

Acknowledgements

The study team for this project would like to sincerely thank the following persons for their support whether it came in financial, verbal, intellectual, institutional permission or “in kind” form:

Harold Clarke, Director of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services; Frank Hopkins, Assistant Director of Institutions, Nebraska Department of Correctional Services; Steve King, Nebraska Department of Correctional Services Director of Research; John Dahm, Warden of the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women; Ruta Snipes, Administrative Assistant to Warden Dahm; Rex Richard, Superintendent of the Community Correctional Center, Lincoln; Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center (RSACC); the steering committee for the project; Lisa Brubaker RSACC Trainer extraordinaire; T.J. McDowell, Director of The Lighthouse; Kristi Pfeifer, counselor at The Lighthouse; Rose Hughes, counselor at The Lighthouse; The Lighthouse, for providing space for our domestic violence training session; S. Bennett Mercurio, Chair of Communication Arts, Bellevue University for her discussions about the psychology of communication; steering committee member Patricia Lynch for her consultations on developments in the project; The Community Health Endowment Foundation; The Lozier Foundation; Friends of the Lincoln-Lancaster Women’s Commission; Woods Charitable Fund; Friendship Home; Larry Garnett, for discussions of ideas related to the project. A particular thank you is offered to Steven Zacharius, Jessica Ricketts McClean, and Karen Thomas of Kensington Publishing Corporation who immediately granted the study team’s request for donation of their publication *SOULS OF OUR SISTERS: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN BREAK THEIR SILENCE, TELL THEIR STORIES, AND HEAL THEIR SPIRITS* (Daniels/Sandy authors and editors) which we deemed could enrich the participants lives and which their surprised and delighted reactions attested, every time, that the volume did. And, to Elias Kelley, for his patience and gracious forgiveness of the time efforts on this project diverted his mother from his presence.

Additional gratitude and thanks are offered to the phenomenal women who comprised the study team. Beside their gifts of time, intellect, interest and aptitude each one can be noted for particular strengths and “presence” in this report: Myesha Albert (for her irreverent humor), S. Lateefah Coleman (for her ability to pose a spiritual and/or poetic phrase), Debbie Gaspard (for her clarity and calm), Cindy Grandberry (for her “fabulous” attitude and sharing of contacts), Tekla Ali Johnson (for her outraged conviction, for long talks about the meaning of findings, and her overall generosity of spirit), Wendy Smooth (for her astute recognition of unstated ideas, her ability to be “on point”, and her editing eye), Renita Tyrance (for her “analytical propensities”), and Franchell Watson (for her innate orientation to solutions and meaningful outcomes).

Finally, unending admiration and respect go out to the courageous, troubled, outraged, struggling, encouraged and victorious women who participated in this study. May their suffering and sacrifice have not been in vain and their triumphs provide a beacon of light on the journey toward an unscathed humanity for all people.

Venita Kelley
Project Coordinator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Report Summary-----	
REPORT SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	7-11
Orientation to the Study	7
Lincoln Area Statistical Overview	8
Narrative of Participant Demographics	8
Number of Focus Group/Interviews	9
Interview Length	9
Characteristics of Focus Groups	9
African American Males in the Study	10
Report Format	10
Report Comment	11
I. PROJECT DESIGN	12-20
Phase 1. Selection of Facilitators	12
Phase 2. Training	13
Phase 3. Focus Groups/Interviews	13
Phase 4. Report and Recommendations	14
Project Overview and Mandate	15
Steering Committee Goals for the Project	15
Steering Committee Project Coordinator Mandates	16
Mandate for Facilitators	17
II. METHODS	21-23
Focus Group Methodology Rationale	21
Interview Methodology Rationale	21
Comment on Focus Group Methodology Adaptation	22
Anecdotal Comment on Focus Groups/Personal Interviews	22
III. KEY FINDINGS	23-27
Narrative Findings for Domestic Violence Service Providers	23
Narrative Findings on African American Women in Correctional Facilities	23
Narrative Findings Related to City and Governmental Agencies	24
Educational Facilities	24
Law Enforcement	25
Social Services, Human Services & State Policy and Laws	25
Narrative Findings Related to Faith Based Organizations	25
Narrative Findings for Women Who Have Not Previously Sought Services	26
Narrative Findings Related to the Media	27

IV.	PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS	28-31
	Domestic Violence Service Providers	28
	Practical Suggestions	28
	Shelter Practices	28
	Cultural Outreach	29
	Public Outreach	29
	In Community Environments	29
	As Colleagues	29
	Correctional Facilities	30
	City & Government Agencies	30
	Law Enforcement	30
	Education	30
	Medical	30
	Legal System	30
	Faith Based Organizations	31
	Media	31
V.	PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	32-40
	African American Women’s Definitions of Domestic violence	32
	Knowledge of Shelters	33
	Overview of Women’s Concerns with Providers (Shelter and Others)	33
	Providers as Colleagues to African American Women providers	35
	Positive Provider Experiences for African American Women	35
	Overview of Women’s Concerns with/Perceptions of Law Enforcement	36
	Positive Law Enforcement Experiences for African American Women	36
	African American Women’s Concerns with the Legal System	37
	Positive Legal System Experiences for African American Women	37
	Overview of Women’s Concerns in Correctional Facilities	37
	Overview of Women’s Concerns with Faith Based Providers	37
	Positive Experiences with Faith Based Providers	37
	Overview of Social and Cultural Areas Related to African American Women And Domestic violence	38-40
	Domestic violence commonalities—	
	African American women and other women	38
	Characteristics of Abuse Power & Control for African American Women	38
	Social concerns of African American Women	38
	Culturally Significant Differences in Terms of African American Women’s Experience of Domestic violence	39
	African American Women’s Personal Concerns Upon Leaving an Abusive Situation	40
	Children as Victims of Domestic violence	40

VI.	INITIAL STUDY TEAM OBJECTIVES & RECOMMENDATIONS UPON CONCLUDING FOCUS GROUPS & PERSONAL INTERVIEWS	41-45
	Summary	41
	Providers	42
	Human Health	42
	Faith Based	42
	Cultural	43
	Suggestions for Future Study	43
	Suggestions for Philosophical Changes in Considerations/Elimination of Domestic violence	43
VII.	CONCLUSION	46-48
VIII.	BIBILOGRAPHY	49-50
IX.	APPENDICES A-M	51-70
	Appendix A: Focus Questions	51
	Appendix B: NE Correctional Center for Women Focus Questions	52
	Appendix C: Minister Focus Questions	53
	Appendix D: Coordinator Introductory Letter to Lincoln Community	54
	Appendix E: Request for Participants Flyer	56
	Appendix E1: Flyer Adaptation for 7 th Day Adventist Church	57
	Appendix F: NE Correctional Center for Women Participant Agreement Form	58
	Appendix G: General Request Letter to Directors of Correctional Services	59
	Appendix H: NE Correctional Services Requirement for Research Forms	61
	Appendix: I: Request Letter for Participation for Women in the Correctional System	63
	Appendix J: Correctional Center Lincoln Form	65
	Appendix K: Youth Permission Slip	66
	Appendix L: Informed Consent Form	67
	Appendix M: General Additional Funding Request Letter	69
	Appendix N: Book Donation Request, Kensington Publishing	70

“Yeah, What is it about the walls?: “The police or ministers should’ve been better. They acted like something was wrong with me. I didn’t understand what the problem was: I hate the time I spent trying to figure out what was wrong with me: How I was making him so mad. Everyone said it was me.”

REPORT SUMMARY

The title of this study, “‘What Is It about the Walls?’ A Report on the Domestic Violence Services African American Women Receive in the Lincoln, Nebraska Area” arose from the mouths of the women in a focus group in this study. The question both describes and encapsulates a re-occurring theme in the stories of the women who participated in the study. In African American women’s experiences literal walls were used by their abusers as stages for domestic assaults. Other women found that there were invisible walls within shelters for accessing transitional assistance, which they sometimes witnessed European American women residents pass through with more willing assistance. Walls also were found in the Black Church and Mosques. Many women indicated that their pastor or imam had counseled them to remain with their abuser, and most Lincoln ministers were unresponsive to the coordinator of the project who attempted to dialogue with them about ways to help the women in their congregations. Walls were also in evidence with law enforcement as attitudes and non-verbal “assessments” conveyed to women they were being faulted for the assault. The legal system maintained existing institutional walls through a lack of understanding of the options for women in their responses to domestic violence, and perpetuating women’s economic vulnerability.

The study also revealed a wall of silence about domestic violence in the African American community in general and specifically also in the women’s families. In fact, many of the women said that it took them some time to even find the words to describe what was happening in their homes, because there is no meaningful vocabulary in the African American community with which to describe the phenomenon. Finally, women talked about the walls of isolation from friends, and from other women, that their shame related to domestic violence produced.

Still, African American women often sought assistance from providers, law enforcement, the legal system, correctional facility programs, faith based organizations in the African American community, and other institutions designed for assistance. African American women found their efforts for assistance complicated by both images of themselves within the micro culture of African American society, and mediated images of them in the larger society. The results of such images, where African American women are not the major innovators of the images, are matrices of domination, power and control that African American women must negotiate for their daily survival. There is additional danger and trauma that domestic violence imposes upon the already vulnerably positioned African American female. This report constitutes an attempt to clarify aspects of that danger matrix which African American women experience. Certainly those matrices affect the options and means of solutions that African American women might use to address domestic violence in their lives.

The study team for this report was able to interview forty-six women “from the prison to the PhD” in this report, thus experience a solid conviction that the resulting data is unique and significant in understanding the experiences and concerns of African American women who suffer domestic violence.

This report, therefore, organizes Lincoln area African American women’s oral and written responses to focus group and personal interview survey questions about the domestic violence that participant African American women had experienced, witnessed, or been engaged in as a part of an abused woman’s support system. The study team is now able to provide recommendations for improved services by providers, correctional facilities, faith based organizations, the media, and city and governmental agencies, which include law enforcement, education, medical and legal systems. Due to the richness and depth of the information gathered, the study team is also able to suggest an addition or alteration to the philosophical assumptions about the enactment of domestic violence in society(ies). In addition, the study team is able to offer suggestions for policy changes, so that African American women’s need for safety can better be addressed by African American women, themselves and by the intertwining communities of which they are a part.

INTRODUCTION

Orientation to the Study

This study on the domestic violence services that African American Women receive in the Lincoln area began in earnest with funding provided by the Woods Charitable Fund. Before the study ended, Friends of the Lincoln-Lancaster Women's Commission, the Lozier Foundation, Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center, Friendship Home and the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services had contributed further funding or given permission for access to the project and study team.

The Family Violence Council, in association with Lincoln based domestic violence care providers, initiated a study to assess the domestic violence needs of African American women in the Lincoln, Nebraska area. For the purposes of the study "the Lincoln area" was initially defined as Lancaster County and surrounding counties. When participants began linking their domestic violence experiences to the Omaha area, Bob Moyer, Executive Director, Family Violence Council, approved including Omaha area women in the study. Yet, the majority of participants have domestic violence experiences in the Lincoln area. It was also discovered through the study that Lincoln also serves as a domestic violence "respite" location for women who have left their abusive situations, thus their experiences expand beyond and include the Lincoln area in terms of their exposure and recovery from domestic violence and its resulting traumas.

The steering committee for the study was convened by then Family Violence Council (FVC) CHE Coordinator Jill Heng and (FVC) Executive Director Bob Moyer in October of 2002. The committee met monthly until January of 2003, when steering committee member, Venita Kelley, applied and was selected as project coordinator of the study. Kelley, in consultation with Moyer and Jill Heng estimated the project duration would be six months. Focus groups were projected to begin in February and end in March. In actuality the groups and interviews extended into June 2003. Kelley hired eight African American women to act as facilitators for the project. The role of the facilitators was to interview women about their experiences with domestic violence, and to record the women's responses. However, the facilitators' input and actions on behalf of the project all became integral to formalized ideas about findings, analyses, etc. It should be particularly noted that because of the quality of skill, dedication and interest of the facilitators the effect of their involvement was that of team members rather than "subordinates" thus the results of this study must be looked upon as a group effort rather than solely the project coordinator's endeavor.

Between February and June of 2003 Kelley recruited and trained eight facilitators for the study, established letter and e-mail contact with the Lincoln area community, conducted an e-mail solicitation for participants, attended meetings ranging from African American women's clubs to the Nebraska Department of Corrections in order to inform of the study, gained support and solicited participants for the study, participated in a short round of solicitations for extended funding for the study, scheduled meetings and established a timeline for the study in meeting the mandate for the project as established by the steering committee. The six month timeline gave an effective reference point for conducting the study. However, it was difficult to maintain due to human schedules, yes, but PARTICULARLY due to the number of women who sought to be a part of the study or who were recruited. We did find that there were women who still did not feel comfortable enough to participate personally in the study, but who would still fill out the study questions. Kelley originally projected that interviews would be complete by late March,

then mid-April. In fact, the last interview took place on June 6th and the study was not able to accommodate women who still wanted to participate.

Lincoln area statistical overview

The African-American community in the Lincoln area has a high usage of provider services. Only ten percent of Lincoln's population, 24% of the victims of domestic assaults investigated by law enforcement in 2002 were non-white. These statistics mirror those of Friendship Home, the community's battered women's shelter, where 25% of women in shelter were African-American and 36% of children were African-American. The Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center also serves a large non-white population. In 2002, 9% of their face-to-face contacts were with African-American women (FVC 2002).

Narrative of Participant demographics

Forty six Lincoln and Omaha area women were either focus group participants, granted personal interviews, or offered commentary via written means. By comparison, as indicated in an internet search, the National Black Women's Health Imperative focus group study of 1995 interviewed 48 women, and made national recommendations based upon their findings. Thus, we are confident that this study of African American women in the Lincoln area is a sound study with an adequate reach into the Lincoln area African American community to yield legitimate conclusions about the quality of African American women's experiences. We should also note that the study includes information from geographic areas outside of Lincoln, from Omaha to Louisiana. We found that one of the tactics of the abuser was to remove the women from the Lincoln area, often to avoid accumulations of domestic violence reports or to increase the depth of power and control over the woman. Kelley also gained permission from FVC Executive Director Moyer to include Omaha area women in the study.

At the suggestion of facilitator Tekla Ali Johnson, women who were in correctional facilities were targeted for the study. An internet check of the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women website revealed that 80 percent of the residents self report that domestic violence is directly related to their incarceration. The Nebraska State Department of Correctional Services granted permission for women to be contacted and volunteer for the study (we recognize that the \$10 stipend that the women were informed of in the contact letter had some influence in correctional facility women's decision to participate. Ten dollars becomes a significant amount of money in situations of incarceration.) Eventually 26 women from the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women (NCCW) and Lincoln Correctional Center (LCC) participated in the study.

The study team was able to include an age range of participants from 14 to 54 (as self reported by participants). Because of the age range, the study team was able to come up with significant data regarding child witnesses to domestic violence as well. Participants were also offered private interviews as a response to African American cultural practices of "information as property" (Kochman 1981), meeting the personal needs of participants, and the practical needs of participants who were incarcerated. Several women opted for personal interviews including women at NCCW. NCCW Warden John Dahm had predicted that this might occur due to women being unwilling to voice sensitive information in front of other residents, as information is also a commodity in the incarceration environment.

The experience of domestic violence (as defined by participants) encompasses sexual, physical, verbal, mental and spiritual assault that by earliest report began at 13 and still affected participants of age 54 at the present day. The participants were of all class ranges: lower

socioeconomic to upper middle class. The public figure participants were often the ones who asked for private interviews, indicating that loss of social image was of concern (as with European American women) and indicating that their ability to seek services was compromised by their public persona. The NCCW participants also had large requests for private interviews. As stated earlier in the report, this was interpreted as a safety measure on their part so that key information would not become a prison commodity were it shared in group.

Number of Focus Groups/Interviews

At this time the combined number of groups and personal interviews has not been determined but we estimate 20 -25 took place. The steering group suggested four; however, the number of groups/interviews was increased to meet the demand and recruiting results of the facilitators/coordinator.

Interview length

Focus group/personal interview times ranged from 40 minutes to eight and a half hours. The flexibility in the time came from the study team's determination to let the participants set the tone and lengths of time for answering questions, the study team's awareness of oral traditions among African American people, and the fluid time cultural practice of many African American people. Still, all of the meetings were scheduled for 90 minutes. Women were assured by facilitators they had at least three hours should they choose to extend the time. Any time spent in interview over three hours was agreed upon by the facilitators and participants.

Characteristics of Focus Groups

The project coordinator and facilitators established potential hours to conduct groups/interviews from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Sunday to accommodate the potential work and personal time shifts for participants. We felt the time and date flexibility would guarantee a range of socioeconomic class participants.

