
Intimate Partner Violence as a Community Problem

Community Perspectives from Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn

By Suvi Hynynen Lambson and Warren Reich

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Intimate Partner Violence as a Community Problem: Results from a Community Research
Project in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Executive Summary	v
Chapter 1.	
Introduction	9
Chapter 2.	
Survey Findings	13
Survey Methodology	13
Salience of IPV as a Community Problem	15
Responding to Violence	17
IPV Tolerance	18
Consequences of IPV	19
Consciousness-Raising	21
Chapter 3.	
Focus Group Findings	24
Focus Group Methodology	24
Understanding of Intimate Partner Violence	25
Causes of Intimate Partner Violence	26
Community Norms on Violence	28
Law Enforcement Intervention	31
Community Violence	35
Increasing Community Awareness	35
Chapter 4.	
Discussion	37
Victim-Offender Overlap	37
Education about IPV	37
Sex Differences	38
Cultural Norms	38
Mistrust of Police	38
Next Steps	39

Bibliography	40
Appendices	42
Appendix A. Community Survey	42
Appendix B. Focus Group Protocol	53

Executive Summary

In 2016, the Center for Court Innovation was awarded a Byrne Criminal Justice Award to study intimate partner violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Specifically, the project targeted an 18-block area surrounding the Marcy and Tompkins public housing projects. This report presents findings from a community survey and subsequent focus groups with Bedford-Stuyvesant residents.

Methodology

Community Survey

From April to July 2016, researchers conducted 309 surveys with residents from the target area within Bedford-Stuyvesant. Most surveys were completed in the Marcy and Tompkins Houses. Respondents were nearly evenly split by gender and were primarily black (68%) and Hispanic (22%).

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted with community members who expressed interest in further discussing intimate partner violence during survey collection. Focus groups were organized by respondent type, with one group for women only, one for men only, and one for female survivors of intimate partner violence. The group discussions included personal experiences of participants as well as their experiences within the community, norms surrounding intimate partner violence, and potential remedies.

Findings

Survey respondents did not consider intimate partner violence to be as pervasive as other forms of violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant, yet most believed that intimate partner violence is a problem that affects the community. Witnessing violence of all kinds was relatively common in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

- **Ranking Community Problems:** Gun violence was rated as the most pressing community problem with 70% of respondents rating it a “big problem.”

- **Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence:** Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents identified intimate partner violence as a big problem, and 52% saw teen dating violence as a big problem. Female respondents were more likely than males to report being personally affected by dating violence and/or intimate partner violence. For that matter, female respondents were more likely to report that they had been personally affected by 16 of 18 public safety problems on the survey.
- **Perception of Intimate Partner Violence as a Community Problem:** More than half of the respondents (63%) believed that fights between intimate partners have an impact on the greater community at least some of the time. By contrast, 41% believed that such fighting is “nobody else’s business,” with men more likely to characterize intimate partner violence this way (50% v. 34% of women).
- **Tolerance for Violence:** Statements reflecting norm tolerance toward intimate partner violence were generally not endorsed by survey participants, with the exception of one: two-thirds of survey respondents (67%) endorsed the view that it is acceptable to hit someone if they hit you first. Most respondents also deemed threatening someone (88%), insulting someone (79%), and yelling (64%) examples of violent behavior, although according to focus group participants, these were commonly-observed and widely-accepted behavior.
- **Contributing Factors:** Focus group participants further identified factors that contribute to intimate partner violence in their community, including drugs and alcohol; the exacerbating involvement of other people, including friends, family members, and even strangers on the street egging on a fight; power dynamics; and pressure felt by under-employed or unemployed men.
- **Cycle of Violence:** Several participants in the focus groups also spoke of a cycle of violence, noting that they had experienced violence at different stages of life, from childhood at the hands of parents or other adults, to later in life with intimate partners and their own children, both as a victim and as a perpetrator.
- **Victim-Offender Overlap:** Additionally, some focus group participants identified themselves as at times having been both a victim and a perpetrator of physical and verbal abuse in intimate relationships. They saw this as something distinctly different from traditional intimate partner violence; rather, participants attributed physical (and other)

forms of abuse in some of their relationships to a lack of positive communication techniques and thus they resorted to what they had seen growing up or experienced in other relationships.

- **Involving Law Enforcement in Intimate Partner Violence:** Most respondents (82%) said they knew what to do if they saw someone experiencing intimate partner violence. Most commonly, respondents reported they would call the police (80%). Responses varied by group: Women (91% v. 71% of men) and older respondents (84% v. 67% of those 24 years or younger) were more likely to report that they would call the police if they saw someone being hurt inside the home by someone they knew. While focus group participants expressed willingness to call the police, they did not think that the police actually did much to resolve the abuse in the long term.
- **Legal Ramifications of Calling the Police:** Arrest was the likely outcome of calling the police, according to one-third (34%) of survey respondents. Another 23% of respondents believed there would not be any legal consequences of calling the police. Even among those who felt an arrest was likely, many (28%) did not believe any long-term consequences (e.g., prosecution) would result from the arrest. Women were more likely than men to believe that *both* parties would be arrested as a result of involving law enforcement; women were also more likely to believe that police involvement would be traumatizing for children.
- **Community-Police Relations:** Some participants said that they did not trust the police and would therefore turn to others—such as family members—for help responding to intimate partner violence. Survey findings reflected general mistrust of the police, as only 20% of respondents rated community-police relations positively.
- **Consciousness-Raising:** Responses suggest that intimate partner violence is not typically discussed “out in the open.” When it is, it is seen as a “women’s issue,” since women are more likely to talk about and receive information about intimate partner violence. People were generally at least somewhat comfortable talking about a variety of violence-related topics, including intimate partner violence. Focus group participants were familiar with intimate partner violence (though they were more familiar with the term “domestic violence”), but felt that a public awareness campaign could help to educate the community about all kinds of intimate partner violence, including verbal and emotional violence.

Discussion

Based on the results of the community survey and focus groups, we identified five specific considerations in creating an intervention to address intimate partner violence in the targeted area in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

- 1. Victim-Offender Overlap:** Based on survey and focus group discussions, some intimate partner violence in the community appears to be “traditional,” with a clear, targeted victim and perpetrator, while other instances are “situational,” which means that the same person can sometimes be the victim and at other times be the perpetrator of violence. These shifting power dynamics may be due to the intergenerational cycle of abuse, as well as community norms that tolerate aggressive behavior. These two different dynamics both deserve to be addressed but most likely will require different interventions.
- 2. Education about Intimate Partner Violence:** While many people recognized physical violence as intimate partner violence, other forms of intimate partner violence (e.g. emotional, verbal, financial abuse), are not necessarily viewed or treated as abuse when witnessed in the community. This finding suggests that it may be worthwhile to explore models for increasing awareness and bystander intervention through a public awareness campaign.
- 3. Sex Differences:** There were differences between how men and women were personally affected by intimate partner violence, what they viewed as acceptable behaviors, and how to address intimate partner violence. These differences are worth considering when planning a community intervention; different messaging may be more or less effective for specific groups.
- 4. Cultural Norms:** Prior research suggests that neighborhoods in which violence is more acceptable have an increased likelihood of intimate partner violence (Pinchevsky and Wright 2012). One finding suggested normalization of retaliatory violence and support for the privacy of family disputes. Accordingly, interventions should seek to change cultural norms about violence in the target area.
- 5. Mistrust of Law Enforcement:** Findings indicate a community sense of mistrust of the police. Any intervention created to address intimate partner violence in the target area must consider the existing relationship between the community and law enforcement and either make an effort to improve police-community relations or create a community-based prevention program with limited or no police involvement.

Chapter 1

Introduction

On the Wednesday after Labor Day 2016, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and then-Police Commissioner William Bratton touted the preceding summer as the safest since the police department started keeping detailed records, twenty years ago. The summer months tend to be the city's most violent, but violent crime was down in 2016, continuing a general decrease in crime over the past few years. While this was certainly good news for New Yorkers, there was one stubborn exception to this generally positive trend: intimate partner violence (IPV). Official crime statistics reveal that domestic violence has remained prevalent and intransigent, despite efforts to combat it. The New York Police Department (NYPD) reports a 34% decrease in violent crime since 2001 but only a 13% decrease in domestic violence over the same period. Thus, domestic violence represents an increasing percentage of violent crime overall.¹ Furthermore, domestic violence incident reports have increased among residents of New York City Housing Authority's public housing (NYCHA), doubling from 809 reported incidents in 2009 to 1,642 reported incidents in 2012 (Pazmino 2014). While an increase in *reports* of domestic violence may result from a variety of causes—for instance, increased presence of law enforcement, improved community-police communications, willingness to report—such a sizeable increase merits further exploration.

In 2016, the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence identified Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn as one of six neighborhoods with particularly high domestic violence indicators—including domestic violence-related homicide, domestic violence incident reports to the NYPD, domestic violence-indicated child abuse investigations, and domestic violence-related homelessness. As of early December 2016, a total of 4,990 Domestic Incident Reports (DIRs) had been filed by officers in the 79th Precinct (Bedford-Stuyvesant). However, rates of victim services utilization by community members were disturbingly low—only 360 victims from the 79th Precinct visited the OCDV's Brooklyn Family Justice Center in 2014, representing just 7% of the district's DIR filings that year.²

¹ Statistics provided by the NYPD and the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence.

² Statistics provided by the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence. It is possible—indeed, likely—that at least *some* of these 360 victims had repeat incidents of violence

During the same period,³ a total of 280 domestic violence incidents (6% of all DIRs in the precinct) had been filed in just the Marcy and Tompkins Houses, up 36% from last year. Of those arrested, 55% had a prior domestic violence arrest.⁴

Since a great deal of domestic violence is never reported to police, existing interventions—such as batterer programs and specialized community supervision—reach only the small number of abusers who are reported, arrested, convicted, and sentenced to such interventions (Catalano 2007). This is especially true in neighborhoods like Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn where there is entrenched distrust of the police. Given the limited reach of justice system imposed offender programs, it is unreasonable to expect that these interventions will affect community norms or overall rates of domestic violence. Norm change and general prevention will require other strategies that reach much larger proportions of the community.

