are not necessarily sensitive to the community's needs.

> *Ensuring that all services are of the highest quality and culturally competent is critical to the success of this endeavor. Culturally competent intervention methods are needed across all levels of intervention: individual, couple, family, group, community, and societal. In addition to providing such interventions, they should be documented to provide greater confidence in results and to offer opportunities for replication in other comparable places. (Bent-Goodley & Williams, 2004, p. 41)*

It is imperative that funding opportunities be linked to culturally competent service provision; programs not able to demonstrate cultural competence should not receive public funding to support their ventures in minority communities.

The next step for the Greenville Community Planning Group, which facilitated the gathering of data from this community assessment experience, is to use the information contained in this report to educate the citizenry of their communities about domestic violence. The author acknowledges and commends the focus group respondents who shared their insights in this process for their willingness to take risks and to be honest about this dark issue in their community. The group respondents provided clear recommendations that can inform practice, policy, and research. Their comments have the potential to change the conditions of both their geographic and vocational communities and to address the problem of domestic violence in the larger rural community of eastern North Carolina. The message is clear, end domestic violence; the voices must be heard.

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Steering Committee

IDVAAC Steering Committee. Back row, left to right: Oliver J. Williams, Ph.D.; Kelly Mitchell-Clark; William Oliver, Ph.D.; Linner Ward Griffin, Ed.D., MSW; Robert Hampton, Ph.D. Front row, left to right; Joyce N. Thomas, MPH, RN; Shelia Hankins; Esther J. Jenkins, Ph.D.; Antonia Vann, CDVC; Beth E. Richie, Ph.D.

Fact Sheet on Intimate Partner Violence in the African American Community

STATISTICS

In a nationally representative survey, 29% of African American women and 12% of African American men report at least one instance of violence from an intimate partner.[1]

African Americans account for 1/3 of the intimate partner homicides in this country[2] and have an intimate partner homicide rate four times that of whites.[3]

Black women comprise 8% of the U.S. population but account for 20% of the intimate partner homicide victims.[2]

RISK FACTORS

The poorer African American women are and less educated the more severe the abuse they suffer

Alcohol problems (drinking, binge drinking, dependency) are more frequently related to intimate partner violence for African Americans than for whites or Hispanics.[5]

Among African American women killed by their partner, the lethal violence was more likely to occur if there had been incidents in which the partner had used or threatened to use a weapon on her and/or the partner has tried to choke or strangle her.[4]

Among African American women killed by their partner, almost half were killed while in the process of leaving the relationship, highlighting the need to take extra precautions at this time.[4]

Among African American women who killed their partner, almost 80% had a history of abuse.[4]

As with other women, domestic violence is more likely to end in the serious injury or death of black women when there is a history of her partner having used or threatened to use a gun or knife or the partner has tried to choke or strangle her.[4]

IMPACT OF ABUSE

Battered women are at greater risk for attempting suicide[6] particularly if they were physically abused as a child, for being depressed[7] and to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).[8]

DYNAMICS OF ABUSE

Women do better in abusive relationships when they have the support of friends and family. Battered black women who reported that they could rely on others for emotional and practical support were less likely to be re-abused,[9] showed less psychological distress,[10] and were less likely to attempt suicide.[6]

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Black youth are over represented as victims and perpetrators of teen dating violence.[11]

African American girls are as likely as boys to slap or hit their partner,[12] but studies of racially diverse groups find that girls are more likely than boys to be violent with their partner in self defense[13] and to be injured as a result of dating violence[14]

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Eastern North Carolina Domestic Violence Resource List

National Domestic Violence Hotline Information
Hotline Number
1-800- 799-SAFE (7233)
TDD Number
1-800-787-3224
Administrative Number
512-453-8117
Fax Number 512-453-8541

National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-HOPE
RAINN (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network) www.rainn.org

North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Office: 919-956-9124
Fax: 919-682-1449

Eastern North Carolina Domestic Violence Service Providers:

BEAUFORT/

Community Insights on Domestic Violence among African Americans:

Conversations About Domestic Violence And Other Issues Affecting Their Community

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community

College of Human Ecology

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Greenville, North Carolina, 2006