The Lincoln Medical Education Partnership (LMEP) became the principal group/interview site. To accommodate participants potential discomfort with the site, African American community "comfort and familiarity" sites such as The Lighthouse, RSACC, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln Women's Center, and other agency sites such as the Lincoln-Lancaster Women's Commission conference room were established as potential sites and communicated to the women seeking to be scheduled for the study. Still, local restaurants, facilitator's homes, the NCCW facilities, and locations suggested by participants also became sites for groups/interviews.

The study team felt that this flexibility and "co-scheduler" approach was an important practice as the study team was aware of current and centuries old research practices which exploited and harmed African American people and the study team wanted to avoid that practice and perception that we were trying to fit participants into our predetermined goals and outcomes. Prior to scheduling, and during focus group orientations, facilitators took an approach of full disclosure about the study, stipend, aims and potential reach of the study. The study team felt that this approach would fulfill the steering committee mandate of empowering the women while they participated in the study.

Participants were given an orientation to the study and signed informed consent forms before interviews began. They were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. They were also assured they had control over what was recorded or documented either through raising a peach colored

card, or physically turning the recording equipment off themselves. Participants were assured they could withdraw from the study at any time (including post-interview), without penalty or adverse effect upon relationships with the study team or any organizations affiliated with the study itself.

Participants were also assured that if the study questions created pain, emotional or psychological revisiting of the abuse, that arrangements could be made for contacting mental health professionals. Post interview three women (aside from those at the NCCW facility) requested and were connected to Dr. Henrietta Vargas for counseling. As of June 24, 2003 one woman was known to have entered counseling, one had intended to but is not known to have followed up, and contact with the third woman has been lost.

The study team, as much as possible, triangulated documentation through recording, flip chart notes, and handwritten notes during sessions. All but one focus group sessions were triangulated. A recorder and handwritten notes were used in personal interviews. When handwriting would interfere with the quality of interaction in a personal interview the recorder became the sole source of documentation. One focus group was not recorded as the facilitator did not notice the extension panel control button was turned off.

All participants were given a \$10 stipend for their participation in the study. Facilitator Wendy Smooth completed a team goal of securing donation of 50 books from Kensington Publishing Corporation (SOULS OF MY SISTERS: BLACK WOMEN BREAK THEIR SILENCE, TELL THEIR STORIES, AND HEAL THEIR SPIRITS, Dawn Marie Daniels and Candace Sandy, author/editors). Participants were also given a resource packet containing educational information and numbers for provider services. The book, stipend, and refreshments were participants' compensation for their assistance with the study.

African American Males in the Study

The study team regrets we could not conduct male youth or men's groups though we had identified African American male facilitators and participants. African American male youth expressed intense interest in being interviewed. Several adult African American men offered commentary about their disapproval of abusers, their own experiences as witnesses and protectors, and their willingness to participate in the study. Time, opportunity, and prioritizing African American women participants were the only reasons the study team did not conduct the interviews. Facilitator Franchell Watson did conduct an unscheduled interview with an African American adult male, but that information is not included in this study. We will offer a recommendation that African American males of several age ranges be focused on for study and insights into how they are affected as witnesses or women's support system in the recommendations section.

Report Format

With the abundance of information gained from the focus groups, personal interviews and written responses Kelley determined the report needed to have an information rich (rather than depth) approach. Since African American women themselves, and domestic violence services for African American women is an under-researched area the range and frequency of information was deemed more important to relay. Thus, this report is formatted to be more topical than analytical as a means of making the information more accessible and useable for those who receive it.

Report Comment

The study team freely acknowledges that information gained in this study may replicate existing knowledge about domestic violence itself, and domestic violence services for African American women. We feel that replication should be looked upon favorably as a point of reference for effective measures in addressing domestic violence needs for African American women. The idea is that domestic violence providers, law enforcement, the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and the legal system this report is written for will be able to differentiate between areas that are synchronous with existing knowledge of domestic violence and how it affects African American women, and areas that are specific to African American women, and which, in fact, add depth to existing knowledge.

The study team is also convinced the focus group/personal interview approach allows stronger confirmation and identification of the current circumstances for the women who are interviewed. We are also confident, however, that this study reveals unique information and solutions upon which new services and policies can be based to address the eradication of domestic violence for African American women.

This study has made clear that there must be a continual refinement in understanding and eliminating domestic violence, its issues and related traumatic contexts. There can be no absolutes in terms of perceptions of domestic violence, who it affects, or the efficacy of solutions in eliminating it. The phenomena associated with domestic violence are constantly re-shaped as society shifts, thus reflective thinking, re-evaluation and re-adjusted procedures and responses must become normative procedure: Eliminating domestic violence must be thought of as an evolving process where once useful solutions are understood to no longer be so; or structures set in place to establish order are recognized as contributing to disorder; or where mechanisms of empowerment are recognized as having been subverted to the point they operate to dis-empower and disenfranchise those who were meant to be helped.

I. PROJECT DESIGN

Phase 1. Selection of Facilitators

The project mandate suggested that a facilitator be chosen to (co-) conduct focus groups. In steering committee meetings of fall 2002, the possibility of adding facilitators was approved. Eventually, eight African American women involved in community activities, or with whom Kelley was associated professionally, served as facilitators/study team members. The women were recruited through e-mail solicitation, Kelley's knowledge of backgrounds, their interests, and age ranges, in accordance with steering committee recommendations. Facilitators recruited others they knew would have an interest in the project. The steering committee agreed that African American women should conduct and facilitate the study. An additional rationale for choosing all African American women was primarily a result of knowledge of interviewer effects on study participants. The results of the Works Progress Administration interviews with formerly enslaved African Americans after World War One is the classic example. While producing an enormous volume of interviews, many of the interviewees told other African Americans that they had withheld some of the worst stories because the interviewers were White. There was a cultural divide which created trust issues for the subjects and affected the content of the interviews. The steering committee and project coordinator's choice of African American women was made in hopes of encouraging participants to "openly" tell their stories.

The facilitators' ages ranged from early 20s to mid-50s. Kelley predicted that the age range would be beneficial to recruitment and interactions with participants who were teenagers to established adults. This prediction was accurate. Facilitator occupations and backgrounds include education, history, political science, counseling, communication, sociology, adolescent psychology, and business administration.

Early in the project the steering committee expressed concern to Kelley that the facilitators and approach to the study would be "too academic". The concern was real as due to historical circumstance, some African American people do not trust or value "academic research" on African American people as that research has often resulted in negations of African American people, culture and ways of life and in actual physical danger. In addition, inaccessible language and jargon coded phrasings of "academic research" have resulted in findings being impractical for use and application within the African American community. This distrust of the usefulness of "academic research" can be observed from the lower classes to upper class in African American communities.

The steering committee needed to be certain that the study design and facilitators would be appropriate to the potential range of participants. This in mind, Kelley hired eight women whom beside personal convictions of the worth of African American identity and perspectives maintain friendships, familial relations, personal and professional interest with African American women, men and children from all of the social classes represented in the United States. To apply Martin Luther King, Jr.'s phrase, the facilitators associate "from the no D's to the PhD." To be more specific, Kelley's research and experience attested to certain social and professional practices within African American communities: Class dynamics are constantly breached and ignored. Thus, she chose facilitators on the basis that:

1. All facilitators have ties to several levels of African American community.
2. Multiple academic, personal, research and experience levels were reflected among facilitators.
3. Facilitators would be willing to share some aspect of their own experience in order to help lower the barriers focus group and interview participants might have been affected by in the interview process.
4. All facilitators had some kind of experience with domestic violence as survivor, provider, witness, part of someone's support system.

In short, all facilitators had a personal interest and stake in issues of domestic violence for African American women.

Facilitators/Study Team

Project Coordinator: Venita Kelley, PhD (Communication, African American Community and Culture)

Facilitators:

Myesha Albert, M.A. (adolescent psychology)

S. Lateefah Coleman, (para-educator, para-counselor, artist)

Debbie Gaspard, M. B. A. (media arts, business administration)

Cindy Grandberry, (administration, politics)

Tekla Ali Johnson, A.B.D. (history, para-counselor)

Wendy Smooth, Ph.D. (political science)

Renita Tyrance, M.A. (administration, sociology)

Franchell Watson, B.A. (sociology, biology, para-counselor)

Phase 2. Training

The second phase of the project involved a series of training sessions in domestic violence statistics, environments and counseling, and focus group and interviewing techniques for the facilitators. The facilitators were provided domestic violence training by Lisa Brubaker of the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center. They were also given several additional hours of training in the laws surrounding the reporting of domestic violence and were taught what other support services are available to women in the Lincoln Area. At the suggestion of facilitator Johnson, a resource packet for participants was compiled from a counseling training manual she owned.

Phase 3. Focus Groups/Interviews

Women who had survived domestic violence, who were currently experiencing domestic violence, or who were a part of the support system of women connected to domestic violence were recruited for participation. In order to find women suitable for the study Kelley contacted social, health and human services, and community workers throughout the Lincoln community. Facilitators Johnson, Watson, Coleman, and Albert played significant roles in recruiting participants as well. African American women in need of domestic violence services or counseling, or who had stories which could benefit the project were approached with the idea of agreeing to a focus group or personal interview. Women who consented to focus group settings were then group interviewed. At least two facilitators were present in each focus group to assist with documentation, details of the interview, and co-conduction of interviews. The decision to conduct focus groups instead of only individual interviews was made because of the cultural propensity among African American's, generally, to become involved in community activities

more readily than individual ones, and to connect with the tradition among African American women to form self-help groups.

Phase 4. Report and Recommendations.

In the final phase, the project coordinator was to put together the results of the focus groups, interviews, and written responses. Then the project coordinator was to write, deliver and provide copies of the resulting report to the Family Violence Council, the FVC study committee, Friendship Home, Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center and other interested parties. This is that report.

Project Overview and Mandate

In 1999, the Woods Charitable Fund provided a grant to the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership on behalf of the Family Violence Council, Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center and Friendship Home to conduct several focus groups to identify the special needs within the Latino population residing in Lancaster County for obtaining and receiving services that would help stop domestic violence and to identify strategies for meeting those needs.

The process was highly successful, resulting in the identification of 10 objectives to implement. A task force has implemented several of these objectives and continues to work toward implementing all 10 objectives. Because of the success of the program, the three organizations reconvened to investigate the domestic violence services received by the African American population in Lancaster County.

The Family Violence Council established a steering committee comprised of domestic violence experts and representatives of the African American community. FVC hired a project coordinator from the African American community who would plan and implement five focus groups with African American women and then compile the results and present a report that achieved the project's purpose.

The project coordinator would also hire a facilitator from the African American community for the focus groups. The facilitator would be specially picked to help recruit individuals who could inform the FVC, RSACC and Friendship home about African American women survivors' attitudes on domestic violence, barriers they see to services, and their perceptions on which services are needed and how best to provide them. In further discussions with FVC Executive Director Moyer regarding information gained in groups/interviews, it became clear that relevant information for law enforcement, the legal system, the correctional system, and faith based providers was emerging. Though only the correctional system was included as target recipients of this report due to their interest in their facilities performance and operations as related to domestic violence, recommendations for the systems mentioned and providers are included in the study.

Steering Committee Goals for the Project

In the fall of 2002, the steering committee for the project designated these goals:

1. The people involved in the project as project coordinator and facilitators must be able to help participants recognize "power over" and "control" dynamics involved in domestic violence situations.
2. Project coordinator and facilitators must be empathic, can relate to the situation: affective, reflective, probably will have witnessed violence in some capacity thus will have some deeper level of commitment to the proposed outcomes of the study.
3. Empowerment of the participants through voicing their concerns.
4. Education information will be provided to the coordinator.
5. Co-dependent and self concept issues addressed or "uncovered" with participants.
6. Identify support services already in place.
7. Discovery of obstacles to success.

Steering Committee Project Coordinator Mandates

The steering committee established seven mandates for the project coordinator.

1. Address safety and privacy concerns of participants.

Study results: Focus groups became main source of gathering information but private interviews were also offered to the women. The warden at NCCW also thought private interviews should be offered as sensitive information could become a commodity among residents.

2. Identify participants for the study.

Study results: Kelley conducted an information book survey of service providers, then sent out letters to all human services organizations that were identified in the FVC directory including police department advocates; contacted ministers in the Lincoln area (Christian, Muslim, large African American population in congregations), in order to acquaint them with the study and to ask their help in identifying potential participants. Kelley also created a flyer and included a short bio of her work as an introduction/ reminder to the African American community (a cultural practice of African Americans is that they will often not interact with those they aren't acquainted with or don't know. The letter and bio was to remind the community that, in fact, Kelley was an active member of the community).

3. Identify and train facilitators.

Study results: Kelley recruited six facilitators directly from her personal and work interactions. One from an internet recruitment announcement. One facilitator recruited another. And, one facilitator was recommended by a member of the steering committee. Kelley also arranged RSACC training as urged by steering committee and developed and conducted the focus group/personal interview training.

4. Arrange child care and transportation and administer honorariums.

Study results: All duties fulfilled.

5. Set a target number of participants.

Study results: 20 women were targeted, 46 women participated.

6. Will seek a representative range of participants.

Study results:

Age

Kelley initially had identified participant range of women from age 12 to 80. The identified elderly women eventually opted out of the study ("I don't want to remember that old stuff."). The study ended with age ranges identified by participants of 14 to 54.

Class

Participants represented a range of socioeconomic class from impoverished to upper middle class.

Education

The participant education status included post-elementary, high school drop outs to current high school attendees, GED graduates, undergraduate college students, graduate students, and doctors of philosophy (PhD).

7. Review the focus group results and gather/present preliminary themes that will lead to recommendations for improved services.

Study Results: This report fulfills the mandate.

Mandate for facilitators:

1. Have an expertise/background in conducting focus groups.

Study Results: At least three facilitators had previous experience. All had knowledge of focus groups and interviews. The project coordinator and RSACC provided additional training.

2. Set/administer the time frame for the focus groups.

Study Results: 90 minute target, but groups went as long as 8 hours with permission and interest of participants.

3. Set a target number for each focus group.

Study results: The target was no less than 3 people per group, no more than 7. When the target number of participants did not show for two groups, in consultation with the participants, focus group sessions were held. No focus group had less than 2 participants.

The focus group held in the Women’s Center at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln exceeded the study teams agreed upon maximum number. Initially two groups of 5-7 women were the target numbers per group. The Women’s Center facilities could accommodate this arrangement, however when the group began only 5 participants were in the room and the six facilitators in attendance made a judgment call, along with the participants, to proceed as one group. By the end of the three hour session though, due to arrival times from classes and work the group swelled to 14 women during the 3 hour session. Informed consent was gained from late arriving women outside of the room, but they had had to enter the room to alert the facilitators to their presence and often expressed interest in participating in conversations they heard in progress. Twice participants were asked if they wanted to separate, but the majority opted to continue as one group.

Facilitators later regretted the concession as they felt that some attendees were reticent to disclose or masked their own circumstances (“my sister”, “a friend”) in compliance with concerns they had shared with focus group coordinator Watson

about sharing information in front of participants they knew personally but did not trust, or whom they (as upper class women) might not want to traumatize since some group members were underclasswomen. As well, graduate students who were participants might have been teaching some of the younger women in the group and could not afford to share certain personal information due to their professional positions. Given the flip chart and recorded information of the session, the study team still found the results to be strong and significant, however noted that results could still be compromised.

4. Help focus group members identify obstacles to life success.

Study results: The focus group/interview questions were worded to give women opportunity to reflect upon their circumstances. Recordings capture several epiphanies that women had upon talking openly about their situations (“Your mothering spirit is used against you,” “I guess I might be an abuser now!” “Their abuse [plays out] their emotional dependency on us,” “What IS it about the walls with them?!”))

5. Understand the role of the church in the African American community and how it’s structures both support and hinder African American women’s response to violence in their lives.

Kelley has a minor background in theology and has published her research on African American women preachers.

Study results: Most women in the study predicted that the faith community did not care about them, and cited the ineffective, blaming or inappropriate responses of faith based providers when they shared domestic violence circumstances with them. Many attested that that response impelled them to begin reading the Bible or the Koran for themselves to see if what they were being told by abusers and members of the faith community was accurate. None found confirmation for their abuse in their reading, and several even argued that in both the Koran and Bible the readings are incompletely cited and misused for instruction about relationships and normative dynamics between wives and husbands.

The participants’ comments concerned the study team enough that a focus group for ministers was included in the study. The study group’s intent was to gain knowledge of minister perspective on the study, domestic violence itself and their own perspectives about what their faith community’s views were. With six different contacts: letters, phone calls, phone messages and two separate focus group times, only two ministers responded to the opportunity for involvement. One minister was called away to duties on the date of the second group. Thus, only one minister’s ideas and actions as related to domestic violence in the African American community (a resource booklet brought to the session but which was not left for review by the study team) could be included in the study. It should be noted that the study team scheduled the first focus group on a Wednesday which in hindsight proved to be a mistake. Wednesday nights are traditionally Bible study nights for ministers, thus the date itself would have presented a conflict for them. That noted, only the minister who negotiated for and showed up to the second meeting responded to the request for interview at all. That minister had been involved in

putting together the resource information about domestic violence that was brought to the interview.