The Center for Court Innovation was awarded a Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation award from the U.S. Department of Justice in 2015 to plan a culturally appropriate, neighborhood-based and community-led approach to reducing domestic violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The first step was to research the feasibility of applying a community violence prevention model to the problem of domestic violence. Evidence based practices for preventing violent offending and changing norms around violent crime—such as “call-in” forums and the Cure Violence model—have rarely been implemented or evaluated with domestic violence offenders.⁵ In addition, domestic violence prevention and intervention work has largely been isolated from place-based strategies; community accountability and support have generally not been brought to bear with domestic violence offenders. Toward this end, the current project seeks to inform the development of an appropriate intimate partner violence

during this time period and are involved in more than one DIR. The 7% figure does not account for multiple victimizations; the actual percentage represented by these 360 victims may be higher than 7% of all DIRs.

³ As of December 2016.

⁴ Statistics provided by the NYPD, 79th Precinct.

⁵ There is one program, in High Point, NC called the Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative that implemented “focused deterrence policing” (first introduced by David Kennedy) for domestic violence cases and recently evaluated the program, finding some positive results in reduced recidivism and fewer DV calls in the area. The program was replicated in Lexington, KY with similar results (Sechrist 2016).

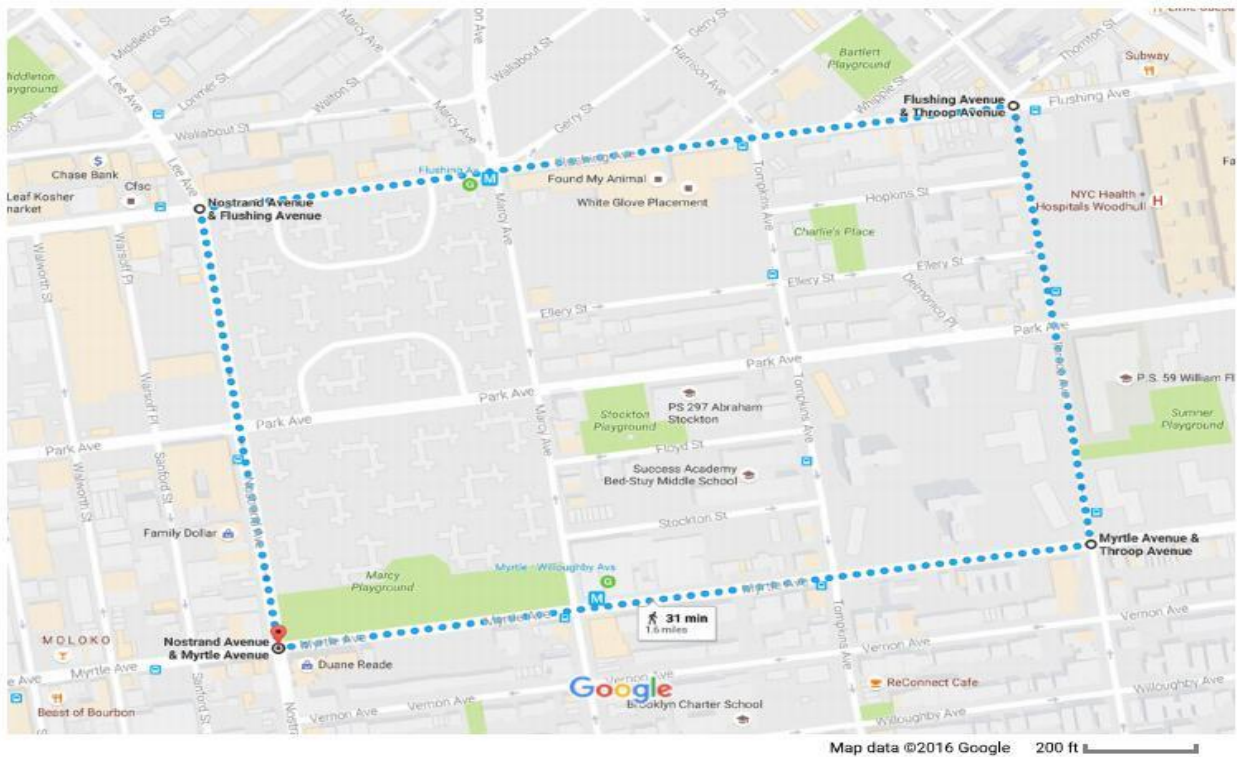
intervention drawing on existing community violence prevention models and specifically incorporating perceptions of IPV among members of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community.

This exploratory research includes more than 300 community surveys conducted within the limited catchment area (described further in Chapter Two), as well as more in-depth feedback provided through three follow-up focus groups with community members. Resident participants were asked their perceptions of domestic violence, including community norms, thoughts on prevention, challenges to addressing domestic violence in their community, victim needs and existing resources.

The current chapter concludes with a description of the project catchment area. Chapter Two describes the methods and findings of the community survey. Chapter Three describes methods and findings of focus groups with members of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. Chapter Four provides discussion and summary of findings and recommendations for implementation.

Project Catchment Area

The current catchment area for this project is an 18-square block area within the neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. To date, the surveys were collected from



residents living in this area, mostly in the two large NYCHA housing developments. The focus group participants were also recruited from the prescribed catchment area.

The area is bordered by Nostrand Avenue to the west, Flushing Avenue to the north, Throop Avenue to the east, and Myrtle Avenue to the south. Two large NYCHA public housing developments are located in this area: Marcy Houses and Tompkins Houses. In 2014, the Tompkins Houses development was identified as one of the most violent housing developments citywide. As such, Tompkins Houses—along with 14 other NYCHA projects—was included in the Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety. Announced in June 2014 by the de Blasio administration, this long-term, comprehensive plan dedicated \$210.6 to making neighborhoods safer and reducing violence crime in NYCHA development “through more targeted law enforcement efforts, immediate physical improvements, aggressive community engagement and outreach efforts, and the expansion of work and education programs” (Fact Sheet, 2014).⁶

In total, the population of the catchment area is 11,241, 64% of whom live in public housing (4,389 in Marcy Houses and 2,841 in Tompkins Houses) (Performance Tracking and Analytics Department, 2016). The majority of the population within the catchment area is black (53%) or Hispanic (43%); the remaining population identifies as multiracial (2%) or other (2% - including white, Asian, American Indian). The catchment area represents about 8% of the total population (136,280) of Bedford-Stuyvesant; the population of the catchment area includes more black residents (53% v. 20%) and fewer Hispanic (43% v. 67%) and white residents (0% v. 9%) than the neighborhood overall. Nearly half (46%) of Bedford-Stuyvesant residents receive income support in the form of TANF, SSI, or Medicaid. The median income in Bedford-Stuyvesant is \$39,131—considerably lower than either the city (\$59,369) or borough (\$44,850) medians. Median incomes in Tompkins Houses (\$20,500) and Marcy Houses (\$27,328) are even lower (2010 Census Data).

⁶ A total of 15, or 5% of all NYCHA housing developments, account for nearly 20% of violent crime in public housing were targeted through this initiative.

Chapter 2

Survey Findings

Survey Methodology

The community survey was developed based on prior community surveys conducted by the Center for Court Innovation, but adding specific questions about intimate partner violence (IPV) in the community (see the final survey instrument in Appendix A). The survey did not ask for details about personal experiences with IPV, though respondents were asked whether they had been personally affected by IPV (either experiencing it themselves or having someone close to them experience it). The overall purpose of the survey was to gauge community perceptions of IPV (e.g., nature, extent, tolerability). All questions related to IPV were reviewed by members of the Center’s Domestic Violence Programs department. The survey also included general questions not related to IPV, in order to provide a snapshot of neighborhood quality of life and potentially provide greater context for understanding results related to IPV.

In all, 309 residents completed surveys. Researchers conducted all surveys within the catchment area using a convenience sample. Potential respondents were approached at local residences, at area businesses, and on the street. Researchers went door-to-door Monday through Saturday, weather permitting and as long as volunteers were available over the course of three months to recruit survey respondents. Surveys were conducted at varying times of day in order to capture a more diverse sample. Potential respondents were provided with a general overview of the study and were told the survey would take approximately 20 minutes to complete. All survey respondents were at least 18 years of age. No personally identifying information was collected as part of the survey. Respondents were informed that participation in the research was voluntary and that they could end their participation at any time. Surveys were conducted in English and Spanish. Below are the survey results.

Sample Characteristics

Table 1 provides demographic and other background characteristics of the 309 residents who completed the community survey. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 84 years old. Compared to the actual population of the catchment area, black and white residents were overrepresented in the survey responses; Hispanic residents were under-represented (26% of survey respondents v. 43% of the population). Most respondents lived in Bedford-

Stuyvesant; only 7% had a strictly professional relationship with the neighborhood. Three in four (75%) lived in public housing, and of these, 42% lived in Tompkins Houses and 31% lived in Marcy Houses. Nearly all respondents reported that English was spoken in 94%, and Spanish in 21% of households (note that respondents could select more than one language). Both this finding and the under-representation of Hispanic residents in the respondent population may be a function of project staffing; one of the 18 researchers conducting the community surveys were capable of conducting the survey in Spanish. Nearly four in ten (36%) were either married or in a serious relationship.

Table 1. Survey Sample Characteristics

Total Sample Size	309
Average Age	38 (range: 18-84)
Male	45%
Race	
Black	68%
White	6%
Hispanic	22%
Other	4%
More than one race	6%
Relationship to Neighborhood	
Live	85%
Work	7%
Live and work	8%
Languages Spoken in Household	
English	94%
Spanish	21%
Other	3%
Housing	
Public housing (NYCHA)	75%
Private home or apartment	23%
Homeless or shelter	1%
Relationship status	
Single/never married	56%
Married	20%
In a serious relationship	16%
Divorced/separated	4%
Widowed	4%

Note: Respondents could select more than one race or language.