6. Recognize and contextualize cultural constraints to full participation in the focus group activity.

Kelley has expertise is in the dynamics of culture, including African American communication and cultural norms.

Study Results: All facilitators were African American women with stated and lived respect and experience in African American cultural context. All of the facilitators understood the research exploitation that has occurred with African Americans and did not want to perpetuate it. Therefore, extended time was often taken in the informed consent form orientation. The facilitators would include aspects of their own experiences at times which operated in the cultural context of shared community and shared perspective.

7. Encourage and maintain strong participation in culturally appropriate context/mode.

Study Results: All facilitators knew to be themselves with participants and to avoid feeding into perceptions participants might have about them being “too educated to understand”, and therefore used a combination of African American rhetorical styles and nonverbals in their interviews to establish rapport: Ebonics, verbal emphases (“I heard that”), call-response, narrative sequencing, tonal semantics (“mm hmm”), and signifying, making jokes in the discussion to relieve tension (including gallows humor). Facilitators would also offer comment to women’s “question-comments” (“He shouldn’t have done that to me.” “No, girl, he shouldn’t have.”) Nonverbally at least one facilitator would often sit, and position her body in ways to convey she was relaxed and open to whatever the participants might voice. Facilitators would often use their bodies as part of the conversation (leaning forward when women were intensely conversing, moving their hands and arms as part of a question). All of these verbal and non verbal communication norms constitute a cultural interview style which then helped create rapport and allow the participants to share their stories and perspectives with the study team.

8. Help participants open up about services they’ve received.

Study results: There are over 50 hours of tape, and 27 pages of flip chart notes from the sessions with participants. A half hour tape yields approximately 6 typewritten pages of single spaced comments. Another test of facilitator ability to open up to women is that there are only 2 sessions recorded where the sessions stayed within the 90 minute scheduled time. Those sessions were with teenagers (and these are the 6 page reference point).

9. Help participants “uncover” the barriers and obstacles they have to sufficient services.

Study Results: A great number of comments, suggestions and recommendations are included later in this report which spans the participants’ experiences with providers, law enforcement, the legal system, the educational system and as

colleagues with providers. These results themselves extended the scope of the study. Yes, the barriers were uncovered.

10. Help participants identify needs they have for services.

Study Results: A great number of comments, suggestions and recommendations are included later in this report which spans the participants' experiences with providers, law enforcement, the legal system, the educational system and as colleagues with providers. These results themselves provide information about African American women's domestic violence needs.

11. Help participants voice or "uncover" the mistakes, assumptions, actions, stereotypes, racialized behavior that keeps them from being better served with services.

Study Results: Participants were often quite aware of their experiences, their own perspectives about the domestic violence AND the services they received. Facilitators "offer" of time and focus on the issues related to domestic violence both helped participants voice their perspectives and let them experiment with terms and phrases to describe what they understood.

12. Have a discovery approach with participants.

Study results: The tone and approach of this report mirrors and operates within this mandate as it did with participants. The study team is aware that some information will coincide with already existing knowledge about domestic violence and African Americans involved with domestic violence. However, the approach of this study was "to let the women speak for themselves" and this report tries to convey faithfully the areas which the participant's addressed.

13. Help participants separate/define violence from the criminal justice system (definition/experience?).

Study results: The sections having to do with law enforcement, the legal system, and correctional facility services help support that this mandate was fulfilled.

II. METHODS

Focus Group Methodology Rationale

Powell et al define a focus group as,

“A group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research,” (1996: 499).

Focus groups are a qualitative research method which offers advantages for data collection. The purpose of focus groups is to promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure in which people can share their ideas, experiences, and attitudes about a topic. Participants "influence and are influenced," while researchers play various roles, including that of moderator, listener, observer, and eventually inductive analyst (Morgan, 1993; Gibbs, 1997; Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998)

Focus groups have the ability to access the "knowledge, ideas, story-telling, self-presentation, and linguistic exchanges within a given cultural context," (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998: 5), and allows the original voice of participants to emerge and remain intact thus presenting and allowing a broader view of social reality (Schatz, 1993; Hoepfl, 1997). Focus groups help to capture those experiences that cannot be "meaningfully expressed by numbers," (Berg, 1995:3). The use of focus groups reflects two basic assumptions: 1) People can provide a rich source of information about a topic, and 2) The collective and individual responses encouraged by the focus group setting will generate material that differs from other methods of information gathering. (Glitz, 1998). Focus groups provide rich and high quality data, and effectively reveal the multiple realities of people's existence and provide glimpses into participants' worlds (Gibbs, 1997; Krueger and Casey 2000).

Interview Method Rationale

Interviews can be effective for a variety of purposes: To learn about cultural customs, evaluate the effectiveness of an educational or social program, explore people's reactions to important events in their lives, develop oral histories, or to create life histories of interesting or influential people and events.

Interviews are most successful and useful when the information needed can be obtained in no other way and when a rich, detailed picture of people's experience and the meaning they attach to it is needed. The topic may be new, understudied, or existing information is inadequate. Or, questions of interest are sensitive, or complicated. Additionally, someone's physical presence may be required or desired in order to guide people through the process of answering questions. Importantly, personal interviews are effective when detailed, narrative information is desired.

The interview style is unstructured and conversational, and the questions asked are generally open-ended and designed to elicit detailed, concrete stories about the subject's experiences. The purpose of such interviews is not to identify objective truth ...but to help understand the experiences of the participants and the conclusions the participants themselves have drawn from them. Interviews are most appropriately used when a rich, detailed, holistic picture is needed of people's experience and how they interpret it,

as well as when there is interest in explanations of thoughts or behaviors that are rooted in situational or contextual factors, or when a study needs a method that is flexible and can be changed as necessary as the study proceeds (Doyle, 2001).

Key to this study, interviewing and focus groups are related methods of inquiry into phenomena.

Comment on Focus Group Methodology Adaptation

The study team focus groups were atypical due to the number of questions (9-14). Though five questions were highlighted as essential to be asked (within “standard” guidelines), the study team had an outline of 14 questions which conventional wisdom focus group methodology wisdom would critique as too many. However, Project Coordinator Kelley, from her expertise perspectives in African American communication and culture practices, determined that the research environment for interacting with African Americans was staid and did not respond to oral tradition practices as enacted by African Americans. Thus, the elevated number of questions was used as rapport building and perspective encouraging devices.

Even in interviews most facilitators’ use of African American style in asking sensitive questions was observed: hedges, pre-question re-phrasings, hesitations, pauses, qualifying statements (responding to nonverbal cues and adapting from moment to moment with interviewers). As well, the questions were slightly altered for different circumstances of focus groups for ministers and women in correctional facilities (see appendices **B** and **C**).

Anecdotal Comment on Focus Groups/Personal Interviews

- Most participants were ready to talk once they entered the interview environment. Facilitators were aware of this and were advised to interrupt to make sure participants were protected by being oriented to the study and signing consent forms prior to further comments they might make. Some women were signing the consent forms before the form signing orientation. However, facilitators would conduct the entire orientation before moving formally into the interviews/focus groups.
- There is long term fear, emotional pain, and an environment of (personal and societal) intimidation related to domestic violence for African American women. Participants in their 80’s were going to participate but withdrew, not wanting, finally, to re-visit old memories. Other women were on their way to meetings and never showed up. Facilitators were later able to provide them the opportunity to participate by letting them respond to the focus group questions in writing.
- In general, the African American community response to the need to address domestic violence in African American communities is positive, and reflects an awareness that domestic violence exists in alarming measure. When announcements were made about this impending study in meetings, or contact was in local venues (grocery stores, parking lots, etc.) the response was always enthusiastic, interested and was literally stated “it’s about time”. Often African American women AND men offered extended comments about their own experiences, perspectives, support system behaviors in response to incidents upon hearing about the study. Only one of those comments is referenced in this study (in the discussion section as related to ritual and ritualistic sacrifice), though, as there was no context for providing informed consent so that these comments could ethically be included in the study. The comment that *is* included was by verbal permission after Kelley asked if it could be used.
- Most participants chose alternative names as was offered by the study team. Approximately five women chose their own names to be referred to under documented circumstances. They stated proudly, even defiantly, that they “had nothing to hide,” or “I’m glad [name] might know [recognize] it was me.”

III. KEY FINDINGS

In general, this study of the domestic violence services that African American women receive in the Lincoln area revealed a need for greater awareness of how domestic violence itself is perceived by and affects African Americans. It also revealed the need for awareness and support of African American women experiencing domestic violence in five primary institutions, broken into other institutions, in the Lincoln area. These five institutions were named by the women in the study, who had approached providers in each of these areas and had not gotten the help that they sought. Or, they did not know how to contact providers who specialize in domestic violence consultation and support for their circumstances. These five institutions are: domestic violence providers, correctional facilities, city and governmental agencies (which include law enforcement, education, medical and legal systems), faith based organizations, and the media. These are the study team's findings:

Narrative of Findings for Domestic Violence Service Providers

Outreach to African American women could be increased. Material about shelters is not currently being placed in areas that African American women frequent such as grocery stores, African American owned beauty salons, and church vestries. Further, women who had previously been in shelter, said that thirty days was not enough for African American women "living in a racist society" to find a job, become economically independent, and establish a secure family environment for her children. Women needed more time in shelter, better access to transitional housing, job locator assistance, family counseling and family assistance when transitioning out of correctional facilities. Women also acknowledged that they felt that some of the European American staff in shelters saw African American women's problems as their fault and "stereotyped them" to be drug abusers, or women who did not want to work. The women said that they were more quickly written up in shelter than were European American women, and were less likely to be told about available resources, or provided guidance about practical survival matters such as signing up for family aid and navigating new neighborhoods.

African American women who were on staff at shelters stated they were misunderstood, viewed as intimidating, resented in the context of their work, had interactions including overt censure and suspicion, experienced passive-aggressive undermining of their efforts, were subtly ridiculed among their colleagues especially when their methods, while succeeding with the women they worked with, did not meet the established structure of the shelter or provider context. Participants stated that the power and control cycle is in strong evidence in the shelter environment both with African American women as staff colleagues and in what participants view as the inflexible structures of the shelters themselves.

Participants found also that shelter staff's willingness to listen and share personal experiences or knowledge with them helped them feel less isolated. One participant was grateful for the shelter's co-signing for a phone for her. The classes and educational materials were useful for women in either giving them a perspective about what they were experiencing or as tools for planning their exit from the abusive situation, and evaluating abuser emotional states.

Narrative of Findings on African American Women in Correctional Facilities

Participants in correctional services said that their imprisonment was a part of the domestic violence cycle. "They are all related domestic violence, alcohol, drugs, prison," said one participant at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women (NCCW). Several of the women were in prison as a result of having determined to defend themselves from further domestic

assaults, and the encounter resulted in the abuser's death. Other women said they felt that previous domestic violence counseling had been a "set up." When they exit the prison, they said, they are given their children and still don't have a job. When they turn to a man for support, he is often from a former relationship, and the cycle begins again. "We need ninety days, during which time we are in contact with our kids but not totally responsible for them," one woman said.

The women noted that programs for support related to domestic violence have not been in place for at least two years at NCCW, and do not exist at LCC. The NCCW program became de facto defunct when the person who staffed the program left the NCCW context.

There are no counseling (or staff) personnel of African American or other Woman of Color descent in place in the correctional facilities. The sentiment that European American personnel were not interested and were not able to relate to the issues and perspectives of African American women was also expressed by correctional facility residents. Racism, "over policing," and distrust of potential providers (due to self reported past experiences of betrayal) were also cited by the women as challenges within their environment.

A number of participants voiced the belief that Nebraska has no self defense law, therefore responses to abuse that directly contributed to their incarceration were not considered in their convictions. Kelley was unable to confirm whether this was perception or fact. If it is fact that there is no self defense law the study team's concern is that the judicial system is de facto supporting domestic violence through inadequate understanding of the dimensions of the problem.

Perhaps not surprisingly, power and control dynamics are in evidence for women in correctional facilities as participants stated that guards have been known to say, "I need a crackhead to empty the trash, " to solicit women for work detail. Comments and approaches like these were reported to be a part of daily interaction between the women and correctional facility staff. Abusive contexts such as these would then increase incarcerated African American women's distrust and disdain for staff and programs in the facilities where they are in place.

The study team was not able to return to NCCW to interview other potential participants interested in being in the study. Participants stated that women from the Lincoln area were available and interested for interview but had not been identified because they were not favored in the correctional environment.

Narrative of Findings Related to City and Governmental Agencies

These findings include educational institutions, police departments, and state institutions which create policy such as departments of social services and state legislatures.

Educational facilities

Participants stated that, at present, educational institutions such as public schools do nothing to warn girls about the dangers of domestic violence, or about the "red flags" which abusers will signal early on in a relationship.

As well, participants stated that when interacting with children who enter schools near the shelter environment, school officials query children about circumstances unrelated to their education or

personal safety thus contributing to an environment of shame and humiliation for the children.

Law Enforcement

Ironically, African American women are more likely to have to rely on local police in a domestic violence crisis, because they are statistically less likely to be financially able to remove themselves from the abusers locale.

Most participants who had experienced domestic violence found officers to be of little help, either in referring them to shelters, or in stopping the abuse for more than a few minutes. In some cases the police added to women's fearfulness as they threatened to arrest both she and the abuser. In a few cases, an officer tried to make sexual or romantic overtures to the women in crisis.

A set of officers, an African American male and European American female offered great emotional support to one woman who was plotting her way out of her domestic violence situation. The team was always the one to respond to calls to her home. They did not offer her any information about shelters, however. "He was my strength," the woman said of the African American officer who while interviewing her away from the abuser, quietly gave encouragement and perspective to her about how she could change her situation. Post their first call to her home, they began to refer to her by her name, and she never sensed they were judging her. Another woman stated an African American male officer listened to her patiently, offered encouragement and a view about how she should be treated.

Social Services, Human Services and State Policy and Laws

In general participants in this study experienced a high level of distrust with social and human services workers. At times, participants stated when they did approach the workers about domestic violence assistance, the workers seemed more interested in reporting that a man had spent the night in the home, (and potentially causing a web of economic problems in the form of cuts in aid), than in helping the women and her children. Further, a recent Nebraska law allows the state to place children who have witnessed domestic violence in foster care. Therefore, in reporting the domestic violence, African American women risk losing custody of their children.

Once your children are gone into that system, it's like hell to get them back. They look at YOU as the unstable one, even though you were not the perpetrator. Meanwhile, he's walking around free and easy, with no worries about a child on his mind.

This Nebraska law then, is a major hindrance to reporting domestic violence at this time in the African American community, and may serve to further empower abusers.

A few participants stated that ineffective experiences with social and human services as children or youth contributed to their reluctance or refusal to seek services as adults.

Narrative of Findings Related to Faith Based Organizations

The faith based response for African American women mirrors the general faith based response to domestic violence in the larger society. Most participants expressed ambivalence and outright discouragement about the Black Church and Muslim Mosque response to their situations of domestic violence. Participants stated they were often counseled to stay with their abusers and

were targeted as creating the problem in their situations, particularly if they sought divorce. A few participants had direct ties to leaders in the churches and mosques and found that they were again focused upon as problems, or that church leaders used their organizational positions to breach her confidentiality and whereabouts.

I cannot justly capture what I am trying to say in words, but it seemed as if ministers have an attitude that implies that God has personally told them how to address the issue of domestic violence. Moreover, it is up to the member to humbly seek this revelation.

Several participants stated they began to seek answers for their situation through their own reading of the Bible or Koran. They stated that there is an incomplete application of scripture to their situations, wherein they are encouraged to submit to the male leadership in the house. However, participants state the scripture instructs husbands to “love their wives like Jesus loved the church” or that Allah instructs that a woman should be cherished and not struck. Thus, the women’s own reports attest that their personal understanding of scripture and doctrine evolve at odds with instruction in the faith based community. In addition, women survivors of domestic abuse opt to believe the words of the texts they investigate rather than words they may receive from a faith community leader, thus often become distanced from the institutional structures of churches and mosques.

Yet, participants do find aid in the faith community. One participant engaged in marital counseling with her husband and their pastor. A year after her husband cursed the pastor out and left a counseling session, the minister aided her with funding for a divorce. It should be noted, that in that year she was still subjected to physical and emotional abuse.