Salience of Intimate Partner Violence as a Community Problem

- **Let's talk about some issues that may exist here. After each issue I state, tell me if you think it is a big problem, minor problem, not a problem, or you don't know in your neighborhood, and then if you feel like it is something that affects you personally.**
 - *Public Drinking*
 - *Drug Use*
 - *Gangs*
 - *Drug Selling (Public)*
 - *Drug Selling (Private)*
 - *Theft*
 - *Assault*
 - *Sexual Assault*
 - *Mugging*
 - *Gun Violence*
 - *Fighting*
 - *Bullying*
 - *Streets Need Repair*
 - *Dating Violence*
 - *Child Abuse*
 - *Prostitution*
 - *Building Repairs*
 - *Intimate Partner Violence*
 - **How does your neighborhood compare to surrounding areas in terms of street violence?**
 - **In the past 12 months, how often have you seen someone threatened with a weapon?**
 - **How safe do you feel inside your home?**
-

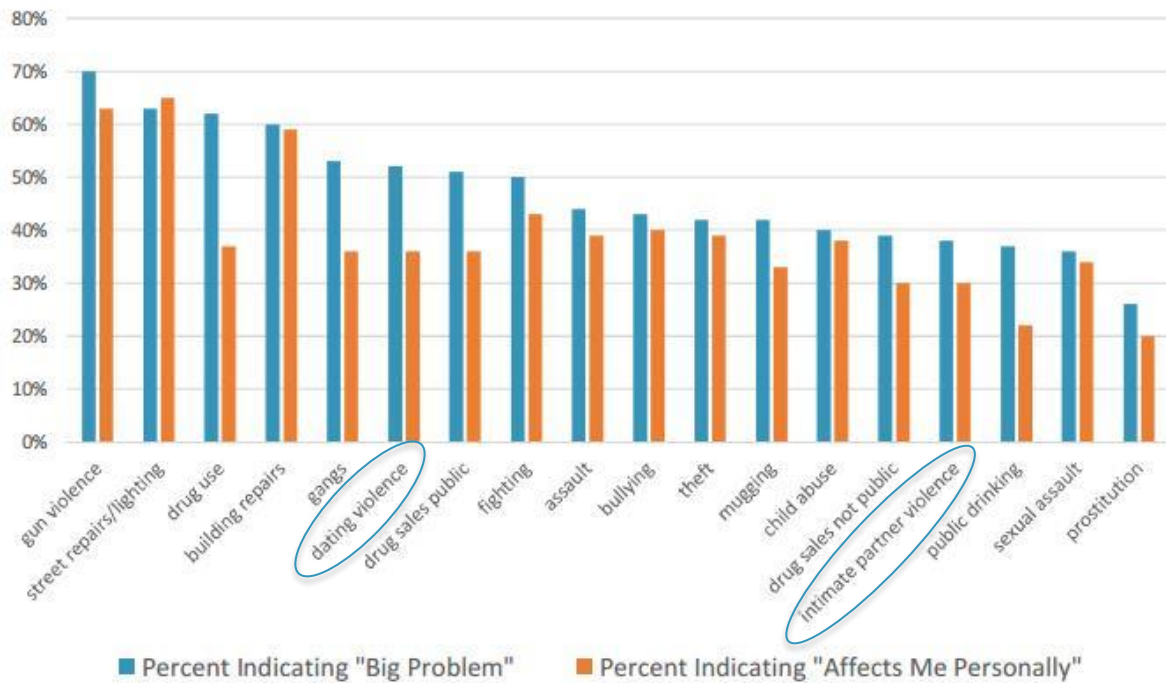
Figure 1 indicates the percentage of respondents who categorized each of a series of potential community safety concerns as a “big problem” in their neighborhood (see blue bars). In addition, the orange bars in the figure represent the percentage of respondents who reported that the problem affects them personally.⁷ The most frequently cited issues were gun violence, street repairs/lighting, drug use, and building repairs; each was identified as a “big problem” by 60% or more of the sample. Of these, street repairs, gun violence, and building repairs were said to affect 60% or more of respondents personally.

We further examined respondent personal experiences by sex. Female respondents were significantly more personally affected than males across 16 of the 18 problems included in the list (the two exceptions were gun violence and gangs). The largest sex difference was for fighting, with a 23-point difference between women (54%) and men (31%). The mean

⁷ The term “affects me personally” was used in the question so that a survey respondent would not feel like they had to disclose their own prior or current victimization to the interviewer in a setting where privacy could not be guaranteed. However, that does mean that responses to this question have limited use, since we don't know if someone has personally experienced IPV or knows someone else who has.

difference between females and males was 14% across the 16 problem; both dating violence (16% difference) and intimate partner violence (15%) fell near the mean. That is, female respondents were significantly more likely to have personal experience with dating and intimate partner violence.

Figure 1. Respondents Who Rank Issues as a “Big Problem” and One that Affects Them Personally



In general, IPV did not rank highly in the list of issues as an important problem: only 38% identified IPV as a “big problem” and just under one-third (30%) claimed that it affected them personally. More of survey respondents identified dating violence as a “big problem” in their community (52%). Less than half (44%) reported being personally affected by the combined dating violence/IPV issue. About as many respondents reported being personally impacted by fighting and bullying; more respondents were personally affected by gun violence and street and building repairs.

Residents were asked about their feelings of safety in their homes and in their neighborhood. The majority of residents (79%) felt that street violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant was comparable or lower than in surrounding neighborhoods. In past 12 months, 27% reported seeing someone threatened with a weapon at least once per month, with an additional 17%

when the time span is extended to the past six months. Only 7% (9% of women; 3% of men) felt unsafe (“somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe”) inside their homes.

Responding to Violence

- **How likely would you be to contact the police if you saw someone being hurt?**
 - **How likely would you be to contact the police if you were hurt inside your home by someone you know?**
 - **If you saw someone being hurt in the neighborhood, the *first* thing you would do is...**
 - Call someone from a local community organization*
 - Call the police*
 - Call family and/or friends*
 - Nothing, not any of my business*
 - **How would you characterize the relationship between the community and the police in the last year?**
 - **Do fights at home between intimate partners (people in a romantic relationship) ever affect the greater community or spill outside?**
 - **Would you know what to do if someone told you that they were experiencing abuse from their partner or if you were experiencing it yourself? What would you do?**
-

Survey participants were asked how they would respond to violence both on the street and in the home. Most (81%) would be “somewhat” or “very likely” to contact the police if they saw someone being hurt (82% if they saw someone being hurt inside their home by someone they knew). More than six in ten (65%) indicated that calling the police would be the first thing they would do. Results to these questions varied by gender and age: Women were more likely than men to report that they would contact the police if they saw someone being hurt (89% v. 70%), or being hurt inside the home by someone they knew (91% v. 71%). Women were also more likely than men to indicate that calling the police would be the first thing they would do (75% v. 54%; men were more likely than women to call family or friends, 12% v. 5%). Older respondents were more likely than younger respondents to report that they would call the police. Nearly seven in ten (67%) of those aged 24 years or younger, compared to more than eight in ten (84%) of those 25 and older, would “likely” or “very likely” call the police if they saw someone being hurt in their neighborhood. More than half

of respondents (63%) believed that fights at home between intimate partners “sometimes” or “often” affect the greater community.

When it came to responding to intimate partner violence, 78% of respondents (81% of women, 74% of men) indicated that they would know what to do if they or someone they knew was experiencing partner abuse. Open-ended responses to this question varied but the modal response (38%) involved calling the police or some other authority (e.g., abuse line, Safe Horizon); few (11%) said they would take action themselves, and very few (3%) would contact someone other than authorities (e.g., family). While many of the respondents indicated that they would call the police if they witnessed or experienced violence, only 20% of the sample felt that community-police relations were “good” or “very good.” This issue is explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

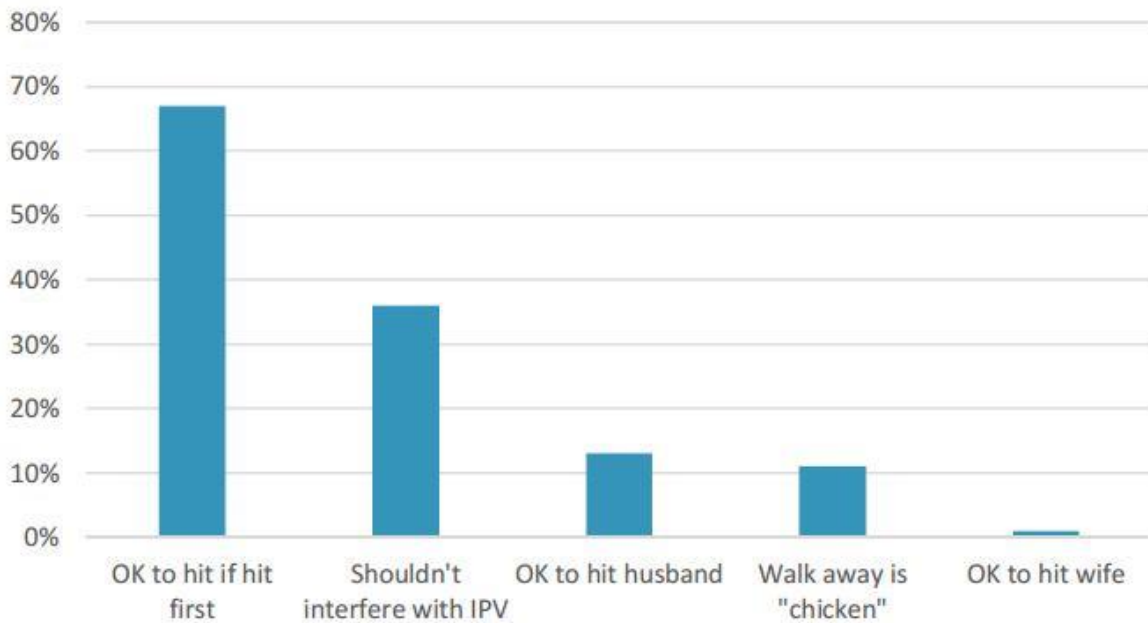
Intimate Partner Violence Tolerance

- **How much do you agree that fighting between romantic partners is a private matter?**
 - **How much do you agree that fighting between family members is a private matter?**
 - **How likely would you be to report a case of intimate partner violence to authorities?**
 - **How much do you agree with these statements:**
 - A person who walks away from a fight is a coward or “chicken.”*
 - It’s okay to hit someone if they hit you first.*
 - It is sometimes OK for a woman to hit her husband or partner.*
 - People should not interfere in violence between romantic partners.*
 - It is sometimes OK for a man to hit his wife or partner.*
 - **Is yelling a violent behavior? Threatening to hurt someone? Insulting someone?**
-

Figure 2 shows that of the five statements reflecting a norm of tolerance toward IPV, only one (“It is OK to hit someone who hits you first”) was endorsed by more than half of respondents (67%). Just over one-third (36%) agreed that others should not interfere in violence between intimate partners. Few agreed that walking away from a fight is cowardly or “chicken;” men were more likely than women to find fault with walking away (15% v. 8%). Men were more likely than women to believe that fighting between intimates is a private matter (50% v. 34%); 41% of all respondents agreed that “fighting between romantic partners is nobody else’s business.” Yet, as noted earlier, 38% of respondents said that they

would contact the police for an IPV incident. In addition to the questions about use of physical violence, respondents were asked whether verbal aggression qualifies as violence. The majority viewed threatening someone (88%), insulting someone (79%), and yelling (64%) as examples of violent behavior.