In a focus group specifically for ministers, a participant covered a number of issues and concerns among the pastoral community: Ministers were in denial about the seriousness of domestic violence, ministerial duties influence them to counsel toward keeping families together, ministerial training mirrors societal gender biases, ministers are actively involved in issues related to domestic violence but operate in isolation, ministers are reluctant to place themselves in the middle of family circumstances, and there is no ministerial training related to a therapeutic way to address domestic violence.

Narrative of Findings for African American Women Who Have Not Previously Sought Services

Some participants who said that they have not previously sought services or that they did not call the police said that they fear “getting him into trouble” or contributing to the abuser’s death at the hands of overzealous officers. This finding indicates that African American women are constantly negotiating multiple and conflicting levels of societal realities which then result in her experiencing paradoxes which either “paralyze” her options or entrap her further into the domestic violence circumstances.

Participants frequently cited financial dependence upon or by the abuser as the reason behind their fear of him being incarcerated. Some of the women said that they did not want to “turn against him to the white man.” After some discussion participants explained that they see the historical oppression of African American people as ongoing and do not want to become a part of that societal system of degradation of African American people. For instance, the already exaggerated number of African American men in prison (in some places as high as one in four), and participants distrust of the legal, law enforcement, social and human services systems to be advocates for African American people in general, and African American families in particular,

was the primary reason for their hesitancy. One facilitator described African American women in domestic violence situations as being so busy “managing the perception of African American people in the eyes of white people,” that they don’t know how to solicit and accept assistance from those same persons. Kelley described the problem as a need to “unpack the dual consciousness,” in order to help African American women neutralize their self-negation under false notions of being “true to the race”.

Narrative of Findings Related to the Media

Participants stated that until the wife of O.J. Simpson was slain, and her experiences with domestic violence publicized, the media had largely ignored this social problem. Further, the persons identified as victims were then “only White.” The study team determined that longstanding media portrayals of African American women as strong, unfeminine, ugly, not worthy of respect, loud, masculine, as domestics, and literal and emotional servants to others has affected African American women’s self image as well as shaped ideas about African American women in the larger society. Those ideas trap African American women into both strengthening and weakening their ability to respond to issues and crises such as domestic violence.

IV. PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

The most important policy recommendation stems from the participants' identification of the primary reason that they remain in domestic violence situations: Economic need. Indeed, Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of human needs states the need for physiological safety (food, shelter, etc.) is first. Safety needs (security, protection from physical and emotional harm) are second, and social needs (affection, belonging, acceptance, friendship) third. African American women's societal positioning largely confers the idea that physiological and safety needs are all that African American women deserve and should desire and those only minimally. As a result, African American women may be more likely to endure short term or cyclic periods of violence in their homes, because, in their view, at least they have an actual space to live (shelter needs) in terms of providing for themselves and their children. Ironically, within their bounded socially contextualized situation in the larger society, they understand institutional structures and their own necessities, but may often feel forced to forego those personal needs in order to serve the needs of the African American micro-society (which has its own safety needs and which also insulates the women themselves in multiple ways). The recommendations that follow stem from participants awareness of their positioning and their perspectives in light of that knowledge:

Domestic Violence Service Providers

The women overwhelmingly stated that a shelter run by Women of Color or with Women of Color "involved at every level of decision making" would enhance domestic violence services for them. Their perceptions indicate that European American women shelter staff sometimes acted like they had a "missionary complex" and were superior to the women seeking assistance.

Practical Suggestions

- Provide bus passes to women in shelters so they can maintain jobs and family duties (taking children to school); or develop shuttle transportation services.
- Install motion detectors around all vulnerable areas of shelters.
- Keep a supply of new underwear that women can be given upon arrival at shelter.
- Make sure shelter walls have pictures and art that reflect African American women, including cultural art.
- Make sure magazines such as Essence and Jet are available for women to read in shelter environment.
- Make certain shelter resource library has books and materials specifically addressing African American women: Iyanla Vanzant's series of books, Hopson and Hopson Friends, Lovers and Soulmates, etc. Materials like these would be of use in helping women re-define relationship and self care expectations.
- Establish a written resource packet related to rental procedures and establishing utilities, which includes names and contact information for area African American counselors and psychologists, etc. and present to women upon arrival to provider services and to women who will be residing in shelters.

Shelter Practices

- Establish a shelter run by and for Women of Color.
- European American providers must recognize the societal conditioning as superior they receive which becomes a filter that operates in their provider and collegial work with African American women. They must actively seek training, counseling, education or engage in an in-depth reading program which would familiarize them with African American culture and perspectives.
- Report organizational breaches of confidentiality (church leadership) to judges and law

enforcement.

- Provide the criteria for assessing emergency entry to women early in crisis calls.
- Establish support groups for children residing in shelters.
- Encourage/facilitate women in shelters being lay or para-counselors with one another.
- Establish tutor and para-educators in the shelters so that children will not be humiliated in new school situations and to lessen potential exposure for children by abusers who may visit schools.
- Establish an on-site health facility for vision and dental checks, vitamins, etc.
- Never conduct an intake interview in front of a woman's children.
- Establish a process where women are allowed or taken through a "detox" time (unrelated to substance abuse) "something like a twelve step program" when entering shelter/programs. Compare the shock and trauma treatment that emergency patients receive in hospitals, but create a human services equivalent to it. This "detox" process should likely be created with survivors so that they are able to inform and shape it for effectiveness.

Cultural Outreach

- Establish or support culture specific support groups for African American women experiencing domestic violence.
- Develop culturally appropriate intake questions.
- Gain training in African American rapport building in interpersonal contexts.

Public Outreach

- Establish a media campaign that specifically focuses upon African American women, using culturally appropriate language and images. Campaign should include information about statistics ("once it starts it rarely stops") and escape route outlines.
- Establish and maintain a public campaign for hotel soaps, shower caps and shampoos which then are offered to women in crisis upon arrival at shelter.

In Community Environments

- Post business sized cards (easily palmed) at grocery and women's clothing check out stands which identify shelter numbers, define domestic violence and provide an outline for escape plans.
- Post information and business sized cards in hair salons frequented by African American women.
- Make greater efforts to involve the African American religious communities in the elimination of domestic violence.
- Identify/"recruit to the cause" ministers and imams in community who are allies to the effort as liaisons to the religious community of ministers.
- Establish links with community centers which then would provide information about domestic violence providers and services, resource packets and a community based locale for domestic violence trainings and programs.

As Colleagues

- Facilitate professional networking with other African American and Women of Color providers.
- Avoid making African American colleagues the "exotic other".
- Invite and incorporate suggestions and practices that differ from established shelter structures, particularly when methods are useful to women.
- Train and educate providers about female to female competitive strategies, including power and control dynamics across race and culture lines.

Correctional Facilities

Women in correctional facilities said that there is only one non-coed halfway house in Nebraska for women transitioning out of prison.

- Establish a half-way house staffed by Women of Color to assist transition back into public society.
- Establish and maintain grief, family, and domestic violence support groups.
- Establish a domestic violence advisory board, which may include former correctional residents, which will work closely with correctional facilities to design and steer appropriate projects.

City and Governmental Agencies

Law enforcement

- As often as possible the same investigation team should respond to domestic violence calls: familiarity, strengthen court testimony, officer can provide on spot encouragement to exit situation.
- Establish public information policy where officers responding to calls hand a business sized card with shelter information and a general definition of domestic violence to women. Codes for the types of assault should also be on the card.
- Establish a public information standard script where officers responding to calls inform women about medical care, provider services, and support groups.
- Establish a policy of dismissal for officers who are found to use their law enforcement positions to aid abusers or harass victims.
- Refine policies of dual arrest in domestic violence situations.
- Raise number of times for attempted serving, or log “in perpetuity” warrants and restraining orders when abuser cannot be found or may be hiding from police.
- Officers must be aware of statistics that African American women leave abusive situation an average of 10 times before they can manage to stay away.
- Offer monetary rewards for information on abusers who are on the run from arrest.
- Establish a link with the phone company where a woman can call and document she is experiencing abuse. For instance, she might be in the abusive situation, but can call #2 to alert correctional officers to a domestic violence need for assistance call.

Education

- School officials establish and follow a policy of respecting children’s rights to privacy.
- Establish a progressive education curriculum about domestic violence which children will encounter first alongside sexual education in fourth grade; then in health classes in middle school and high school.

Medical

- “The medical [response] shouldn’t just be “do need stitches” but “do need counseling.”
- One participant linked the medical response of the 1970’s of giving valium and other depressants as the starting point of her drug habit, “come to think of it, I DID begin abusing prescription medicine first...[they gave me] what I describe as “the Black people’s domestic violence counseling”. This participant eventually wound up in prison for actions related to supporting her drug habit.

Legal System

- Establish a self defense law for victims of domestic abuse.
- Repeal laws and policies related to a woman’s loss of her children to foster care in situations of domestic abuse.
- Refine laws related to dual arrest.

- Establish criteria to assess when a woman will not be legally responsible for the bills of her abuser.
- Establish practices that make the abuser accountable for abuse: Jailed if child support orders ignored, paychecks garnished to pay child support, child support payments through social services network when woman is in danger from personal contact, mandatory attendance at battering men's groups (driver's license points, community service, or jail time if there is non-compliance).

Faith Based Organizations

- Engage in training and education related to domestic violence.
- Use sermons to address domestic violence as a sin against "God's sacred vessel."
- Incorporate domestic violence as concerns in interfaith organizational contexts.
- Take action against the gulf between congregational sufferers of domestic violence and counseling and providing services.
- Eliminate the assumption that the feminist movement is responsible for African American women's protest against and seeking relief from domestic violence within churches and mosques. (As in African American women who don't want to suffer abuse, and who speak out, are brainwashed and being mouthpieces for European American women who participate in domination scenarios all African Americans suffer from [but particularly African American men], thus African American women who "complain" are operating as agents for domination by European American society.)
- Establish the churches and mosques as safe places for women to seek or be connected to services.

Media

- African American women seeking re-dress from domestic violence needs to be included in mainstream social images of domestic violence.
- A concerted effort to eliminate stereotypical images of African American women and their womanhood.

V. PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

OUTLINE OF PARTICIPANT THEMES

African American Women's Definitions of Domestic violence

- “A violation of mind, body and soul, of women, of trying to survive in a ...of confusion.”
- Verbally, physically, emotionally, power, the man's reputation (being an instrument of).
- Abuse, assault, harassment.
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-any situation that puts a person, normally/usually a woman, at risk for bodily harm, financial, anything that risks their health.
- A violation of my body and soul, of women trying to survive in a world full of confusion.
- Getting your butt kicked.
- Anytime someone's afraid of person in the house.
- Some kind of physical, emotional, verbal:
 1. emotional-[he]knows what [your] weakness are so plays with [your] emotions, nothing where you could say you know what that is.
 2. sexual assault-violence, molestation, rape, marital rape.
- Isolation
- Psychological abuse:
 1. Insult to the spirit of the person
 2. Degrade the spirit
- ”Bitch” you need me.
- Make you feel less than you are “I make you,” “you ain't nothing with out me.”
- They become authoritarian.
- Try to denote supremacy:
 1. de-powering
- Placing blame for any problems they say they can solve [but haven't].
- Male superiority.
- ”You made me do it.”
- Control, maintaining control.
- Emotional dependency in the abuser:
 1. A lot of weight to carry [his sense of identity for him].
 2. Their dominance is their problem.
 - a. [But] it's hard to leave them because [you/they] feel they'll fail.
- Abuse vs. relationship.
- You lose who you are. It takes a long time to re-build [yourself]:
 1. Loss of self confidence, self worth.

Lots of sisters have high self esteem in some areas but not with DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

 1. Survival
 2. Needs vs. want
- Manipulation of your strengths.
- Your mothering spirit is used against you.
- When people in the home are afraid of others in the home.
- It was using the children against me.
- Verbal sexual violence.
- Relationship violence, even with siblings.
- “I didn't have a definition of the problem.”

Knowledge of Shelters

- A significant number of the women did not know about the shelters or did not think the shelters were open to them.
 1. “I thought the Y was the shelter. I rode the bus across town. It happened that someone at the Y knew, they gave me directions and called [for me]. I had my two babies with me.”
 2. “I had no idea where to go. I understand it’s secret, but I didn’t even know who to ask.”
- Lack of available information in public places African American frequent.

Overview of Women’s Concerns with Providers (Shelters and others)

- Experiences of power and control hierarchy in the structure of shelter rules and interpersonal interactions.
- Counselors unable to relate to African American women and other Women of Color.
- 30 days not enough time to transition into one’s own housing.
- Children not protected at school, situation exposed to child peers, thus social isolation.
- Schools ask too many questions not related to child’s education, thus humiliating child in school environment.
- Being selectively told information that was freely offered to others.
- Information being doled out.
- Providers too directive with women, “You will bathe your children at this time,” “You WILL wash your children’s hair ...they don’t even know that it’s not good to wash Black kids hair everyday.”
- Cleanliness of the facility: “I didn’t feel comfortable letting my kids play on the floor.”
- Support groups, and their times, don’t take into consideration the daily issues or obligations women have for work, or family care:

“Basically, uh, it was like ‘okay, this, this and this and this...so you can make the choice to pick which one of these things you gon’ do and basically you...you know, you’re kind of on your own. I had three children at the time. I had to get up at 5 o’clock in the morning, in order to catch a 6 o’clock bus, in order to take my kids WAAAAYYY out yonder to drop them off at school, one child, and then stay on that bus while my one child got off, ride back into town get off on another stop for a day care situation and THEN WALK to work in order to be on time, and then they would get upset with ‘okay, why are you tired? You got to be in this group tonight.’ Well, you know I done worked ALL day long. I had to get up at 5 o’clock in the morning. I’m NOT AT home... ANYWAY. I’m on foreign...TURF, and You’re not even understanding what I’m saying. NO, I don’t feel like coming to no HOUSE meetin’ tonight. I need my rest.”(Lots of quiet laughter from facilitators and other focus group members.)

- Shelter facility itself not having security lights, etc: “Someone could be hiding up there...and you can’t see if they are or not.”
- Lack of personal care items for African American women: hair grease, soap, lotion, large teeth combs, brushes, etc.
- Clothing donated were cast-offs and not suitable even in situations outside of shelter.
- Assumption that African American women were substance abusers.

- Having to teach the provider (about African American women) at the same time under stress of changing their lives.
- Encountering the societal assumptions about African American people when needing to concentrate on life issues.
- Providers unwilling to admit that there is a larger societal context for interactions (adversarial) between African American and European American women that influences their interactions.
- Situations of domestic violence not being taken seriously because the women are African American.
- Not knowing what kind of reaction a woman is going to get from a provider (racism, sexism).
- Tokenism in hiring African American women as provider colleagues.
- “All White providers with all Black clientele. They were intimidated by us.”(outside of Lincoln area, but echoed even when woman cites she was only Black woman at Lincoln area shelters.)
- (paraphrased) Providers in Nebraska are very concerned with women beating the system. They are judgmental, college prep types.
- Being uprooted from home.
- The number of calls needed to have situation evaluated as dire enough for shelter [is insulting and discouraging].
- “Shock of moving into a place where no one looks like you.”
- “Spectrum of trust not there,” “Don’t want to tell them all because I could have been deceived by them.”
- Lack of practical guidance by providers: “Basically they gave me things I had to choose from then I was on my own.”
- Provider assumptions about Black people: “White providers think they know what Black people are like, but they don’t have a clue.” (spoken in context of poor quality of clothing offered at the shelter)
- “They don’t know how to approach us, and we don’t want to spill our guts out to someone not like you as to what has taken place.”
- Dismissal of lifestyle: “If I tell you I don’t eat pork, I don’t eat pork,” “If I’m a vegetarian, then I’m a vegetarian.”
- Feeling on display in the shelter environment: “If my hair is covered, don’t ask to see it, let alone touch it. I’m not on the auction block.”
- Competencies are dismissed: “After being through all this, women know how a home is supposed to be and how it’s supposed to be run.”
- The shelter was “helpful, not pleasant, but clean.”
- Ineffective response to women’s needs: “I was looking for a cheap place to stay not a shelter.”
- Unclear expectations of what qualifies one for shelter: “The first shelter [didn’t help] they didn’t attempt to. You can only stay 24 hours, longer if you explained the situation but it was embarrassing. You had to meet their unexplained criteria, and I couldn’t figure out what that was.”
- Cultural isolation in the shelter: “[I befriended] a Latina woman. There were no children’s books her kids could look at.”
- “They were controlling. There were strict rules for everybody. I left in 2 weeks though I could’ve stayed 30 days.”

- Restrictions on women sabotage women’s efforts to leave abuser: “The best shelter I found said everyone had to be in by 7 p.m. My job kept me later. They forced me to almost lose my job. It wasn’t flexible enough. I wasn’t homeless or financially bereft but I was tied to the job.”
- Staff impede women’s self-care:[woman did a healing ritual] “They laughed at me.”
- Inadequate time to transition to self sufficiency: “There could have been more time where I could stay longer. I tried to get out as soon as I could.”
- “They don’t have Black products.”
- “Come to think of it, I DID begin abusing prescription medicine first...[they gave me valium] what I describe as ‘the Black people’s domestic violence counseling.’”