Figure 2. Percent Agreeing with Statements Reflecting IPV Tolerance



Taken together, results from these first sections reflect a degree of ambivalence toward IPV as a community problem. Intimate partner violence was not considered as serious or personally relevant as other forms of violence (especially among men), yet most believed that it is a problem that affects the greater community. Witnessing violence of all kinds was relatively common, and reporting violence to the police was the most common response, despite findings that police-community relations were strained.

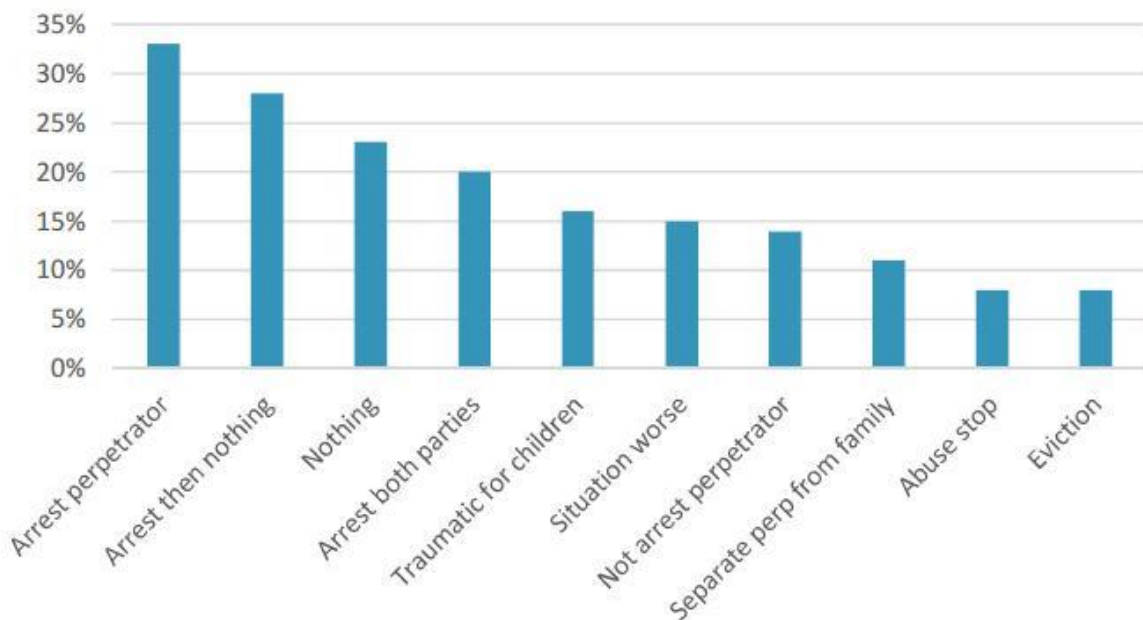
Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence

-
- **If you reported intimate partner abuse to the police, what do you think would happen?**
-

Figure 3 shows respondents' perceptions of the consequences of calling the police to report IPV. Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses. It is noteworthy that separation

of the perpetrator from his or her family and cessation of abuse were deemed least likely outcomes, next to eviction. Arrest was believed to be the most probable consequence, with a total of 34% believing that an arrest would follow reporting. However, 28% believed that the arrest would ultimately not result in prosecution or other consequences. Another 23% believed that there would likely be no consequences of a report to police. Women more than men believed that calling the police would result in both parties being arrested (23% v. 16%), and that doing so would be traumatic for the children (20% v. 11%). Other anticipated responses did not significantly differ by respondent sex.

Figure 3. Anticipated Consequences of Police Notification of IPV



Respondents’ answers suggested an underlying ambivalence on the nature of IPV, similar to findings discussed above. A majority endorsed retaliatory aggression, yet believed that walking away from a fight does not make one a coward. Few thought it was acceptable to hit a spouse. Most believed one should interfere in violence between intimate partners—most likely by calling the police—and few endorsed wife-to-husband (or partner) or, especially, husband-to-wife (or partner) hitting. Threatening, insulting, and to a lesser extent yelling were also seen as violence. Yet it was not clear what respondents were likely to do if they saw intimate partners insulting or yelling at one another or hitting in retaliation.

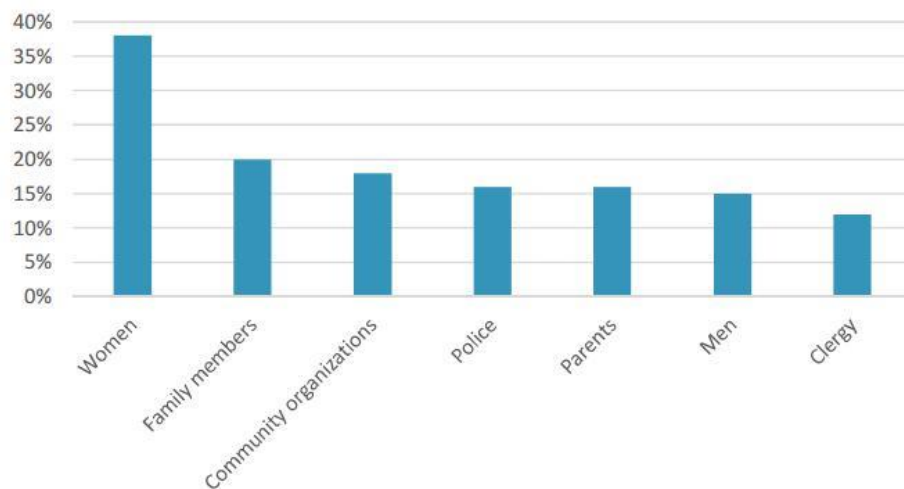
Approximately eight in ten respondents indicated they would call the police for IPV (see page 19), but respondents were uncertain of the consequences of such a call, or whether the

consequences would be beneficial. Perhaps this reflects a lack of faith in the criminal justice system as an effective means of addressing IPV. Perhaps it reflects the general weakness of police-community relations discussed above or an underlying feeling of futility in addressing IPV, regardless of the intervention.

Consciousness-Raising

- Who have you heard talk about intimate partner violence?
 - Who do you think should be responsible for talking about intimate partner violence?
 - In your opinion, are people comfortable talking about violence between partners or in the home?
 - How comfortable are you talking about potentially sensitive subjects (e.g., intimate partner violence, police, racism, drugs, guns)?
 - Have you ever received any information that helped you to understand more about intimate partner violence?
 - How likely is it than a campaign to stop or reduce intimate partner violence would actually do so?
-

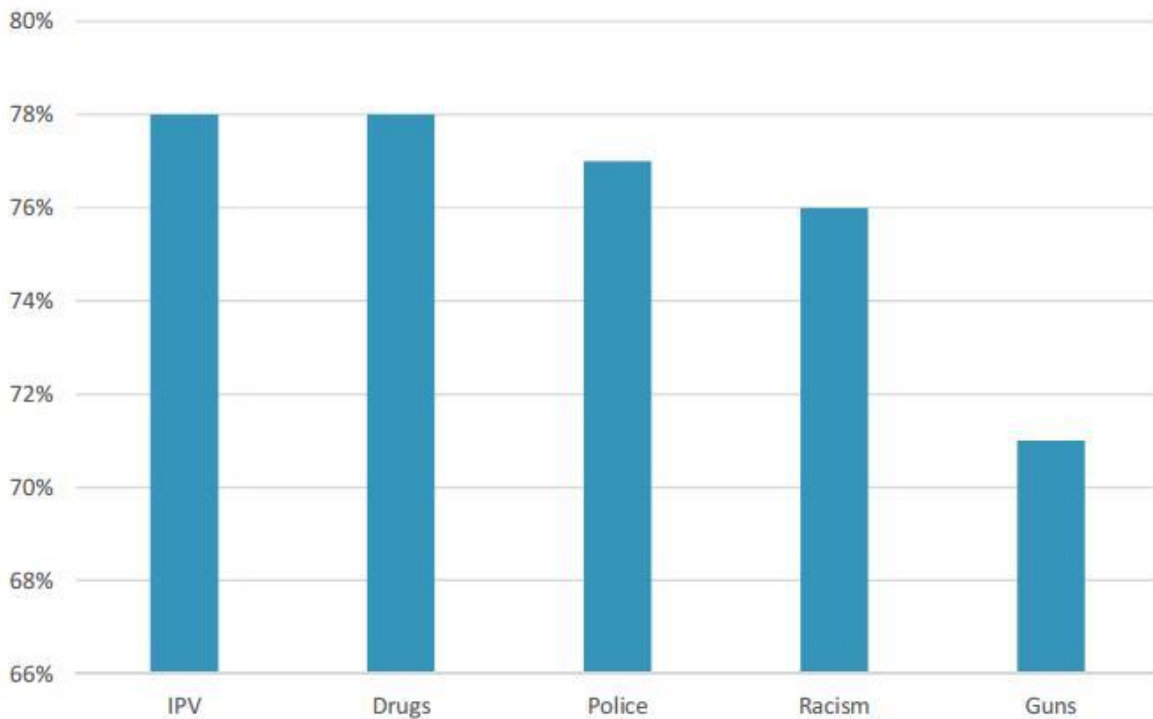
Planners were particularly interested in finding out who in the community, if anyone, was speaking about intimate partner violence, what they were saying, and how information was disseminated. Figure 4 shows where respondents have heard about IPV. No source on the list was cited by a majority—in fact, about a quarter of respondents (27%) did not report hearing anyone discuss IPV—but by far the most common response among those who had been



exposed to discussions about IPV was “mostly women” (38%). Younger respondents were more likely to hear parents talk about IPV. Most respondents believed in the potential effectiveness of a campaign to reduce IPV (68%) or gun violence (65%).

Figure 4. Who Have You Heard Talking About Intimate Partner Violence?

Figure 5. Percent Indicating “Very” or “Somewhat” Comfortable Discussing Sensitive Topics



Few (27%) respondents believed that other people generally are comfortable talking about IPV; yet most respondents reported feeling comfortable talking about IPV, drugs, police, racism, and to a slightly lesser extent, guns (see Figure 5). Women and men reported to being equally comfortable discussing these topics.