Several women suggested that there be African American women on staff in the shelters. However, the collegial environment in the provider environment also has its issues according to African American women who participated in the study. Thus, this section was added:

Providers as Colleagues to African American Women Providers

- “Other staff were upset because the women would ask for me.”
- Colleagues tried to control her choices and were condescending about her methods of assistance which reportedly were viewed favorably by women in the shelter.
- Worked for years in an environment where she needed to explain herself over and over.
- Looked at suspiciously because networked with other Women of Color.
- Felt keenly there was a “hierarchy of power and control” for her as staff person.
- “My sister... was in the shelter more than one time. The shelter hired me. I was the chosen token one.”
- Colleagues were deaf to complaints that their behavior was overtly racist.
- “There are barriers, there are walls because if you misconstrue something that I say, you can turn it around on me.”
- An environment of judgment and censure for the women in the shelter: “We’d write in a casebook, and I’d very seldom see something positive about the women.”
- Racialized climate that African American woman provider witnessed with women in the shelter: “They put a Woman of Color out because she wouldn’t clean up the bathroom. The bathroom may have had issues for her. But, instead of giving her another task like in the toy room, they instead put her out. So, you’re leaving one abuser for another, then they say ‘how can she keep going back’.”

Positive Provider Experiences for African American Women

- Counselor LISTENS to her. Let her know that other girls have experienced sexual abuse (lessened her isolation).
- “The information about domestic violence was good. The course materials were excellent.” They helped shelter resident be able to recognize when domestic violence incidents were going to occur. Though, by necessity, she had to return to abuser, the participant used the information to help plot her way out of the domestic violence situation, and found the information useful in negotiating the abusive context when it began to present itself in her home.
- “They gave me a deposit on a duplex,” (however she didn’t approve of the location as it would bring up too many [bad] memories.

- Provider gave her vouchers for Target and “...made you (and daughter) feel comfortable and welcomed.”

Overview of Women’s Concerns with/Perceptions of Law Enforcement

- Response times are inadequate. Inconsistent response to calls from Black neighborhoods: “If you’re Black, they may be there in 5, 10 or 30. You wait. They take a report.”
- Police perceptions of the environment affect response times.
- Protection orders are ineffective.
- There is [the belief] there is no self defense law in Nebraska (thus if she protects herself she goes to prison), thus prison or suffering the violence become the only viable options for an African American woman.
- Dual arrest method of police control will result in the loss of her children, or custody being assigned to abuser [the danger of a woman losing her children to foster systems or her abuser is then imminent and she does not want to leave her children in the hands of the abuser so makes a determination to suffer the abuse for a “larger good” of protecting her children].
- Even with evidence of abuse (bruises, black eyes, etc.) police ignore and side with the abuser, arresting her but not him.
- Abusers have ties to the police (family members, public image, law enforcement themselves) which police will not challenge or address, and will often use to protect abuser and intimidate woman: “My cousin was his supervisor. He visited me and said I shouldn’t make him lose his job,” “They knew my husband, and were not going to stand up to him for me. They wanted to get along with him. My husband was in the brotherhood and maybe some of them were afraid of him.”
- Police don’t know how to provide service at point of crisis: “Police were trying to help but I didn’t understand. They tried to drop hints at, ‘If he’d hit you, [that would be] an offense.’ I didn’t know the language to tell them how he could be taken in. They took him but he was let out that night on his own recognizance.”
- Police use woman’s crisis as an opportunity to proposition her: “I was 20. They took me home, but rode me around town like a joyride, but like a flirtation. It was a turn off. Maybe they didn’t mean to be intimidating, but it was,” “Other officer said he’d take me to (his) home himself if his wife wasn’t there [as in she was desirable to him].”
- Officers have no useful information for women at point of crisis: “One officer said he didn’t know what to tell me but to leave.”
- Law enforcement inadequate to address situation: “...law enforcement, I didn’t find it to be helpful, other than to put it on record that I called.”
- “The police or ministers should’ve been better. They acted like something was wrong with me. I didn’t understand what the problem was. I hate the time I spent trying to figure out was wrong with me: How I was making him so mad. Everyone said it was me.”

Positive Law Enforcement Experiences for African American Women

- “The same two officers always responded... I wish I knew the name of this big, burly Black officer. He was my strength. [Every time he responded to calls to my house, he would take me aside]. He would say [name] you don’t deserve this... a good man does not put his hands on a woman...when are you going to get yourself out of this?”
- “He told me, what are you doing...it’s not going to get better.”

African American Women's Concerns with the Legal System

- Protection and restraining orders not effective: “[A] protection order is really no good because if the judge is not in, it’s a win/lose situation for me.”
- “There should be punishment for them.”
- “We need to be able to see justice...he’s scot free... we’re raising children with no help from them...our children are entitled to the basic support...he needs to be made accountable.”
- Not understanding or acknowledging that self defense [legally defined and personally conducted] is a strategy of resistance to domestic violence.

Positive Experiences with Legal System

None cited within the study.

Overview of Women's Concerns in Correctional Facilities

- “There’s no domestic violence program since the woman who did them moved away.”
- “I have family issues that I need to address, but no one is her to help guide me how to address them.”
- Providers breaching confidentiality, and participating in “policing” of women.
- “The police are pretty tired of my shit.”
- “The police get tired of you...he stabbed me. My sister got into the cruiser with the police and found [him].”

Overview of Women's Concerns with Faith Based Providers

- Families of religious leaders side with the abuser.
- Ministers don’t care about what happens to the women.
- Will be counseled to stay in the abusive situation due to interpretations of the scripture.
- Woman will be said to be at fault for the abuse.
- Concerns about church finances outweigh concerns about women and children’s safety.
- A lack of religious community understanding that domestic violence is a life and death issue for the women and children who are abused.
- Use of the authority and deep communal reach of the Church to further isolate the woman.
- Use of the authority of the Church to discover a woman’s whereabouts and disclose to abuser.
- Churches unaware of the realities of the domestic violence situation in the area and in the nation.
- “I went to a gang of minister’s [Christian and Muslim], none really helped me.”

Positive Experiences with Faith Based Providers

- Minister gave money to help woman gain a divorce (post marital counseling sessions, verbal assault of the minister, and an additional year of abuse by the woman).

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AREAS RELATED TO AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence Commonalities--African American Women and other Women

- Isolation from family and friends: No phones, literal house imprisonment, verbal assaults on her family and friends; identifying family and friends as reasons for relational problems and his verbal, emotional, and physical violence.
- Substance abuse by abuser.
- Abuser has history with law enforcement.
- Her body is exploited by him: forced prostitution, holding drug stashes, sexual violence
- Lack of access to information.
- Entrapment through material goods (“I wore the same big, baggy clothes for two years. He had torn them up but I wore them anyway.”)
- Left without food in house.
- Social outlets for help are restricted.
- Impoverishment.
- Blamed by law enforcement, legal system, faith communities as responsible for the abuse.
- Black men are trying to gain a sense of themselves as viable in the society through abusing Black women: Creating “master-slave” dynamics with women.

Characteristics of Abuser Power and Control for African American Women

- Women moving or being moved from state to state or to different locales in the state by abusers.
- Using racism of society as mechanism to control her (“They’re not going to do anything for me,” “I’m siding with the white man against him.”).
- “He misrepresented everybody’s role in this, including his own.”
- Chronic unemployment even when able bodied and skilled (***this finding is unrelated to the societal employment disenfranchisement of African American men except where an abuser uses this reality to exert power and control over the woman***).
- Impoverishing the woman, “He depleted my life savings.”
- Interfering with educational goal, “He wouldn’t let me go to school either,” “He threw my books away, too”.

Social Concerns of African American Women

- Families complicit with abuse:
 1. (Grandmother, mother, father, step-father) counseled to stay with “good man.”
 2. Hands off until woman is desperate for change and moves on:
 - a. Inside and outside of the context of woman returning to abuser and abusive situation, thus family exhaustion with her complicity in returning to the abuse. In outside context family either legitimates abuser and blames woman, or indicates ideas about divorce as bad, needs of the children, societal castigation of Black men.
- “Elders not passing down respect values for Black women in the United States.”
- Need for useful information when planning exit and escape from abusive situation.
- “We should update ourselves...within our families and communities...it has to start NOW...(through breaking the silence, sharing our ideas and experiences with younger generations, establishing intergenerational communication again).

- “Women should know from the first hit they could lose their life.”
- Affordable childcare.
- Childcare while in transition mode (from shelter or incarceration).
- All the large organizations should be held accountable for eliminating domestic violence in African American communities: the Church, the NAACP.
- Their femaleness not being respected or responded to (in multiple contexts from micro-society to larger society).

Culturally Significant Differences in Terms of African American Women’s Experience of Domestic Violence

These ideas emerge as possible differences in how African American women are seeing or dealing with domestic violence. Identifying these areas may be useful in developing culturally appropriate services, campaigns, and educational infrastructures.

- Women’s use of the term “fighting” indicates a different positioning in the women’s minds → not victimage but hand to hand combat between equals (though the women are routinely brutalized), or there is verbal engagement at the level of a resistance talk: “We was fighting.”
- Emotional/psychological dichotomy for the woman of the abuser being good and evil where the good is enough to redeem his behavior, even post exiting the relationship: “I know all in all he’s a good guy, but he’ll never change”. (This finding would be related to sexist and racist conditioning for African American women in the United States, where African American women have had to settle for “a little bit of good” because the “bad” is so often a part of their societal positioning. Being involved with a man, then, who is able to exhibit good or endearing traits alongside or out of context of the abuse he delivers would be a noteworthy part of an African American woman’s daily reality. Again, the historical context for this kind of “splitting” of consciousness can be well inferred. In addition, the African based cultural philosophy of “nothing in itself is bad, it’s what’s done with a ‘thing’ that makes it or the doer bad” can be seen at work/odds with the woman’s experience of abuse.)
- Chronic unemployment by the abuser, who then both forces, castigates or manipulates the woman to care for him.
- Being culturally positioned as protector of the abuser “I lied a lot...told police he was gone...[would] bond [my] husband out...say he was ‘gone in love’.”
- Being culturally and abuser positioned as the (sole) economic provider for the abuser.
- Some women paradoxically support/try to establish their self esteem and assert or discover their worth through physically engaging abuser: “I got off on self defense [physically fighting with the abuser].”
- The woman suffers or are afraid of accusations of being traitors to the race, religious communities and faiths, and African American men when seeking re-dress from domestic violence
- Young (college) African American women place men in the “King” role as an outcome of their incomplete learning about African centered thought.
- Young (college) African American women find African American women who are abused “weak” and at “fault” for the abuse they suffer, commenting that the legitimacy of an abused woman’s womanhood is at stake. (This would constitute psychological and emotional subversion of empowerment structures for women).
- Are overburdened in terms of the roles they are expected to accept or which are “left” to them both within the micro-society and larger society.

African American Women's Personal Concerns upon Leaving the Abusive Situation

- Had no phone.
- Lack of knowledge as to how to get utilities on in her name.
- Being assigned delinquent bills because of legal obligations due to marriage to abuser (ruin of credit rating necessary to being able to establish life independent of abuse).
- Lack of education.
- Lack of programs to transform underground economy skills into mainstream economy assets/skills.
- Lack of adequate substance abuse counseling.
- Lack of information that would help understand what domestic violence is and provide language to define the experience.
- Overload of paperwork and information in paper form when seeking domestic violence assistance from providers and correctional officers.
- Lack of knowledge of how to establish utilities.
- Not enough time or adequate support system to support transition from abusive situation or situation of incarceration.
- No clothes or personal care items: "I had no brush, no hair grease, no comb, no sanitary products," "Just me and my two babies, on the bus."
- Abuser economic control means she often has no money to exit the abusive situation, "I didn't even have a dollar for the bus."

Children as victims of Domestic violence

- The oldest child feels a strong obligation to become the leader or co-parent to other siblings. Often times the oldest child feels as if he or she can become an extra shield of protection to the younger siblings. This is related to the child's feeling that the abused parent is becoming incompetent as a result of dealing with domestic violence.
- Children might not be immediately impacted by domestic violence, but the violence has delayed and long-term effects. This study's data suggests that there are negative emotional and academic outcomes for children witnessing or experiencing domestic violence: One participant reported experiences of trouble in school a couple of years after the period of domestic violence she and her family experienced; loss of interest in school activities and athletic programs formerly important. In addition, participants report they do not "trust guys" as a result of the domestic violence. The study team feels the results of domestic violence can impede the social, emotional and relational health of children, contributing to a cycle of early parenthood and social isolation.
- Providers at family shelters are not including children in their approach. Specifically, programs are not provided for children. Such programs would allow children to speak about their pain: "They need to do more with the children than just let them play. I needed to talk, too."

VI. INITIAL STUDY TEAM OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS UPON CONCLUDING FOCUS GROUPS AND PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Below are the recommendations that the study team developed upon review of the findings in this study.

- There is a need for domestic violence survivors groups for African American women with African American women leading the groups in order to build trust and support methods among the women involved which arise from and are shaped by the women themselves.
- There is a strong need to mediate the “For White Women Only” opportunity/stigma associated with domestic violence services in Lincoln. A means of countering this myth is to connect domestic violence service providers with the African American community in Lincoln.
- Reach out to African American women in the spaces they frequent. (There are significant numbers of institutions in the Black community that can be used to disseminate information.)
- Disseminate information in African American hair salons and barber shops.
- As the Malone Center is rebuilding, it can become a key player in disseminating information to the community about domestic violence services in Lincoln.
- Build relationships with African American organizations to raise awareness of the services available in the Lincoln area. African American organizations active in the Lincoln area include: National Council of Negro Women (anti-domestic violence is a part of its national charter), NAACP, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Iota Theta Fraternity, Inc., Juneteenth Celebration Planning Committee, etc.
- There is a need to build trust between the African American community and the institutions that are here to service domestic violence victims and their families.
- African American male youth and men who are not abusers should become a part of the voices and solutions to this phenomenon in African American communities (and their voices and ideas should be included in future or follow-up studies to this effort).
- Increase community policing efforts so that the hostile relationship and distrust of law enforcement might be reduced. African American women might be more likely to contact law enforcement officers if she has a positive relationship with the officers in her community.
- Develop community liaison “officers” into the law enforcement structure in ways similar to the Guardian Angels or Brown Berets. They are not police per se but take an active interest in the well being of their communities in concert with law enforcement efforts.
- There is a strong need to provide counseling services to incarcerated women where domestic violence is linked to their crimes.
- The Black Church is perhaps the most central institution of potential use in addressing and eliminating domestic violence in African American communities.
- There is a need to build holistic programs, which include ideas and practices of self care for African American women. Those programs must also include spiritual elements. The church and mosques in the Lincoln area are not ready now to attend to this issue. Since so many women express a faith and a “walking in faith” orientation to their lives including outlets/supports for women’s spirituality, even outside of the walls of the

churches and mosques, is an important part of establishing healing environments and practices.

- Include considerations and identifications of the _abuser's_ emotional dependence as a motivational force in conducting domestic violence abuse awareness campaign's.
- Creation of a multi-state reporting system whereby domestic violence programs, service providers, law enforcement and legal entities across the nation can track perpetrators as they move from state to state.

Providers

Human Health

- Providers have an obligation to the whole family. The voice of the child needs to be heard as well. There should also be gender and age specific programs, because children of various ages deal with domestic violence differently. In particular, there should be special programs that deal with adolescents. Adolescence is a pivotal point in healthy human psychological and emotional development. Researchers have suggested that adolescents deal with various emotional, physical, and cognitive changes during this period of development. Dealing with domestic violence in addition to other challenges only exacerbates the problems of adjustment and transition into adulthood. Thus, informational campaigns and programs should address the realities of these needed additional adjustments.
- Treatment programs or facilitators of support groups should incorporate a parenting component that addresses the impact that domestic violence has on parenting practices. For illustration, African American parents are known to have very direct or authoritative parenting practices. Does dealing with domestic violence make them more demanding, or even slightly neglectful? How then might parenting awareness need to shift in order to help both abused parents and children to positively address the impact of domestic violence on their lives?