Figure 6. Sources of Information about Intimate Partner Violence

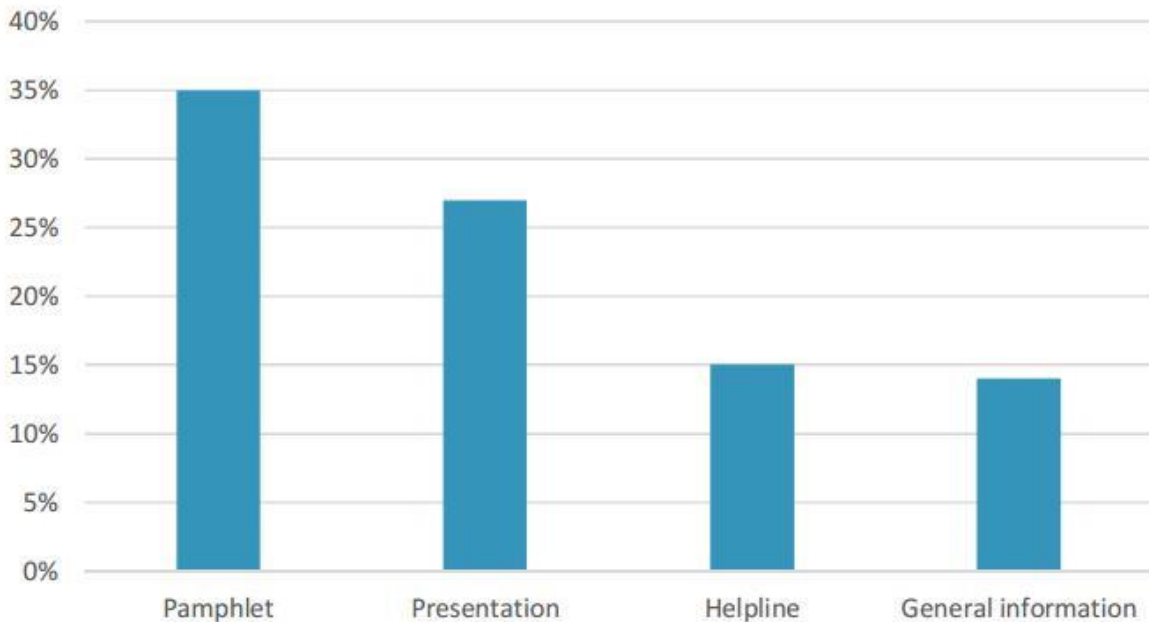


Figure 6 shows the most common sources of information about IPV. Pamphlets (35%) and presentations (27%) were most common. Women were more likely than men to have received information on IPV in a presentation, pamphlet, or an IPV helpline. Open-ended responses tended toward vague references or “I don’t know” when it came to naming resources in the community to address IPV.

Yet there was some optimism about the capacity for change. Nearly seven in ten (68%) said that they believed that it was “somewhat” or “very” likely that a campaign to stop or reduce IPV would actually have a positive impact.

Taken together, our results revealed a recurring theme among respondents, namely, that IPV is not typically “out in the open.” When it is, it is usually seen as a “women’s issue,” albeit one that impacts the entire community. Women were most likely the ones to talk about, and receive information on, IPV. But responses also suggest a potential for mobilizing community action toward open discussion, consciousness-raising, and programmatic responses to violence, including IPV.

Chapter 3

Focus Groups

After completing the community survey, researchers and program planning staff invited community members to take part in a series of four focus groups. Participants for the focus groups were selected from those survey participants who indicated that they would be interested in discussing the topic of intimate partner violence in greater depth. A total of 114 survey respondents expressed willingness to engage in further discussion.

The researchers planned four focus group sessions: (1) a female-only group; (2) a male-only group; (3) a group for survivors of intimate partner violence; and (4) an LGBTQ+ group. The LGBTQ+ group was ultimately cancelled due to lack of interest. In total, nine community members participated in the focus groups: five women and four men. All of the survivors (4) were female. While male respondents were typically older, female participants represented a wider range of ages. All focus group participants were residents of the catchment area; some had lived there their whole lives, while others were more recent transplants. All had lived in the area for more than one year. All but one of the participants lives in NYCHA Housing; that individual was also the only non-black focus group participant.

Each group was about 70 minutes long. Sessions were staffed by at least one researcher and planning staff member.⁸ All sessions were conducted in English. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed; analysis was conducted with the qualitative analysis software Dedoose. Each participant received a \$20 cash stipend for their participation in the study. The focus group discussions covered domains including identifying IPV, underlying causes of IPV, violence in the community, responses to IPV, the role of law enforcement, and community needs. Findings are summarized below.

⁸ In the first session, an additional researcher was present to facilitate the focus group. The remaining sessions were facilitated mostly by one researcher, with support from an intern.

Understanding of Intimate Partner Violence

Each session began with facilitators asking participants about their understanding of intimate partner violence (IPV).⁹

Types of Abuse

While participants usually initially cited physical violence, they were also quick to note verbal abuse as being visible in the neighborhood.

Physical abuse All of the female participants acknowledged experiencing some kind of physical violence, from hitting and choking to one participant whose partner beat her so badly that she lost an eye. Three of the women also reported that they had been physically abusive toward their partner first, with one respondent pushing a partner down the stairs and another slapping her partner. While none of the men indicated that they had personally been involved in a physically abusive relationship, they had all witnessed or heard of physical abuse among people in the community, and had been asked to intervene in at least one instance.

Threatening Both male and female participants (one male and two female) talked about being threatened with violence at some point in their relationships. Participants seemed to believe that these were legitimate threats to their safety, prompting fear.

Verbal and Emotional Abuse All of the participants reported witnessing verbal and emotional abuse in the community on a regular basis. This took the form of partners yelling and arguing with each other in public, as well as public criticism, humiliation and name-calling. Focus group participants reported that both men and women participate in this behavior, though they felt that they saw women verbally abusing their partners in public more frequently. They also expressed that they did not know how to help a man who was

⁹ For the purpose of the focus groups, the term domestic violence (DV) was used interchangeably with IPV, as participants seemed more familiar with that term. In general, domestic violence is a broader term that may also include violence against non-intimate family members (e.g., child abuse, elder abuse). However, in this context, it is used to refer to violence between intimates either currently or formerly in a romantic relationship. Elsewhere in the report, IPV is preferred as the term of art.

being verbally abused, while if they saw a woman verbally abused by her partner they would intervene.

Sexual Abuse Four of the five female participants mentioned being raped at some point during the focus groups. Two were sexually assaulted by a partner; the other two were sexually assaulted by a family member when they were adolescents. Aside from their personal experiences, they did not talk about the prevalence of sexual abuse in the community in general.

Location

Participants mentioned the following locations where they had experienced or witnessed violent interactions between individuals whom they believed to be intimate partners.

At Home Nearly all of the female participants said that they had been victims or perpetrators of abuse inside their own house or apartment.

In Public A few participants said that they had heard shouting and fighting on the street right outside of their apartments. One participant said that she was afraid for the sake of her children with the level of violence she heard outside of her window since she was right on the first floor and there could be shooting. It was not clear whether the shooting concern was directly related to the incidence of intimate partner violence. Others noted that they frequently witnessed couples fighting on the street and in stores, especially over money.

Overheard in Others' Homes Participants noted that they could often hear yelling and fighting coming from open windows when walking through the Marcy Projects (the only housing complex mentioned by name). Participants also reported overhearing fights between intimates from neighboring apartments, even when their own doors and windows were closed.

Causes of Intimate Partner Violence

Asked to identify some underlying factors that might contribute to intimate partner violence, participants pointed to drugs and alcohol, exacerbating involvement of outside parties, and power and control.

Drugs and Alcohol Multiple focus group participants had witnessed incidents where they felt that alcohol or drug consumption led to or intensified violence. Participants suggested

that impairment could make someone more likely to abuse, or create a potentially violent argument about the substance use.

It's little things that trigger [arguments] more now; if the man's drinking, if he have a drug problem, that would trigger it off even more.

[O]ne of my sisters was in that ... her husband was a drinker. So that was when he want to fight, when he drinking... Sometimes it's the woman who wants to fight. Women argue too ... her husband used to be a violent guy, he drank and she don't know how to cool him down ... [Drinking is] one of the main problems with them fighting.

Egging on by Others In two of the three focus groups, participants noted that sometimes, rather than calm a situation, the people around actually contribute to it by encouraging insults and fighting. This may not be specifically connected to intimate partner violence, but does suggest that sometimes being in a public space, among other people can potentially exacerbate a potentially violent incident.

I was at an event and a young lady was speaking about ... a personal thing that ... she shouldn't have spoke[n] openly about ... so the security there, they kind of quieted that down, but it escalated after the event was over ... and then the police get involved with it ... And then you had a whole lot of little agitators that were around her, was getting involved with it, and they was creating that situation to get mad and it worked.

Control One defining characteristic of intimate partner violence is the use of violence to exert power and establish control in the relationship (Benson et al. 2003). In each of the focus groups, participants described such use of violence or the threat of violence to prevent victims of IPV from leaving the relationship.

We had our little ups and downs and stuff, but never no hitting. This [violence] came as a shock to me. But he always said if I leave him, he's going to kill me. I never pictured he would try to kill me for reals because [if I thought the threat was real], I would've got out of it.

The woman is already afraid of the man because he has put the fear in her, like you know what, I've been beating you ten years, why should I stop now? ...

Because a man has no problem striking a woman because he feels that [is] the only way that he can control a situation. It's sad to say but most men use their power and fist fight judgement to controlling a woman.

Community Norms on Violence

In general, participants in the focus groups expressed disapproval for perpetrators of intimate partner violence. All of the men and some of the women mentioned that it is not okay for a man to hit a woman, supporting survey findings. Participants in the men's group brought up examples of highly-publicized incidents of intimate partner violence committed by men against women. They expressed condemnation for the men who were revealed to be abusers. However, the men also expressed hesitance to intervene in aggression between the partners, who might not respond positively to the intervention.

Cycle of Abuse One woman in the focus groups initially identified herself as a perpetrator of IPV. However, as she continued to talk, it was evident that she had also been a victim of abuse when she was younger.

I was the aggressor [I]t all started when I was 15, because I had a stepfather who abused me, so I hated all men, but I knew I was attracted to them. So you know, I get a boyfriend and it wasn't on purpose that I would find out that he was weaker than me and it wasn't in the case of being weaker, they was just raised not to hit women, so I took advantage of that. So a lot of times, and most of it started verbally, I would start cursing them out, belittling them, saying all kinds of crazy stuff and thinking it was cute, especially when I got in front of my friends. I would belittle him and say things and he's say something and I would smack him, like really hard ... I would hit him at least 15-20 times a day. Like hit him. Whether smack, sometimes I would trip him. It was really ridiculous. But it wasn't towards him. It was a lot of aggression that I had growing up with my stepfather. When my stepfather would choke me or slap me or beat me I wouldn't cry ... I wouldn't show him weakness ... It stopped me from feeling empathy because I just felt like I had to be on the defensive. And then I would do this too because I thought that all men were like him. So it was like, you know what, when I first met you, I'm gonna let them know that I'm in charge ... and being in charge for me ... was physically hitting somebody. If somebody say something I don't like, what happen? You got slapped, you got hit. That was a way of

keeping people in line. That was what I grew up seeing, that's what I grew up knowing and I just put it into my relationships.

Participants also spoke about the level of violence or aggression within families and the in the neighborhood that contributed to intimate partner violence. A number of participants identified that when they were growing up, their parents beat them and beat each other, so that aggression became an acceptable resort (as noted in the quote above). Some participants still believed this was an appropriate lesson to teach children, though there were others in the group who disagreed with that perspective. Participant feedback reflected a base level of daily violence accepted in the community. One participant put it especially well:

You go outside to play and all the other kids is pushing and mushing and we ready to fight ... And then you go to ... some suburban neighborhood where John and Billy and Bob and Susan and they don't have that same interaction. And that's something that I noticed years later, but as a kid you don't know any better. It's just what you know. Your mom beats you for twisting your mouth, your dad beats your mom for talking back, and it's just a never-ending cycle. So by the time I had my son, yes I had been abused by his father, yes I had been abused in other relationships prior, but I also been the one to smack somebody and would get so angry and didn't know how to express it verbally or in any other way then I would express it physically.

...A lot of my girlfriends to this day [ask], 'Should you be beating your kids?', 'Should you be spanking your kids?' And I'm always that voice saying, 'No! What's happening is, you're teaching them aggression.' And they're like, 'What do you mean?' And they go into this whole spiel about how they need to spank in order to somehow effect change in their child as if their children, these little people, are somehow unable to be reasoned with, which is like baffling to me! Because I was smart as a kid, you didn't have to beat me! ... I loved my mom and I wanted her approval, but that's what she knew ... She was a 15-year-old wife, 18-year-old mother of two. By the time she was in her early 20s she was a mother of three...[S]he was abused. And I think a major issue is that a lot of us don't even recognize abuse. We think it's normal! We think it's normal to grow up in an environment where you get spanked for having an opinion. We think it's normal to step outside and get accosted because you've earned enough money to buy nice things and how dare you walk the streets and think you can show it.

Yeah you deserve to get your ass beat for wearing Jordans. What is that disconnect where we become so comfortable with just physically attacking one another?

Another explained:

*Because honestly, it's a cycle. My mom used to beat us in a way it wasn't about discipline, it was her frustration, you could see it. We would get **beaten**.*

And it's something that you get used to, even in the same regard with your mates ... I'm telling you, I've seen people outside the community say, 'What in the hell? You want to beat me up? You want to fight me over a seat?' It doesn't make sense. Really? We must seem foreign. Why are we doing this?

I think that's the main thing. We learn ... all we know is what we see when we're growing up. If we see mom and dad being this way, to us, that's the right way, that's all we know. So if our dad is yelling at our mom like crazy, we may start doing that until someone teaches us that there's a better way to live.

Some of the focus group participants identified themselves at times as having been both a victim and a perpetrator of physical and verbal abuse in intimate relationships. They attributed this to a lack of positive communication techniques, and while part of the problem of IPV, also distinctly different from the dynamic in a relationship with one primary offender and a primary victim.

Pressure on Men In the men's group, financial pressure and the stress of not having a job were particularly salient topics. Participants emphasized the importance of being able to provide for a family as part of the role of a man. When the men are not able to perform this role, they feel a lot of stress and pressure at home which can then lead to abuse, according to the participants in the men's focus group.

[D]omestic violence can be peer pressure—if the man's not making any money and there's no food in the house, there's no money generated to pay bills—that can drown the man or the woman into depression. I just told a story last week about the same thing, where there was the woman beating the man because he didn't have a job and couldn't provide for the family.

A woman in the survivors group also spoke about the pressure faced by men of color in general:

There is, I believe, an attack on everything of color and because of it, it doesn't just exist outside [our homes] ... You have a man who you can never possibly question his manhood otherwise he's going to lose it, because he's being questioned every day. His manhood is being questioned every minute of every day when he's not able to provide, when he's not able to walk into certain arenas and he's not able to do certain things he thinks most men should be able to do. Just on the basis of his skin tone. It's something that, when you recognize that you can't ignore it. You can't act like he's just a bad guy or she's crazy, you have to see where it's coming from. And until the bigger picture is somehow changed ... we're always going to have this level of hostility that exists in our homes.

Law Enforcement Intervention

Survey respondents were asked what they would do when confronted with intimate partner violence. Focus group participants were asked similar questions about how they had responded in the past or what they thought should be done when confronting intimate partner violence. Many reported that they had called the police for help; either for themselves or for others if they overheard fighting and worried that someone might get hurt.

Participant: When a man and a woman are fighting, I call [the police].

Facilitator: What point does it have to get to for you to call them?

Participant: If he's being like really aggressive towards her, yes I'll call. I'm really sorry, I don't care, call me a snitch, call me whatever you want to call me ... If he yells, that's none of my business. Physically abusive, that's something different.

Even when participants called the police, it did not always resolve the situation.

Participant 1: If the yelling is extremely aggressive, and if there is anyone who hits ... especially a kid, I won't hesitate to call the cops. I might protect myself and not get in the middle of it, but I will go where I feel safe.

Participant 2: I always call and say I feel anonymous. Give a name, no. But I'm telling you need to get over here.

Facilitator: And what do the police do then?

Participant 2: They come to the area and most of the time they keep arguing, fighting.

Facilitator: So the police don't really stop it?

Participant 2: They'll break it up but it tends to go right back to the same situation.

Retaliation Calling the police could also make things difficult for the person who makes the call.

The police knock on the ... door [of the person who called police]; right after the police knock on the door, the perpetrator or the friend of the perpetrator go knock on the door too.

You have to understand also that, when you are calling the police on a domestic violence situation, you don't know the relationship between those two people. Because sometimes you may call the police and you have both parties turn against you, [wanting you to] mind your own business.

Victim Reneges Particularly in the men's session, participants expressed frustration that even if the police were called and the perpetrator went to jail, victims themselves frequently opted not to support prosecution or even defended perpetrators in court.

Participant 3: At least 70% [of victims] who put you in that situations [are] down in court, waiting for the judge to release [the perpetrator].

Participant 4: That's right. They ain't gonna press charges, they drop charges.

Participant 3: ... The answer is: [When] they get arrested, that's your way out. Pack up and get out. Because if you don't, when he comes home, he's angry that he went through this. And the system makes him angry even more because now he's trying to call you to drop these charges and he can't reach you and he doesn't know what you went downtown and told the DA ...

Participant 4: You can go down to the courtroom and you can see all the cases—domestic violence—dropped, by the spouses. Being that I'm a community leader, a lot of people they call me about domestic violence. I say, 'I'm not going to touch that. Ya'll work it out, I'm not gonna get involved with that.' Because by the time

I get involved in that, [the charges have been] dropped. So I stay out of it.

Effect on Family Going to jail impacts not just the perpetrator, but also the victim and other family members. Focus group participants expressed concern that a man going to jail might lose his job, in turn hurting the financial stability of the family. Both partners and children witnessing violence might want the abuse to stop, but not want the abuser to be arrested or the criminal justice system to be involved. One man in the focus groups shared an experience he had recently with an elementary school-aged child who told him about some abuse in his home.

I only found this out through an 11-year-old kid, but he put his trust in me to not to go to the police, but to go direct to speak with his mother [the perpetrator] ... I sat down with her and I explained to her. '[Child] told you what's going on?' she said. ... I said, you know, beating your husband is not the answer. He doesn't have a job, you gotta remember, this man was once working for sanitation because he got hurt ... Beating him every day because he can't provide for the family, that's not the answer or the solution. I said I'm not going to call the police, I'm asking both of you guys to go get help because ... I don't think it's so much the violence, [but] that you're angry and you get into an argument, I think it's more there's no food in the house, there's no bills getting paid, you're going back and forth to court for your rent. And I say, pressure can lead to violence, the same as drugs and alcohol ... And they coming to me and put this trust in me, I felt like that was a stepping stone in the right direction. And then I asked [the perpetrator], well let's go sit down and let's go talk to a domestic violence officer, and I explained to the officer ... I'm asking you as a personal favor, I'm trusting you as the domestic violence officer, I'm asking you please talk to both of them ... I checked on them last week, so far so good, they're going to the program, they are both participating.

No Trust in Police Another reason participants who were victims of intimate partner violence do not report it to police is that they do not trust the police because of the experiences they and those close to them have had in the past. For example, one woman mentioned that she had been raped and her treatment by the investigators made her feel revictimized.

[T]he cop literally said ... You were asking for it. You deserved it. I wasn't even talking, I completely shut down.

Another participant felt that community members had had too many bad experiences with police to trust the justice system to do the right thing. The respondent was particularly concerned about providing alternative community resources for kids, who worry about what will happen to their family if police get involved in violence at home.

[K]ids have fear and they don't like to share it with people that they don't trust ... Trust is not in the community anymore ... I have some kids who come to me and talk to me about their situations and I try to deal with it accordingly because, once you break a trust with a kid, they'll never trust you again ... And you can also see the fear that what [telling someone about violence] might cost, the consequences. What might happen not only to you, but to your parents, to the boyfriend, to the girlfriend ... 'If I call on my mother or my father, what's going to happen to me?' ... The community is afraid ... The community don't mind helping out the police, but it's the way the police structure themselves and go about doing things and about, if somebody could come up with a greater plan how to protect people instead of the police officers making a collar and the police officers going about their business.

One participant was especially adamant that she would not call the police on a man of color because of the way that men of color are dehumanized by the justice system. The participant sought alternative options to address violence.

I don't think the first interaction should be always be: 'Let's get the police in here—who don't give a damn about men of color or people of color in general—and let them handle it.' I don't think so. If I can interact in some way before calling the police—meaning calling his mom, calling his sister, calling his brother, calling someone within our circle who can gently in some way reason with him, I'm gonna do that ... I would prefer to not see another man of color or person of color put in jail ... I will never readily call the police. Never. Because I knew what would happen: They would see a black man who is aggressive and nervous and go right into being aggressive with him and that doesn't solve anything... It doesn't help ... It's not like they arrest them and put them in

counseling and help them grow as human beings. They just put them in a box among other criminals.