Faith Based

- The Black Church and Mosques in the Lincoln area, should they elect to take instruction and guidance from the approaches of Black Churches and Mosques in Boston and Atlanta (Jordan), could contribute greatly to addressing the gulf that lies between the church and its members about domestic violence and its existence among parishioners.
- To quote Reverend Gloria White-Hammond, "The Black Church has an awesome responsibility in combating domestic violence, and sending the clear message that it is not acceptable," (Jordan 18), addressing the "passive-denial...when African American men are the oppressors of African American women" (Jordan 17) which gets replicated in the faith environment, and addressing the "faith crisis" that domestic violence presents to the faith community (Rev. Cheryle Albert, Jordan 18). African American faith based actions such as including domestic violence workshops within the church, clarifying the complete biblical and Koran doctrine about the nature of relationships between husband and wives to congregations, sponsoring awareness of domestic violence, etc.
- Rev. Jeffrey Brown may also provided a guiding philosophy about the role of the church. "Churches must be a haven for those who have been battered and bruised, mentally, physically, and-or psychologically. The church has to be the lighthouse; it...should shine the light in the darkness, the reality of Gods' light," (Jordan 18).
- And, Reverend Aubra Love of Atlanta is also clear about the role of the church in addressing domestic violence,

On any given Sunday, a historic Black Church may be more than 75 percent

female parishioners. While domestic violence is prevalent in all communities, many people in religious African American communities tolerate it as normative behavior. Many of these women have endured incest, sexual violence, and battery. These issues have to be addressed if [we] really want to touch the sacred place, the true place of vulnerability [with God]; only then can we be the truly beloved community. It [domestic violence] disrupts their relationship with God, (Jordan 18).

Cultural

- Arrogant assessment that Black women are being run by white women: Resistance to feminism (see conclusion for greater discussion).
- “The impression by Black men that ‘we’ want war and not dialogue and survival skills.”

Suggestions for Future Study

- A question for further thought and investigation is that with more children than women being African American in the shelter environment (FVC, 2001), abusers may be incorporating racial hatred into their abusive practices (the “get me some get back” phenomenon).

Suggestions for philosophical changes in considerations/elimination of Domestic violence

To paraphrase Lorraine Hansberry, in order to understand the universal one must focus on the very specific. As this study evolved, it became more and more clear that something greater than the domestic violence itself was involved in its occurrence. This study was commissioned, and the resulting study team was assembled, as a means of ferreting out the underlying phenomena taking place with African American women where domestic violence was involved. In taking that focused approach the links between culture, philosophy and practice became more evident. Certainly the interlocking cultural, historically based, and philosophical expectations of African American women and men were being investigated as a means of understanding African American women’s needs in light of suffered domestic violence. The larger societal frame HAD to be implicated as well. Analysis of these multiple elements which shape African American women’s lives have revealed to the study team what seems to be a fundamental influence factor that’s been ignored in considerations of domestic violence on local, national and global scales. That said the study team makes the following suggestions for inclusion or adaptation in considerations of the phenomenon of domestic violence.

- Ritual is integral to ways that societies build and maintain themselves. Because of the positioning of women in subordinate status in the United States, domestic violence itself and the manner of inflicting it upon women reeks of “ritualistic” orientation. There would be multiple levels of “ritual sacrifice” for African American women: Mainstream and microcultural. Thus, elimination of domestic violence for all women would necessitate addressing the phenomenon as a dysfunctional alteration of human conditioning.

Explanation: Kelley and the study team feel that this study brings to conscious consideration the idea that domestic violence itself stems from a (human) cultural conditioning of ritual and ritualistic sacrifice. The fact of domestic violence is thousands of years old, and global. The current language term for it is less than fifty years old yet, domestic violence has been used as a mechanism of control of women since the advent of the military state (Henderson, 1995). Circumstances have resulted in identification and practices dedicated to eliminating the practice. Even though there is entrenchment and a long history

of the practice this does not mean that change cannot happen (compare the Chinese' societal re-structuring that resulted in the overall cessation of foot binding).

Here's an example: A chance meeting between Kelley and two African American women took place in a parking lot while the study was being conducted. Kelley mentioned her work on the study and asked the women to consider participating in it. One of the women shared the story that in her family they always knew what was going to happen when the bars closed down at three in the morning on Fridays. Her father would come into the children's rooms and drag them all out of bed and onto the living room couch. He would turn on all the lights and water in the house, and then drag the mother out of bed. He would then proceed to beat her unmercifully in front of the children. All of the children in the household, except the woman, grew up to be involved in domestic violence situations. All of the brothers became abusers, and all of the sisters, except the woman, were abused. She became a rescuer for the family and a mental health practitioner, but had a moment of clarity in the parking lot where she located her not "ever being able to sustain a relationship" in the abuse. In addition, this woman did not consciously realize until that parking lot moment that she had suffered domestic violence because of being forced to witness her mother's beatings. Certainly, the generational "training" and experience of this woman would bring up similar memories or experiences for those who read or hear it. This then strongly indicates that these kind of patterned behaviors are constant, familiar, and "normative" in the United States (and other societies). These kinds of norms would then constitute a legacy of philosophy and practice that are ritualistic and which maintain a certain "social order."

The study team believes that an examination of cultural and societal maintenance assumptions will reveal that African American women's (and all women's) roles and lives are defined within a context of sacrifice and altruism for others' sake. The situation for dominance and control is then considered to be set in absolutes where she is concerned. An environment of ritual and ritualistic sacrifice then emerges which holds that the woman's sacrifice is endemic to the survival of the society and culture. That environment was at one time literal, but has evolved into philosophical "knowing" and practice. Yet, the study team argues that domestic violence is perhaps the only modern day literal practice of ritualistic sacrifice of women: Beating and degrading women is considered necessary to the reinforcement of societal structures.

To skip a great deal of discussion, once protest and movement against women's related subjugation became a part of mainstream effort in the United States, the ritual and promotion of the ritual were no longer publicly condoned. But, a privatization of the ritual is still encouraged and supported as a means of male supremacy (Ianno) and female "loyalty to 'the State'". This then would be why so many institutional agencies find domestic violence difficult to eliminate entirely: There is a deeply conscious belief that domestic violence maintains the very existence of the society, thus there is ambivalence about the actual need to eliminate it. Of course, African American women's experience of domestic violence would then have to be understood within, at least, two levels of societal practice of this belief.

- Women contribute to situations of domestic violence for themselves when they establish it as a taboo topic in their relationships. They place their friends and relatives in positions which chip away at the friendship and familial bonds. Related to her lack of self esteem and altered self concept, she establishes a pattern that contributes to her own isolation and co-dependence on the abuser to the point she often no longer asserts a

personality.

- Providers can assist women by helping them discover and “legitimate” their core personality.
- Providers can help women by helping them “unpack” how their lives are enmeshed with the abuser and, likely, other circumstances of abuse in her life.
- Providers DO need to keep addressing how women help perpetuate their own unworthiness. The Theory of Helplessness might apply here.
- In order to address their domestic violence (and other stressor) circumstances women develop passive-assertive mechanisms of control (Mercurio), wherein they are assertive but do not take credit for it. Thus, it builds up the man, but she won’t take credit for what she does well. Thus, she enacts manipulative behavior which then can be used as an excuse to escalate and conduct abuse upon her.
- Providers can assist in women establishing new rules for relationships: “The rule is, you NEVER raise your hand to me. If you ever do, I will be out of this relationship.” These rules would be spoken and agreed to in the beginning of relationships. These rules should be a part of the elementary and secondary mental and physical health curriculums. (Mercurio)
- Tokenism as diversity is still a dilemma in institutional structures. This affects domestic violence services at the level of providers, law enforcement, the legal system, the medical system, the educational system, and the media.
- Cognitive filters are altered in situations of domestic violence. The view of the situation changes under the constant psychological and emotional re-framing of the abuser, thus the woman’s literal view of the situations of abuse may be changed to her detriment and further entrapment.
- The imposter syndrome is at work with both the abuser (“I’m a good man.”) and with the victim (“Everything’s fine”) (Mercurio).

VII. CONCLUSION

While domestic violence crosses all communities, and does not discriminate according to race, class, region or other differences, it is clear there are differences in the ways in which women experience violence and the ways in which they respond to domestic violence service delivery. African American women are not aware of the domestic violence services available to them in the Lincoln, Nebraska area. Further, there is a perception that the services women DO know of exist “for white women only.” Understandably these perceptions attest to a situation wherein a one size fits all approach to addressing domestic violence exists and where that practice is not useful for servicing diverse groups of women.

Domestic violence for African American women represents multi-angle/level phenomena with African American cultural context at the vortex. Discussing domestic violence in African American women’s lives requires an examination of the matrices of domination of gender, race, class, macro-society and micro-society structures that African American women encounter and negotiate literally and contextually daily. What it means to be a woman has additional sets of circumstances and realities for different cultures and classes of women. Thus, do women’s experiences with domestic violence itself, domestic violence services providers, law enforcement, the legal and medical systems, and faith based organizations.

To explain, African American women’s experiences with domestic violence cannot be taken out of the context of the African American experience including modern day and historical relationships with existing institutions. African American women hold a strong distrust and fear of many of the institutions that are integral to domestic violence services delivery. Their distrust and fears are grounded in the historical realities of the relationships between these institutions and the African American community. In terms of law enforcement, an African American woman’s trusting officers to “do the right thing” is often a choice made at the point of desperation rather than according to belief that the institution itself will offer real solutions. With the criminal justice and legal systems African American women still find laws, policies and practices which protect the perpetrators and make she and her children vulnerable to misaligned and systemic inadequate forms of regulation. Medical community efforts are found to sabotage her efforts for solutions beyond physical relief. Notably, in terms of domestic violence providers African American women may associate domestic violence services with general social services wherein their assessments are informed by previous distrust issues with societal institutions.

As for the faith institutions, nearly every one of the women expressed a belief, faith and practice in a Higher Being. Unanimously, their faith and practice evolved beyond, and existed in alienation from, faith based organizations. According to this study’s participants, African American women consistently find that religious institutions and communities operate under the beliefs that violence is sanctioned by the Bible and Koran. When she discovers, often enough on her own, that in fact, there is no religious doctrine to support the abuse she suffers, she is often further isolated from potential solutions and safe faith based resolution to her dilemmas. The Black Church and other religious organizations are philosophically and factually the major institutions in the African American community. Institutions are the primary means by which a society establishes and maintains its existence. By their lack of adequate response and consideration of domestic violence realities, the core institutions an African American woman relies upon for evidence and practice of her connection to her culture, faith, and community serve to undermine her feelings of belonging, visibility, and viable humanity.

Domestic violence in the African American community must also be understood in terms of the crises affecting the Black family. African American women are responding to this “crisis” and are often dedicated to fighting it for the goal of stable function for the larger collective and keeping their families intact, thus may feel “forced” to forego their own personal safety. This is culturally consistent behavior and expectation for collectivist cultures (of which African American culture is one). An African American woman’s concerns with the collective cannot be de-valued, overturned or misunderstood if adequate solutions are to be enacted on behalf of African American women. In addition, cultural representations of African American women impact and prevent them from seeking domestic violence services. While African American women are often viewed intraculturally and portrayed in media, as strong and resilient, their resiliency may prompt them to resist seeking outside services and to deal with domestic violence problems on their own. This response can have both positive and negative outcomes for women. Positively she may discover depths of resilience and resourcefulness which help her to live a fuller life of her own design. Negatively, she may find herself, her family, and culture at the mercy of penal and human services systems which react to and interact with her as though she is responsible for the conditions of the abuse. The burden of the interwoven blaming and practice keep her isolated, vulnerable, and keenly aware of her unprotected status in the larger society and at increasing levels in African American micro-society.

The “perils of the strong Black woman” has contributed to African American women suffering abuse for long periods of time thinking, or socially positioned, to encourage the belief that they should be able to handle the situation solely by themselves. Thus, her perspective and the circumstance of available help are limited. Likewise, African American women’s inability to respond with equal success to the multitude of related problems leads to a sense of failure, embarrassment and shame which is similarly experienced by all women who suffer violence, however the perception of the “strong Black woman” further complicates these feelings and resulting social isolation and personal alienation: Coupled with the responsibility of taking her part in sustaining and uplifting African American culture she finds herself silenced and often solitary when circumstances which do not reflect positively upon African American people occur. >From this solitary position, particularly when she suffers domestic violence, her options are often strictly related to physical survival. Beside the dire survival circumstances created for African American women in general, the study team has found that this social positioning makes direct contribution to African American women’s incarceration. The Nebraska Correctional Center for Women (NCCW) website itself records that eighty percent of the women incarcerated self report that domestic violence is integral to their residency “behind the [prison] walls.”

On the other hand, the strength of African American women is an enormous asset and their resoluteness can have a positive impact on their escape from the violence. The study team found women who carefully plotted their escape and were successful without jail or prison time being a part of their experience. It should be kept in mind that these women made their escape in isolation from any services or institutional means of assistance. Yet, the resulting positive self concept and assurance about her ability to design her own life and negotiate challenges cemented her conviction to speak out, establish healthy relationships, provide healthy roles and instruction to her children, and claim her own forms of womanhood. Clearly, one challenge for those concerned with how domestic violence affects African American women becomes providing women with the tools, information, and supportive means to replicate this outcome and help women best use their resilient spirits to combat the multiple power and control dynamics she faces in life.

For reasons related to the above ideas, the study team feels it is time to acknowledge that there is a tenet of assumption that “the feminist movement” is responsible for African American women’s protest against sexism and other forms of female subjugation in African American micro-society. Besides horribly distorting the impact that African American women have had on equality, equity, and ideas and practices of egalitarianism in the United States (Giddings, Walker, Hill Collins, Steinem) the idea, as related to domestic violence, is that an African American woman who seeks relief from domestic violence, who speaks out about it and what she suffers, is deemed brainwashed and accused of being a mouthpiece for a European American (female complicit) agenda of domination and oppression for all African Americans (but particularly focusing upon the effects on African American men).

Therefore, as a mechanism of controlling her words and actions in the micro-society, African American women who “complain” about their micro-society oppressed state are castigated as operating as agents for entrenchment of domination and destruction of African American people by European American society. With tragic results, as it affects African American women’s efforts for re-dress in African American communities, there is no separation of the historical, political and sociological evidence of that mainstream domination agenda with the domination of the female agenda which now exists within African American communities. The need to extricate this idea from African American women’s struggle for a safe, healthy and thriving humanity is intimately tied into the harmonious existence of African American society in the United States.

To finalize, within their own cultural system, African American women find themselves at the crossroads of being co-protectors and co-sustainers of their culture where the culture no longer evenly enacts the philosophical notion that women are to be protected and cherished while enacting a whole personhood. African American women, then, often become the scapegoat for the cultural and societal stressors which affect African American people and suffer the physical, emotional, spiritual and economic outcomes related to that social positioning. They endure and endeavor constantly against both subtle and overt power and control dynamics in the larger societal culture and within their own micro culture. Programs and policies related to eliminating domestic violence for African American women must always operate with an acknowledgement of the racial, cultural, class, gender, micro-society, and, newly, ritualistic intersections of dominance practice for African American women themselves and all African Americans. Rather than dismissing these interlocking areas of existence for them, solutions would begin by placing African American women at the center of solution practices and considerations, including the development and/or alteration of current programs and policies created to address their circumstances. Vitally, to ignore these intersections affecting African American women, and employ “one size fits all” mentalities and practices is to directly contribute to the violence African American women face in the systems of the United States. Courageous holistic considerations and solutions related to the occurrence of domestic violence for African American women must be painstakingly considered non negotiable and attainable.

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IX. APPENDICES A-M

Appendix A: Focus Questions

--FVC Focus Group Questions:

Make sure to ask the questions that are *****

*****1. What do you consider domestic violence to be?

2. How did you respond to the situation you were in?

3. Did the people who you worked with help you enough?

*****4. What should have been done better to help you deal with your situation?

*****5. What keeps/kept you from looking for services (earlier in the situation?)

6. Did you face what you would call racial problems/concerns from “helpers”/providers?

a. What were they?

*****7. Did the providers relate to Black women?

A. what did they need to do to relate?

B. did you feel comfortable with them?

C. what made you uncomfortable?

***** D. HOW DID YOUR DISCOMFORT AFFECT YOU SEEKING SERVICES?

8. What are/were your needs if /when you think/thought about leaving/left the situation?

9. Would spiritual/religious reasons tie into your decision to seek services? How so?

*****10. What would excellent domestic violence services help look like if you could design the programs, the approach by providers, the police or any other “authority” figures?

Appendix B: Nebraska Correctional Center for Women Focus Questions

--NCCW Focus Group Questions:

Make sure to ask the questions that are *****

*****1. What do you consider domestic violence to be?

2. How did you respond to your DOMESTIC VIOLENCE situation while you were in the Lincoln area? (Remind her she is in control of the interview and does not have to discuss her

3. In what ways did the people who you worked with in the Lincoln area try to help you?
A. was it enough, even then?

*****4. What should have been done better to help you deal with your situation prior to NCCW?

*****5. In your experiences prior to NCCW, did anything keep you from looking for services?
What was it?

6. Did you face what you would call racial problems/concerns from?
“Helpers”/providers while you were in the Lincoln area?
a. How would you describe them?