Accountability Despite the mistrust and concerns about systemic racism expressed by several respondents, one woman was clear in her belief that perpetrators of intimate partner violence must be held accountable. Consequently, she reported that she would always call the police in such an instance.

Forget [not calling the police because you're] a black man. You can be a white man and [if] you hit me, you're going down. Case closed ... Everybody got a mind and they can think ... They know what they're doing and if you're doing something wrong, you should be held responsible for your actions. It's no if, ands, or buts ... I don't care what color you is. You can be green or purple, figure of speech. You do something wrong, you're supposed to be penalized ... You gotta put a stop to something. We gotta stop making excuses.

Community Violence

As the survey pointed out, the majority of respondents view gun violence as big problem in the neighborhood. When focus group participants were asked about the intersectionality of guns and intimate partner violence, most participants did not readily see a connection between the two. One participant reported that her ex-partner was a shooter and pulled a gun out at her during a fight. Another participant recounted an experience where he was going to threaten his ex-wife's new partner with a gun but ultimately decided not to do so. However, one focus group participant expressed that gun violence and intimate partner violence were part of the same norms that enabled violence throughout the community.

I think it's that level of aggression [that] we're teaching each other as kids, as adults. I think that we were told that other individuals were not worthy or worth the respect or common courtesy to not be beaten, not be shot. And it's kind of become a normalcy again to just pull out gun. It's just another level of aggression ... Before they had the infiltration of like guns, it would still be little fights and the same form of aggression. It's just escalated. ... It's still aggression and I think that it's always going to be there unless we change the root and we teach each other from youth on how to interact.

Increasing Community Awareness

While the term intimate partner violence was unfamiliar to many of the focus group participants, they were all familiar with the term domestic violence. As described above, focus group participants could fairly accurately define domestic violence, including non-physical types of abuse. Participants mentioned several sources of information about intimate partner violence and made recommendations for increasing community awareness around the issue. Understanding how people have obtained information about intimate partner violence in the past can inform future interventions.

- **Media:** Focus group participants mentioned news stories about IPV in both the national as well as the local news. In the men's group, there was a discussion about the football player who hit his fiancée on camera (NFL player Ray Rice in 2014). The bulk of this conversation focused on the fiancée defending Ray Rice and still marrying him, despite the abuse. Participants also described an incident where a woman posted a picture on social media of the man who beat her daughter in order to publicly shame him. This was lauded by the men as a suitable consequence for the abuser and they indicated that the individual should be avoided.
- **Publicly Speaking Out:** Focus group participants who had personally experienced IPV said that they tried to speak out about their experiences with others with the hope of helping them to avoid a similar situation.
- **School:** According to focus group participants who interacted frequently with children, schools are teaching about IPV and school staff asks children if they are experiencing abuse in the home. Students are taught to identify IPV, but—at least according to the adults in the focus groups—they are hesitant to tell their teachers if there is violence at home, because they fear their parent might be arrested. The survey results suggested that younger people (18 to 24) were more likely to feel like it was appropriate to intervene in a dispute between romantic partners as opposed to older people (67% v. 57%), which could suggest a change in attitudes towards IPV.
- **Public Awareness Campaign:** Participants suggested that it would be helpful to have a public awareness campaign to educate the community about what exactly IPV is and that it also includes verbal and emotional abuse.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Based on the results of the community survey and focus groups, along with discussion about the findings with planning staff and community stakeholders, we have identified five specific considerations in creating an intervention to address intimate partner violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Victim-Offender Overlap

Due to a cycle of abuse and community norms that condone aggressive behavior, it may be difficult to label one person as the “victim” and one as the “perpetrator” in the traditional sense. Instead, power dynamics between partners are often shifting. This phenomenon has been described elsewhere in the literature and, notwithstanding ongoing debates about sex symmetry in violence perpetration, there is some support for understanding *some* intimate partner violence as “situational,” or gender-neutral violence in response to a specific conflict that spins out of control (e.g., Pinchevsky and Wright 2012, Tillyer and Wright 2014).

However, there are also instances of IPV in the community, where one partner exercises exclusive control in the relationship and uses tactics such as severe violence, economic subordination, and threats. Focus group participants identified times when they had been the victim of intimate partner violence, but also talked about times when they had been the perpetrator or the dynamic had been fluid. These two different dynamics of intimate partner violence in the community both deserve attention, but different interventions are needed, as well as a mechanism for deciding which intervention might be most appropriate. For example, a controlling perpetrator might use a restorative justice intervention such as a peacemaking circle as yet another avenue for intimidating their partner, while parties experiencing situational IPV might benefit from such an approach, where they can discuss problems and be supported by family and friends.

Education about Intimate Partner Violence

While many people recognize physical violence as abuse, other forms of intimate partner violence (e.g., emotional, verbal, financial abuse) are not as commonly recognized. Behavior such as insulting, yelling, and public criticism are reportedly regular occurrences in Bedford-Stuyvesant. A public awareness campaign that identifies and defines intimate partner

violence and abuse in clear terms could go a long way towards undermining community normalization of violence and encouraging new types of communication. Survey results suggest that respondents ages 18-24 were more likely than older respondents to intervene in incidents of intimate partner violence. These findings suggest some positive impacts of programming targeted at raising awareness of intimate partner violence among young people. The New York City Department of Education has implemented a variety of prevention and social-emotional learning programs in recent years; the survey findings suggest it would be worthwhile to explore models for increasing awareness and bystander intervention throughout the community.

Sex Differences

The survey found that female respondents were significantly more likely than males to be personally affected by intimate partner violence (38% v. 22%). There were also sex differences in terms of what women and men viewed as acceptable behaviors. While there was some overlap, male and female focus group participants also expressed different perspectives on both the causes of intimate partner violence and ways to address intimate partner violence. These differences are worth considering in developing a community intervention; different messaging may be more or less effective for specific groups.

Cultural Norms

Previous studies examining the role of cultural norms surrounding violence have found that neighborhoods in which violence is more acceptable have an increased likelihood of IPV (Pinchevsky and Write 2012; Wright and Benson 2010). While cultural norms can be difficult to measure, this work focuses on whether or not family violence is deemed acceptable and/or considered a private issue. Cultural norms promoting the privacy of family matters—such as fighting—are a significant predictor of nonlethal intimate partner violence. The survey findings reveal that 41% of respondents (34% of women, 50% of men) consider fighting between intimates to be a private matter; 36% of respondents would not interfere in others' intimate partner violence. The survey also revealed that the majority of respondents (67%) viewed retaliatory violence as acceptable. Furthermore, the focus group discussions suggested that verbal abuse was common in the neighborhood and that physical violence, while not officially condoned, was experienced by many respondents from a young age.

Mistrust of Police

Both the survey results and the focus group discussions confirmed that there is a sense of mistrust of the police in the community. For some, that mistrust stems from prior

mistreatment by the police and leads to a hesitancy to turn to police for help, especially when the situation could be resolved with the help of family or friends. For others, unwillingness to call the police was due to concerns that once called, the perpetrator would be arrested and put on a path in the criminal justice system that could lead to unintended consequences (e.g., job loss, financial hardship for the family). Finally, some felt that the police were ineffective and the problem would not actually stop the abuse. People did indicate that there was a line that, if crossed, they would definitely call the police—for instance, if they witnessed a man physically assaulting a woman. However, even in cases of extreme physical abuse, focus group participants reported that they had not called the police in response to their own abuse.

Research on procedural justice has found that if police officers fail to treat citizens with respect, politeness, and fairness, citizens will lose trust in police. This has real consequences, because when citizens do not trust the police, they are less likely to cooperate with law enforcement and more likely to retaliate when they are victimized (Nix et al. 2015). Any intervention created to address intimate partner violence in the target neighborhood in Bedford-Stuyvesant must consider the existing relationship between the community and police officers and either make an effort to improve police-community relations and provide police interventions that do not necessarily lead to prosecution, or be entirely community-based and exclude law enforcement involvement.

Next Steps

The next step for program planners is to use the research findings as a basis for evaluating the appropriateness of various evidence-based interventions to address the issue of intimate partner violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Planners originally considered various community violence interventions that had not yet been tested in an intimate partner violence setting as possible options. Based on the research findings, we conclude that a community violence-based program could be an appropriate intervention for addressing intimate partner violence. In the both the surveys and the focus groups, community members expressed interest in addressing intimate partner violence and building healthy relationships and improving communication. There was a mistrust of police, so a restorative justice approach which addresses community norms, rather than a top-down, call-in model would be more appropriate for addressing the problem. In addition, the intervention should also include some public education about intimate partner violence.

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Appendix A. Community Survey

FOR SURVEYORS: Date of Survey: _____ Closest Intersection/Zone: _____

Survey on Community Violence

Introduction script

Hi, my name is _____. I'm a volunteer with the Bedford Stuyvesant Anti-Violence Project. We're conducting a survey to learn about the feelings and attitudes of Bedford Stuyvesant residents towards domestic violence and other forms of community violence.

We want to know what you think!

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. If you do participate, your responses will be kept confidential; I don't even need to know your name. This information is for research purposes only. The survey will be about 20 minutes, and it is only for adults over 18 years old, who are residents, business owners and/or who work or go to school in Bedford Stuyvesant.

Eligibility

1) How old are you? ____ years
(If the person is under the age of 18, they are not eligible for the survey, thank them and move on)

2) Do you live or work in this neighborhood?
 Yes, live in the neighborhood
 Yes, work in the neighborhood only
 Yes live AND work in the neighborhood
 No *(if No, person is not eligible for the survey, thank them and move on)*

(if respondent is 18 or older AND answered YES to Q2, then proceed with survey below)

Demographics

3) What kind of housing do you live in?
 Public housing (NYCHA)
 Private home or apartment

- Shelter/transitional
- Homeless
- Other: _____

4) If NYCHA (public) housing, do you live in any of the following buildings?

- Marcy Houses
- Tompkins Houses
- I do not live in any of these buildings:
 - If some place other than one of these buildings, what is the closest intersection to where you live?

_____ and

5) What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Other

6) How would you describe your race/ethnic background? (*check all that apply*)

- Black/African American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- White/Caucasian
- Other: _____

7) What languages are spoken in your household? (*check all that apply*)

- English
- Spanish
- Other: _____

8) What is your relationship status?