*****7. Did the providers relate to Black women?

A. what did they need to do to relate?

B. did you feel comfortable with them?

C. what made you uncomfortable?

***** D. HOW DID YOUR DISCOMFORT AFFECT YOU
SEEKING SERVICES?

8. What were your needs if you thought about leaving the domestic violence situation you were in the Lincoln area?

A. what would they have been?

9. How did the services you (did not) receive affect your life as it relates to your being in NCCW now? (**Make sure you tell them they do not have to discuss their incarceration situation in order to answer this question.**)

10. Would spiritual/religious reasons tie into your decision to seek services?

a. How so?

b. Would this be an area that NCCW needs to address, leave alone, increase services?

*****11. All control and possibility are in your hands. What would excellent domestic violence services help look like if you could design the Lincoln area programs: the approach by providers, the police, the church, or any other “authority” figures or by Black women themselves?

*****12. We know that NCCW has a domestic violence group and other services related to domestic violence issues for women in NCCW. Are the NCCW services and programs enough?

*****13. Do you participate in the NCCW programs?

a. Why or why not?

14. What would the best domestic violence services help look like at NCCW?

Appendix C: Minister Focus Questions

--FVC Minister's Focus Group Questions:

Make sure to ask the questions that are *****

*****1. What do you consider domestic violence to be?

2. In what ways do women and their families come to you in response to their situation?

3. **Have you had parishioners seek your counsel on issues of domestic violence?**

4. **How were you made aware of domestic violence issues in the African American community?"**

5. Do you feel equipped enough to help the women and their families who come to you when circumstances of domestic violence occur?

*****6. **How can domestic violence service providers be of better assistance to you as you assist your congregation?**

*****7. What do you think keeps African American women from looking for services other than with the Church? Do you feel they SHOULD look for those services OUTSIDE of the church?

8. Do you think, or have you heard of what you might call racial problems/ concerns from African American women from "helpers"/providers?

a. What was the nature of the problem(s)?

9. Did the women think providers related to Black women?

*****10. **What role do you see the church playing in addressing domestic violence issues?"**

*****11. **How might the churches work with (or assist) the domestic violence service providers in the community??"**

12. What kinds of needs do you see the women have once they think about or in fact leave the situation?

*****13. We are finding that women believe there are scriptures that compel them to remain in battering situations, particularly women married to their batterers. Do you think this is true of church doctrine? What in the doctrine could they look to relieve or address their guilt and shame when they find they must leave the situation?

****14. Would you be open to training and materials that would assist your ministry in addressing issues of domestic violence for parishioners?

*****15. What would excellent domestic violence services help look like if you could design the programs, the approach by providers, the church, the police or any other "authority" figures?

Appendix D: Coordinator Introductory letter to Lincoln Community

[February 2003 Date]

Dear Pastor or Director,

I would like to formally introduce myself. My name is Venita Kelley, and I am currently coordinating a grant study with the Family Violence Council (FVC) of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership. FVC has received funding for a study about the domestic violence services that African American women receive (or do not) in the Lincoln area. The intent with the information gained from the study is to improve the response, relevance, and level of effectiveness in domestic violence services for African American women in the Lincoln community. The FVC has an additional interest in locating African American women who have NEVER sought services so that they will be aware of the initial barriers that discourage African American women from seeking assistance.

I would like to tell you a bit about what has happened already. An executive committee clarified the purpose of the study and presented preliminary approaches to completing the study. The executive committee agreed that our core value would be on "letting the women speak for themselves". Therefore, we felt that a focus group approach to the project would be best. In those focus groups we will guarantee a safe and supportive environment. We will hold the women's comments under the strictest confidentiality. We will use African American women to run the focus groups some of whom have had to address domestic violence challenges in their own lives. Three to seven women for each focus group is our goal. We are also open to individual, confidential, meetings with women who would be uncomfortable in the focus group environment.

The executive committee identified you and your organization as potential allies in this effort. To that end my letter has several purposes. The first purpose is to acquaint you with the study. Second, is to obtain your support of the study. Third, is to ask if you would assist the FVC, and me, in locating women who would participate in the focus groups through inserting a copy of the enclosed flyer in your church bulletins or organizational information? Will you also post it in a prominent area in your facility?

If you are able or would prefer to act as a liaison for African American women who might participate in the study this is also welcome. They would have the option of remaining as anonymous as possible. For instance, they do not have to be identified by their real names even while participating in the focus group. And, we do not expect that you would offer us their contact addresses or phone numbers. I would work with you by informing you of the focus group meeting site. FVC will provide transportation, refreshments, and a \$10 per session stipend for the women as a small thank you for their participation. No one will be required to attend more than one of the targeted 5 sessions, unless they so desire.

Again, one of our goals is to assure that the women feel secure and safe while participating in the focus groups. Given that the women you identify will be familiar with you and your organization's structures, we are aware that your facility might be that "safe place", therefore we are also hoping to gain your permission to use an available room should the women prefer it, as we think it would provide the security and "kitchen table" environment we'd like to guarantee for the women who participate.

We would like to begin holding the focus groups in March so that a preliminary report could be presented to FVC in May. Of course, you and all of the women who participate in the focus groups will be provided copies of the preliminary report, and will be able to make suggestions or corrections as felt necessary.

I am enclosing a short biography about myself to help acquaint you with me; however I will say that my background is as an educator. For nearly eight years I was a professor of Communication and African American Culture at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Currently I am a visiting professor at Doane College. My area of research includes the cultural dynamics African American women use as they live their daily lives. My community work includes developing and running the pre-teen female rites of passage program at the Malone Center for two years. On the UNL campus I helped create, and participated in as faculty advisor, a Sister Circle program that helped Black women to talk about and assist one another with the challenges they faced on campus. At Doane, I'm serving as a faculty liaison for the African American women on campus. I share this information with you to assure you that my personal and professional interests in bettering African American women's lives are something that I live as well as advocate.

You may want to assure yourself that the women who participate in the study are well protected. Or, have a greater role in the study. Thus, I would welcome and appreciate your bringing your expertise and insights to the advisory committee that is being set up for the study. If you opt to not act as liaison, or committee member, past a certain point in the process I will be the responsible party for ensuring confidentiality and security for the women.

If you would like a personal meeting with me to ask further questions I am available to meet with you on Tuesdays and Thursday mornings, and MWF afternoons after 3 p.m. I will follow up this letter with a phone call to you within two weeks; however if you are able please call or e mail me regarding your decision about supporting this effort as well: 402-826-6740 (w); or 489-9292 (LMEP); vkelley@LMEF.org.

Thank you for your consideration of assistance with this effort by the Family Violence Council. My hope is that together we are able to learn deeply, improve domestic violence services, and thus better the lives of African American women in the Lincoln area.

Sincerely,

Venita Kelley
Project Coordinator
African American Women's Domestic violence Services Grant Study.
(The Family Violence Council is a program of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership)

Appendix E: Request for Participants Flyer

EVERYONE living today has the mitochondrial gene that is only passed on through a woman. That gene has been traced back to one African woman who lived 150, 000 years ago:
The Real Eve.

Should her descendants suffer beating, emotional humiliation, rape, kicking, punching, screaming, slaps, murder, mutilation and more violence we don't like to imagine?

Who helps her when it DOES happen?

If you are an African American woman who has suffered or witnessed domestic violence and you know it's time to speak out about it, please be a part of the Family Violence Council (FVC) study that seeks to learn about the domestic violence services that are helpful (or not) for African American women in the Lincoln area.

The information will be used to develop benchmarks for providing better, more relevant services.

All identities will be kept exceptionally confidential.

Focus group participants will be provided transportation, free licensed daycare, and a \$10 stipend for each focus group they participate in. You are a candidate to participate even if you have never sought services: FVC wants to know what barriers kept you from doing so. Focus groups will begin in March of 2003 and, if needed, continue into April.

<p>Please contact: Venita Kelley, Project Coordinator African American Women's Domestic violence Services Grant Study Family Violence Council 4600 Valley Road Lincoln, NE 68510-4844 (402) 489-9292; vkelley@LMEF.org (The Family Violence Council is a program of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership).</p>
--

Leave a voice message, or send an e mail mentioning "I will speak" and the contact information you are comfortable sharing. If you need a private interview mention that in your message and your needs will be accommodated.

Thank you for your courage and your willingness to contribute to better conditions for African American women's lives.

Appendix E1:

Coordinator note: This flyer was adapted for the 7th Day Adventist Church because their doctrinal belief system is that world is only 6, 000 years old.

Should the descendants of Eve suffer beating, emotional humiliation, rape, kicking, punching, screaming, slaps, murder, mutilation and more violence we don't like to imagine?

Who helps her when it DOES happen?

If you are an African American woman who has suffered or witnessed domestic violence and you know it's time to speak out about it, please be a part of the Family Violence Council (FVC) study that seeks to learn about the domestic violence services that are helpful (or not) for African American women in the Lincoln area.

The information will be used to develop benchmarks for providing better, more relevant services.

All identities will be kept exceptionally confidential.

Focus group participants will be provided transportation and a \$10 stipend for each focus group they participate in. You are a candidate to participate even if you have never sought services: FVC wants to know what barriers kept you from doing so. Focus groups will begin in March of 2003 and, if needed, continue into April.

Please contact: Venita Kelley, Project Coordinator African American Women's Domestic violence Services Grant Study Family Violence Council 4600 Valley Road Lincoln, NE 68510-4844 (402) 489-9292; vkelly@LMEF.org
(The Family Violence Council is a program of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership).

Leave a voice message, or send an e mail mentioning "I will speak" and the contact information you are comfortable sharing. If you need a private interview mention that in your message and your needs will be accommodated.

Thank you for your courage and your willingness to contribute to better conditions for African American women's lives.

Appendix F: Nebraska Correctional Center for Women Participant Agreement Form

Nebraska Correctional Center for Women Focus Group General Interest Form

Project: African American Women and Domestic violence Services Study

******PLEASE RETURN IN ENCLOSED ENVELOPE BY MAY 1ST.******

I would like to be a part of the Family Violence Council African American Women and Domestic violence Services Study.

_____ yes _____ no

I would prefer a private interview so that I can participate in the Family Violence Council African American Women and Domestic violence Services Study.

_____ yes _____ no

_____ Send me the questions and I'll write my answers back to you, but I don't want to be a part of a public study.

I understand I will receive a one time \$10 stipend for my participation in the focus group/private interview as a thank you. [Stipend will be given in money order format to comply with the rules of the NCCW.]

_____ yes _____ no

I understand that for the purposes of the domestic violence study my comments are confidential, and that I can use an alternate name in the study, but that the facilitators are bound by Nebraska law to report undocumented crimes to the proper authorities. Therefore, I understand that I am encouraged to refrain from discussing any involvement I may have in undocumented crimes during my participation in the domestic violence study.

_____ yes _____ no

I understand that the FVC study representatives will review with me and give me a copy of the form that guarantees my confidentiality at the time of the focus group.

_____ yes _____ no

My name: _____

I.D. #: _____

(If you decide to be a part of the study this information will help us have your stipend ready upon our visit to NCCW.)

Appendix G: General Request letter to the Director of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services; Warden of the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women, and the Superintendent of the Community Correctional Center, Lincoln

Dear {Director, Warden, Superintendent},

I would like to formally introduce myself. My name is Venita Kelley, and I am currently coordinating a grant study with the Family Violence Council (FVC) of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership. FVC has received funding for a study about the domestic violence services that African American women receive (or do not) in the Lincoln area. The intent with the information gained from the study is to improve the response, relevance, and level of effectiveness in domestic violence services for African American women in the Lincoln community. The FVC has an additional interest in locating African American women who have NEVER sought services so that they will be aware of the initial barriers that discourage African American women from seeking assistance.

I would like to tell you a bit about what has happened already. An executive committee clarified the purpose of the study and presented preliminary approaches to completing the study. The executive committee agreed that our core value would be on "letting the women speak for themselves". Therefore, we felt that a focus group approach to the project would be best. In those focus groups we will guarantee a safe and supportive environment. We will hold the women's comments under the strictest confidentiality. We will use African American women to run the focus groups some of whom have had to address domestic violence challenges in their own lives. Three to seven women for each focus group is our goal. We are also open to individual, confidential, meetings with women who would be uncomfortable in the focus group environment.

Six facilitators have been identified for the focus groups. **At the recent orientation meeting one of the facilitators strongly suggested we bring the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women (NCCW) into this effort. The thought was absolutely one that had escaped my radar, but we all quickly saw the relevance of including women who had been incarcerated due to domestic violence as being of great importance to the study. The women at the Correctional Center may, more than most, be able to identify which services could have/should have been in existence to assist them. Therefore, I am entering a special request that NCCW be an ally in this effort.**

To that end my letter has several purposes. The first purpose is to acquaint you with the study. Second, is to obtain your general support of the study. Third, is to ask if you would allow the FVC through me, and up to four of our focus group facilitators to schedule at least two focus groups at the NCCW facilities? Included in this letter is the flyer that the FVC is circulating to ask for women's assistance with the study? We are getting quite a response. We now have an identified range of women from 12 to 80 years of age--elementary school to assisted living women. In interviews done thus far it has been mentioned that there is an active fight against the "urge to pick up a gun or knife and get him off of me". It's clear to me that some of the women at NCCW needed to give into that urge. At the same time I'm aware that some women have put their futures in jeopardy in less dramatic ways such as writing bad checks or covering for significant others. My belief is that information gained from them would be crucial to the design and re-design of existing services offered to African American women in the Lincoln area.

Would you approve our conducting focus group interviews with the African American women of your domestic violence group, and then ask for their permission for the Family Violence Council to interview them? Other African American women at NCCW who have insights would also be welcome to participate in the focus groups, upon your permission of their contributions.

The women who participate will remain anonymous though the focus groups with incarcerated women are likely to be briefly identified as such. We already have decided there will be no real names used in the reports and recommendations that are written post these focus groups. We do not expect that you would put us on their personal visitation lists unless this is what you think is best. We would be absolutely willing to contribute any background information necessary to be cleared for attendance at NCCW. We would be asking for permission to bring in tape recording equipment and tapes, flip charts, red cards (that the women would raise if they did not want their topic recorded or written down). I would work with you to coordinate the focus group day and time. FVC would offer the women who participate a \$10 per session stipend as a small thank you for their participation. We would arrange for money orders of \$10 be available at the time of the focus groups to place in the women participant accounts or to place with your representative to do so. None of the women will be required to attend more than one session, unless they so desire.

Again, one of our goals is to assure that the women feel secure and safe while participating in the focus groups. We would like to begin holding the focus groups in March so that a preliminary report could be presented to FVC in May. Of course, you and all of the women who participate in the focus groups will be provided copies of the preliminary report, and will be able to make suggestions or corrections as felt necessary.

I am enclosing a short biography about myself to help acquaint you with me; however I will say that my background is as an educator. For nearly eight years I was a professor of Communication and African American Culture at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Currently I am a visiting professor at Doane College. My area of research includes the cultural dynamics African American women use as they live their daily lives. My community work includes developing and running the pre-teen female rites of passage program at the Malone Center for two years. On the UNL campus I helped create, and participated in as faculty advisor, a Sister Circle program that helped Black women to talk about and assist one another with the challenges they

faced on campus. At Doane, I'm serving as a faculty liaison for the African American women on campus. I share this information with you to assure you that my personal and professional interests in bettering African American women's lives are something that I live as well as advocate.

You may want to assure yourself that the women who participate in the study are well protected. Or, have a greater role in the study. Thus, I would welcome and appreciate your bringing your expertise and insights to the advisory committee that is being set up for the study. If you opt to not act as liaison, or committee member past a certain point in the process I will be the responsible party for ensuring confidentiality and security for the women.

If you would like a personal meeting with me to ask further questions I am available to meet with you on Tuesdays and Thursday mornings, and MWF afternoons after 3 p.m. I will follow up this letter with a phone call to you within two weeks; however if you are able please call or e mail me regarding your decision about supporting this effort as well: 402-826-6740 (w); or 489-9292 (LMEP); vkelley@LMEF.org.

Thank you for your consideration of assistance with this effort by the Family Violence Council. My hope is that together we are able to learn deeply, improve domestic violence services, and thus better the lives of African American women in the Lincoln area.

Sincerely,

Venita Kelley, PhD.
Project Coordinator
African American Women's Domestic violence Services Grant Study.
(The Family Violence Council is a program of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership)

cc: [name]

Once approval is granted, you have 60 DAYS to start the research or approval will be suspended and will be required to re-apply for permission. If there are research delays, inform the Research Section and you may not be required to re-apply for permission/approval.)

- 6) **PROJECTED FINISH DATE:** May 15th
(Once the research project is completed, you must forward results to the Planning, Research and Accreditation Section for review and comment before dissemination or publication.)