- Single/never married
- Married
- In a serious relationship, unmarried
- Divorced/separated
- Widowed

I am going to now begin the survey about your feelings and attitudes towards intimate partner violence and other forms of community violence. For reference throughout the survey when I say Intimate Partner Violence I mean violence that happens when one person in a romantic relationship (dating, living together, married, etc.) abuses the other. Abuse can be physical (hitting, slapping, choking), but it can also be verbal (making threats, using put downs), emotional (telling the other person they are worthless, isolating them from family or friends), or even financial (not allowing the person to control money, access money, etc.).

Community Problems/Safety

First I'm going to ask you some questions about some issues in the neighborhood. Let's talk about some issues that may exist here. After each issue I state, tell me if you think it is a big problem, minor problem, not a problem, or you don't know in your neighborhood, and then if you feel like it is something that affects you personally.

	Big Problem	Minor Problem	Not a Problem	Don't Know	Affects me personally
9) Public Drinking	1	2	3	4	Y/N
10) Drug Use	1	2	3	4	Y/N
11) Gangs	1	2	3	4	Y/N
12) Drug selling in public	1	2	3	4	Y/N
13) Drug selling not in public	1	2	3	4	Y/N
14) Theft	1	2	3	4	Y/N
15) Assault	1	2	3	4	Y/N
16) Sexual assault	1	2	3	4	Y/N

17) Mugging	1	2	3	4	Y/N
18) Gun violence	1	2	3	4	Y/N
19) Fighting	1	2	3	4	Y/N
20) Bullying	1	2	3	4	Y/N
21) Street needing repairs/poor street lighting	1	2	3	4	Y/N
22) Violence between teenagers in dating relationships	1	2	3	4	Y/N
23) Child abuse	1	2	3	4	Y/N
24) Prostitution	1	2	3	4	Y/N
25) Building repairs (i.e., broken doors, poor lighting, etc. – NYCHA only)	1	2	3	4	Y/N
26) Intimate partner violence	1	2	3	4	Y/N

27) In terms of street violence (fights or confrontations that happen outside or on the streets), how do you think Bed-Stuy compares to other neighborhoods in Brooklyn?

- Better (less violence)
- Worse (more violence)
- About the Same

28) In the past 12 months, how often have you **seen someone threatened** with a weapon in the neighborhood?

- Almost every day
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Once every few months
- Once every six months
- Rarely

- Never

29) How safe do you feel inside your home?

- Very Safe
- Somewhat Safe
- Somewhat Unsafe
- Very Unsafe

30) How likely would you be to contact the police if you saw someone being hurt?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely

31) How likely would you be to contact the police if you were hurt inside your home by someone you know?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely

32) If you saw someone being hurt in your neighborhood, the *first* thing you would do is ...

- Call someone from a local community organization
 - Call the police
 - Call family and/or friends
 - Nothing, not any of my business
 - Other (*please specify*):
-

33) How would you characterize the relationship between the community and the police in the last year?

- Very Positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very Negative

34) Tell me how much you agree with this statement: Fighting between romantic partners is nobody else's business.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree

Strongly Disagree

35) Tell me how much you agree with this statement: Fighting between family members is nobody else's business.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

36) Do fights at home between intimate partners (people in a romantic relationship) ever affect the greater community or spill outside?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never
- Don't know

37) How likely would you be to report a case of intimate partner violence to authorities?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Very Likely
- Don't Know

For the next statements, please tell me whether you: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Agree; or Strongly Agree.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	(Vol) Don't Know	(Vol) Refused
A person who walks away from a fight is a coward or "chicken."	1	2	3	4	0	9
It's okay to hit someone who hits you first.	1	2	3	4	0	9
It is sometimes OK for a woman to hit her husband or partner.	1	2	3	4	0	9
People should not interfere in violence between romantic partners.	1	2	3	4	0	9
It is sometimes OK for a man to hit his wife or partner.	1	2	3	4	0	9

For the next few questions, please indicate whether the best answer is: Yes, No, or whether you are Unsure.

38) Is yelling at someone an example of violent behavior?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

39) Is threatening to hurt someone an example of violent behavior?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

40) Is insulting someone an example of violent behavior?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Questions about intimate partner violence

41) Would you know what to do if someone told you that they were experiencing abuse from their partner or if you were experiencing it yourself?

- Yes
- No

42) What would you do?

43) What are common beliefs about intimate partner violence in your community?

44) Who have you heard talk about intimate partner violence? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Clergy or other people at church
- Police officers
- Community organizations (specify: _____)
- Parents
- Other family members
- Mostly women
- Mostly men
- Other: _____

45) Who do you think should be responsible for talking about intimate partner violence?

46) In your opinion, are people comfortable talking about violence between partners or in the home?

- Yes
- No

47) Why or why not?

How comfortable are you talking about the following subjects:

	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Not comfortable	Avoid altogether
48) Intimate partner violence	1	2	3	4
49) Police	1	2	3	4
50) Racism	1	2	3	4
51) Drugs	1	2	3	4

52) Guns	1	2	3	4
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53) Have you ever received any information that was helpful for you to understand more about intimate partner violence? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Presentation on Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence
- Pamphlet on Safety Planning
- Intimate partner violence helpline
- Information about what is intimate partner violence
- Other: _____

54) If you reported intimate partner abuse to the police, what do you think would happen? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Nothing
- The abuse would stop
- Police would arrest the person responsible
- Police would come but would not arrest the person responsible
- Both parties would get arrested
- Police would arrest the person responsible but they would be back in a day or so and things would just continue
- Calling the police would make the situation worse
- Calling the police would lead to eviction
- Calling the police would lead to the person responsible not being allowed to see his or her family
- It would be traumatic for the children
- Other: _____

55) In your opinion, how likely is it that a campaign to stop or reduce gun violence (such as community action and events) would actually help stop or reduce gun violence?

- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

56) Why do you feel this way? *(Please write clearly)*

57) In your opinion, how likely is it that a campaign to stop or reduce intimate partner violence (such as community action and events) would actually help stop or reduce intimate partner violence?

- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

58) Why do you feel this way? *(Please write clearly)*

59) What kind of help do you think a family experiencing intimate partner violence really wants?

60) What kind of resources currently exist in the community to address intimate partner violence? _____

Thank you!!

Note to researcher: Please separate this page from the rest of the survey.

Would you be interested in participating in a focus group about intimate partner violence in your community?

- No
- Yes

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

Appendix B.

Focus Group Protocol

BED-STUY INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION, CONSENT, and QUESTIONS:

Thank you all for taking the time to meet with us. My name is _____ and this is _____.

[Facilitator(s) give participants time to read consent form and sign and return it to facilitator.

Collect all forms and excuse individuals that choose not to participate.]

If you are willing to participate in the research at this time, I would like to remind you of your rights as a research subject before we begin:

I want to remind you that your participation is completely voluntary and will not affect any services you may be receiving from victim service programs. Keep in mind that if you participate, you may stop participating in the focus groups at any time, you can refuse to answer any question that is asked, and we will keep everything you tell us and all other information we collect in the strictest confidence. It will not be told to anyone not directly involved in the research. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any reports or presentations on this research. I also want to remind you that you all pledged to keep everything that was said today in this room—please do not repeat anything that was said to anyone else. To thank you for participating in this research, you will receive a payment of \$20 whether or not you stay until the end of the group or contribute to the conversation.

Do you have any questions?

If you have any other questions about the study, or wish to receive a summary of the study when it is completed, you can call Lenore Lebron at the Center for Court Innovation (646-386-4383), who is in charge of the study.

INTRODUCTIONS:

To get us started, I'd like to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves. When it's your turn, please say just your first name. I'll start. My name is (Name). [Go around the circle.]

(Start recording now)

We're here to talk about intimate partner violence in this community. I know that this can be a sensitive topic and some of the things said during this conversation might be a trigger for you, so

if you need to take a break, feel free to do so. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. We will also have a social worker available to talk to you outside.

Let's get started.

1. Tell me what you think of when you hear the term domestic violence or intimate partner violence
 - a. What does it look like? What forms can it take?
 - b. Who are victims?
 - c. Define IPV if needed
2. How visible do you think IPV is in Bed-Stuy?
 - a. Is it something that is seen or unseen? How do you know it is occurring?
 - b. Is it something that people talk about? Why or why not? Who is talking about it? Where does it occur? (Probe – home, outside, school?)
 - c. Have you been affected by it?
3. What would you do/have you done when you've seen IPV?
 - a. How do you recognize it?
 - b. Is there a point when you would call the police? Why or why not? How do you decide? What happens when police are called? Is it effective? What do you think should happen?
 - c. Are there other ways that you think you could intervene?
 - d. What is your responsibility if you see it?
4. Aside from the couple involved, does IPV affect anyone else? How?
 - a. What are the consequences to individuals, families, children, neighbors, etc.? Schools, jobs, churches...
5. What do you think leads to IPV?
 - a. Are there attitudes that people have in your community that make it more likely to happen?
 - b. In a typical case, is there an underlying source of conflict?
 - c. Are there norms that make it more or less likely? Where do those come from?
6. Are men affected differently by this issue than women? Why is that?
 - a. Do women and men have a different perspective on it?
7. What do you think is the message that children in this community are getting about IPV?
 - a. Who is talking about it? What are they saying? *Probe – community groups, churches, individuals, police?*
 - b. Who do you think should be talking about it? What should they be saying and why?
 - c. What are non-verbal messages that people are sending about IPV in this community?

- d. Do you think that the message can change?
- 8. What do you think could be done to prevent IPV in your community?
 - a. What resources are needed? What are the needs of victims?
 - b. Do you think there is a way to reach men/women about this topic?
- 9. Is IPV connected in any way to gun violence in your community?
 - a. Why do you think so?
- 10. Conclusion: Is there anything else you would like to talk about concerning IPV in your community?

DEBRIEF AND CLOSE:

Thank you all for participating today. I want to say again that what you have shared with us is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any reports or presentations on this research. I also want to remind you that you all pledged to keep everything that was said today in this room—please do not repeat anything that was said to anyone else.

Do you have any questions for me about the study we are doing?

Ok, well then we are all finished for today. I want to remind you that if you want to talk more about any of the topics we discussed today, _____. The information for your guidance counselor is on the first page of the form you signed. Thank you and have a great day! [Give each participant an envelope with \$20 and have them sign the stipend log.]