- 7) **WILL THERE BE A SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT USED? Yes*or No** **Circle one**
--NO--

*IF YES THE FINALIZED INSTRUMENT MUST BE ATTACHED.

- 8) **WILL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL BE REQUIRED FOR THIS RESEARCH?** Yes* or No **Circle One**
--NO--

*IF YES WHAT IS THE APPROVAL NUMBER # _____

*IF IRB APPROVAL IS REQUIRED, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE APPROVAL AT THIS TIME YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT THE IRB APPROVAL NUMBER BEFORE RESEARCH CAN BEGIN.

- 9) **DO YOU PLAN TO PUBLISH THIS RESEARCH?** Yes* or No **Circle One**
--YES, likely--

IF YES, WHERE? In publications or legislative materials where interests and policies related to Domestic violence are relevant or of concern _____

FOR WHAT PURPOSE? public education, legislative concern, academic inquiry _____

Appendix I: Request Letter for Participation for Women in the Correctional System

Dear Ms. [name],

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Venita Kelley, and I am the project coordinator of a grant study with the Family Violence Council (FVC) of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership. FVC received funding for a study about the domestic violence services that African American women receive (or do not) in the Lincoln area. The Family Violence Council wants to be able to provide services and make recommendations that will help African American women address domestic violence in their lives in better ways. The FVC even wants to learn what needs to happen for them from African American women who have NEVER sought services so they know what happens to discourage African American women from looking for help from providers.

This is what's happened already. Last fall a steering committee at FVC talked about what needed to happen with the study and suggested that we use a focus group approach so that "the women could speak for themselves" instead of having the committee guess about what African American women need (ed). The committee did say that it was important that women who agree to be group interviewed be guaranteed a safe and supportive environment when they are talking. The committee also said we needed to make sure that women's comments remain extremely confidential. They also wanted to make sure that we used African American women to run the focus groups. The committee also realized not every woman would or COULD be a part of a group of women talking about this issue, so we decided we would be open to individual, confidential, meetings with women who might be uncomfortable in the focus group environment.

Once we got up and running with the project this past February we had 6 women who could work as group session leaders. It turns out every one of the women who are facilitators has some experience with domestic violence. They are survivors, witnesses, or have been a part of someone's support system around issues of domestic violence.

Why am I telling you all this? One of our facilitators strongly suggested we needed to bring African American women from the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women (NCCW) or the Lincoln Community Center into this effort. When she suggested this we all understood how important including women who had been incarcerated due to domestic violence into what we're trying to do. We think women at the Correctional Center may, more than most, be able to identify which services could have/should have been in existence or could have worked better to assist you.

So, I'm asking if you will agree to be in one of our focus group sessions at the LMEP facilities. We have gotten permission from the Superintendent Richard to ask you to be a part of the group sessions, or private interviews if you would prefer. He has agreed to provide you transportation to LMEP. If you decide to participate you will remain anonymous. In future reports and recommendations we might briefly identify your comments as having come from your situation as incarcerated or in transition back into the community post-incarceration, but only to make sure those connected to domestic violence issues understand how far circumstances might have affected your life. We already have decided there will be no real names used in the reports and recommendations that are written after the focus groups/interviews and we will guarantee that to you in writing.

We would be asking for your permission to tape record the sessions. Plus, we would use flip charts to keep a running record of what is said, so that you can see it and correct it if it needs to be corrected. We also would have red cards that you could raise if you don't want your topic or comments recorded or written down). Focus groups are scheduled for three hours and can be held fro 8 a.m. until 10 p.m. in the evenings. Superintendent Richard has said as long as you are able to return by 10 p.m. evening meetings are fine with him.

We are offering women who participate a \$10 stipend for the first session as a small thank you. You will not be asked to attend more than one session. If you decide you want to attend additional sessions that would be fine upon permission of the LCC facility. Unfortunately, we could not offer you another stipend for your additional participation.

Since we officially started the study in early March, African American women have been "coming out of the woodwork" to have their say and talk about what did and should have happened to help them address their circumstances. We have women involved in the study from 12 to 80 years old right now, so we know this is an issue of concern for African American women. I'm convinced you have an important perspective to share that can help us address domestic violence services for African American women. I hope you will agree to participate in the study. If not, I thank you for thinking about being a part of this study. **Please mail the enclosed form back to me by MAY 9th if you consent to participate. I'll get in contact with you after that to schedule a date.**

Again, thank you for thinking about helping with this effort by the Family Violence Council. My hope is that together we are able to learn deeply, improve domestic violence services, and thus better the lives of African American women in the Lincoln area. I hope to meet you soon.

Sincerely,

Venita Kelley

Project Coordinator

African American Women's Domestic violence Services Grant Study.

(The Family Violence Council is a program of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership)

Appendix J: Correctional Center Lincoln form

Correctional Center, Lincoln African American Women Focus Group General Interest Form

Project: African American Women and Domestic violence Services Study

******PLEASE RETURN IN ENCLOSED ENVELOPE BY MAY 9th. ******

I would like to be a part of the Family Violence Council African American Women and Domestic violence Services Study.

_____ yes _____ no

I would prefer a private interview so that I can participate in the Family Violence Council African American Women and Domestic violence Services Study.

_____ yes _____ no

_____ Send me the questions and I'll write my answers back to you, but I don't want to be a part of a public study.

I understand I will receive a one time \$10 stipend for my participation in the focus group/private interview as a thank you.

_____ yes _____ no

I understand that for the purposes of the domestic violence study my comments are confidential, and that I can use an alternate name in the study, but that the facilitators are bound by Nebraska law to report undocumented crimes to the proper authorities. Therefore, I understand that I am encouraged to refrain from discussing any involvement I may have in undocumented crimes during my participation in the domestic violence study.

_____ yes _____ no

I understand that the FVC study representatives will review with me and give me a copy of the form that guarantees my confidentiality at the time of the focus group.

_____ yes _____ no

My name: _____

Appendix K: Youth Permission slip

Permission Slip

Date _____

I am _____ and I am legally able to make decisions

For _____, who has my permission to participate in the **AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND LINCOLN AREA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES STUDY** conducted by the Family Violence Council (FVC) of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership.

I understand that participation in this study will require approximately 90 to 180 minutes of her time. I understand, too, that the FVC is interested in understanding the domestic violence services that African American women receive (or do not) in the Lincoln area.

I understand the information the FVC gains will be compiled into a report and presented to the Family Violence Council Executive Committee by the Project Coordinator, Venita Kelley. The information will then be used to formulate recommendations, programs, policy and procedures for bettering services to African American women exposed to domestic violence.

I understand that all specific information and identities will be kept extremely confidential. NEVER will my legal charge be publicly identified or interacted with as a member of this study.

I understand the focus group sessions will be tape recorded and ideas from focus discussions will be written on flip charts, ON PERMISSION OF FOCUS ATTENDEES. Permission, once given, can be rescinded at any time. Focus attendees may say that the recorder needs to be paused, or that the written record needs to be stopped. Focus group members will be given a red card so if they choose to not verbally request the taping/written record be stopped they can signal.

I understand participants/interviewees will receive a \$10 stipend as a thank you for your work with the Family Violence Council, as well as will be provided refreshments during the focus group and/or interview time.

I understand I or my legal charge may ask any questions concerning this study and have those questions answered before agreeing or giving permission for my charge to participate. I may call the Project Coordinator at any time, office phone, (402) 489-9292, or after hours (402) 826-6740. If my questions concerning my or my legal charges rights as a focus group participant/interviewee have not been answered by the investigator, I may contact The Family Violence Council of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership Institutional Executive Director, Bob Moyer (402) 489-9292.

I understand my legal charge is free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting her relationship with the Project Coordinator, Facilitators, Family Violence Council or the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership. Her decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which she is otherwise entitled.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E mail _____

Appendix L: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Lincoln Medical Education Partnership, Family Violence Council, 4600 Valley Road Lincoln, NE 68510-4891. 402-489-9292

Informed consent is one of the primary ethical requirements of research with human subjects. It is essential that researchers think of informed consent as an educational process that takes place between the investigator and the prospective research subject. The important thing is to let the research subject know exactly what your expectations are during the research process.

Title of the project: **AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND LINCOLN AREA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES STUDY**

Purpose of the Research: *This should inform the subject that: this is a research project, purpose of the research, how long it will take to complete the project, why the subject was selected, age range of subjects (under 19 needs parental consent), and identification of any procedures that are experimental.*

The Family Violence Council (FVC) is interested in understanding the domestic violence services that African American women receive (or do not) in the Lincoln area. Perhaps you or a person you know has never sought services even though they were justified. We would like to know, too, what kept you or the person you know from seeking services. The information we gain will be compiled into a report and presented to the Family Violence Council Executive Committee by the Project Coordinator, Venita Kelley. The information will then be used to formulate recommendations, programs, policy and procedures for bettering services to African American women exposed to domestic violence.

Procedures: *Explain what you expect the research participant to do in this research, how long it will take the subject to complete the tasks, describe the procedures that the subject will be expected to complete, and where the research will take place.*

Participation in this study will require approximately 90 minutes of your time, yet we have had focus groups extend to 3 hours upon the groups' wishes. You will be participating in a focus group study/private interview conducted by the Family Violence Council of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership. All information and identities will be kept extremely confidential. NEVER will you be publicly identified or interacted with as a member of this study.

The focus group/private interview session will be tape recorded and ideas from focus discussions will be written on flip charts, ON PERMISSION OF FOCUS ATTENDEES. Permission, once given, can be rescinded at any time. Focus attendees may say that the recorder needs to be stopped or paused. Focus members will be given a red card so if they choose to not verbally request the taping be stopped they can signal that a subject not be recorded in written or tape recorded form.

Risks and/or Discomforts: *Inform the subject of any risks or discomforts that may result from being a participant in this research. Also inform them of treatments or help that will be available if adverse reactions occur.*

It is possible that your participation in the focus group/interview will bring to the surface emotions and feelings that you had not anticipated. In the event of problems resulting from participation in the study, counseling outlets beyond the focus group will be provided which you can access in consultation with the Project Coordinator.

Benefits: *Describe the benefits to the subject or others which may be expected as a result of this research. Do not make unreasonable claims expected from the results.*

We are taking a focus group approach to "let the women speak for themselves". We already have an age range of focus group members from 12 to 80 so you are not alone in your concern, experience and wish to have domestic violence eliminated. With the information, policy and domestic violence services recommendations for the Lincoln area will be implemented. These recommendations likely will spread to the rest to the nation because of Lincoln's reputation for progressive action around domestic violence. Importantly, the FVC will join other services around the nation which are focusing on eliminating violence in African American women's lives.

All participants will be offered a copy of the summative report for their feedback, and copies of the final report and recommendations to the Family Violence Council Executive Committee.

Alternatives: *For a project of more than minimal risk, a statement needs to be included describing appropriate alternative procedures or course of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject -----N/A (not applicable)*

Confidentiality: *Explain to the research subject how confidentiality will be maintained, how and where the data will be stored so that confidentiality will be maintained, who will have access to the data, how long data will be kept, how data will be reported in order to maintain individual confidentiality, and where or how the data will be published or reported.*

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept extremely confidential. Tapes and flip charts will be stored in a secure location away from the FVC/LMEP office under the direct care of the Project Coordinator. Private interviews will be in the direct care of the Project Coordinator or the interviewer you meet with. Focus group flip chart information and tape recordings will be under the direct care of the Project Coordinator and direct information from them will only be seen by the focus group facilitator's and Project Coordinator. The information and recommendations that come from the study may be published in journals and reports issued by the FVC/LMEP or presented at related meetings but the data will be reported as summarized and focused upon the recommendations and policies never upon a singular person or the focus group itself.

Compensation: *In research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation is offered for being involved in the research. Also explain if any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and if so, what they consist of or where further information may be obtained. Note whether there are class credits given for participating in this research and other options that may be available.*

You will receive a \$10 stipend as a thank you for your work with the Family Violence Council, as well as we will provide refreshments for you during your focus group and/or interview time.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: *Explain to the participants that they have a right to ask questions and have those questions answered before starting the research. Give them list of names and phone numbers of persons to contact for answers to questions about the study.*

You may ask any questions concerning this study and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate. Or, you may call the Project Coordinator at any time, office phone, (402) 489-9292, or after hours (402) 826-6740. If you have questions concerning your rights as a focus group participant/interviewee that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact The Family Violence Council of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership Institutional Executive Director, Bob Moyer (402) 489-9292.

Freedom to Withdraw: *Explain to the focus group participants/interviewees that participation is voluntary and they are free to withdraw from the research at any time without adversely affecting their relationship with the Project Coordinator, Facilitators, Family Violence Council or the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership.*

While you are participating in the focus group/interview you may find that you do not want to continue. This is fine, and you may excuse yourself at any time. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the Project Coordinator, Facilitators, Family Violence Council or the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy: You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Subject:

Signature of Research Participant Date

Name and Phone number of Project Coordinator: Venita Kelley Family Violence Council 402-489-9292, vkelly@LMEF.org

Name and Phone number of your group facilitators: _____; Family Violence Council, 402-489-9292
_____; Family Violence Council, 402-489-9292

STIPEND # _____ RECIPIENT INITIALS _____

Appendix M: General Additional Funding Request Letter

[date]

Dear [name]:

On behalf of the three programs primarily responsible for stopping domestic violence, the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership is requesting funding to help us complete a study of the needs and barriers to service of African-American women who have been victims of domestic violence.

LMEP received a \$4,400 grant from the Woods Charitable Fund for a focus group study on behalf of Friendship Home, the Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center and the Family Violence Council, which is a LMEP program.

The Family Violence Council has hired Dr. Venita Kelley, a communications professor at Doane College, to lead the study. Venita, who is on the board of directors of the Lincoln Lancaster Women's Commission, has recruited an excellent group of African-American women to lead the focus groups and has been highly successful in getting an array of African-American women who have been victims of domestic violence to share their experiences and perspectives.

Actually, the project has been more successful than we had envisioned and it appears we need some additional funding to complete the study. We have been able to schedule more focus groups than originally estimated including one at the women's state penitentiary in York and *one in Lancaster County*.

So, in reviewing the cost of Venita's time, the stipends for the focus group facilitators and participants, and the expenses in holding the focus groups, it appears we need an additional \$2,500 to complete the study. We ask Friends to be generous as possible in awarding a small grant to support this important study.

Please contact me at the Family Violence Council at 489-9292 if you have needed more information. Our hope is to complete the study by the end of May.

Sincerely,

Bob Moyer, Executive Director
Family Violence Council

Appendix N: Book Donation Request, Kensington Publishing

Mr. Steven Zacharius, President/
Chief Operating Officer
Kensington Publishing Corporation
850 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear Mr. Zacharius:

My name is Venita Kelley and I am writing to ask your assistance with an incredibly important project. Currently, I am coordinating a grant study with the Family Violence Council of the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership (LMEP) in Lincoln, Nebraska that focuses on domestic violence service delivery. Particularly, we are conducting a study about the domestic violence services that African American women receive or do not receive in the Lincoln, Nebraska area. We are conducting this research in hopes of improving the response, relevance, and level of effectiveness in domestic violence service delivery.

In order to give these women the maximum opportunity to let their voices be heard, we are conducting focus groups which will allow African American women in our community to make their voices heard. While this research has the potential to make an important impact on the lives of African American women in our community, it also necessitates women re-telling their tragic experiences with domestic violence abuse. Though this is often a painful experience for the women involved, we recognize that they are exerting great strength in the process proving that they are indeed survivors.

Your publication *Souls of My Sisters Black Women Break Their Silence, Tell Their Stories and Heal Their Spirits* by Dawn Marie Daniels and Candace Sandy, tells the stories of women who have championed to overcome incredible life circumstances. We see great parallels between the lives of the women profiled in *Souls of My Sisters* and the African American women who have survived domestic violence and are willing to share their stories to improve service delivery for all women in our community. Given the parallels, we would like to share this publication with the African American women who are participating in our focus groups as a means of furthering their healing process. We believe that the women participating in our focus groups will gain additional strength from the stories contained in the pages of *Souls of My Sisters* and will further assure them that the battles they are facing can be overcome. We would like to ask you to donate fifty copies of the book to our efforts. We would like to receive the books no later than May 1, 2003. Be assured that Kensington Publishers will be recognized for its significant contribution.

If you are able to help us with this worthwhile study, please contact me. If you would like to ask questions or need further information, please call or email me. I can be reached at (402) 489-9292 or (402) 826-6740. I can also be contacted via email at vkelly@LMEF.org.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and continued interests in strengthening and empowering women across the country.

Sincerely,
Venita Kelley
Project Coordinator
African American Women's Domestic Violence Services Grant Study