AFRICAN COMMUNITY SERVICES OF PEEL

RESEARCH REPORT

AWARENESS AND PREVENTION OF VICTIMIZATION IN THE AFRICAN CANADIAN COMMUNITY IN PEEL

(JULY 2006)

Prepared by:
African Community Services of Peel

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- Armagh, Mississauga
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- Family Services of Peel
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- Peel HIV/AIDS Network
- Ruth Seventh Day Adventist Church, Brampton
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- Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services of Halton
- United Achievers' Community Services
- Anonymous Respondents including community opinion leaders, victims, networking Partner organizations, youth and faith based organizations.

Executive Summary

This study was conducted by African Community Services of Peel (ACS) through a grant from the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario Victim Services Secretariat. The primary purpose of the study was to explore the extent to which African Canadian women and children in Peel understand what constitutes victimization and are aware of the services available for victims and the extent to which they access those services. The study would also develop strategies for improving access to victims' services for African Canadian women and children and share the findings with other service providers.
This was in response to the dearth of information that currently exists. The study would assess the theoretical understanding by the women and children, of the term *victimization* and examine factors associated with it among the women and children. This study will show:

- African/Caribbean women and children's level of understanding of victimization and issues surrounding it
- Access issues in acquisition of information and services on victimization
- How the research findings can assist ACS and other service providers in developing effective strategies for addressing barriers that target women and children face in accessing victims' services

The following research tools were used in the study:

- Questionnaires
- Focus Groups
- Case File Studies
- One-on-One Key Informant Interviews (for both service providers and victim members of the community)

According to current literature, victimization is commonly understood to be anything that causes emotional, psychological and/or physical pain. It occurs in all facets of society. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics produced a report that indicates that the most frequently reported form of victimization is violence against women by an intimate partner. The statistics indicate that the violence made up 62% of reported crime[1]. As a result, the literature available on victimization of women mostly covers topics of partner violence and sexual assault.

The results of this study reveal that there is a significant difference in the way women from the Caribbean and women from continental Africa understand victimization. There is a disparity in the way both groups understand and respond to victimization. A larger part of the African women respondents in the study were unemployed. They affirmed that they rely heavily on word-of-mouth as a source of information. Furthermore, it was

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[1] Canadian Council on Social Development, *Responding to Partner Violence, National Network on Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women. Bulletin 2 csd.ca/subsites/cd/docs/bulletin/2/index.html>March 17, 2006*

noted that continental African women may, to a larger extent, condone some acts of victimization compared to Caribbean women. Language appeared to be a major obstruction to most African women in their search and access to information, services and assistance.

The study revealed that each community has its own unique vulnerabilities, for ACS and other service providers to be more effective in addressing victimization in the target community, they will have to be more proactive in:

- ✓ educating the community in a culturally sensitive manner
- ✓ ensuring that the women and children are aware of available services
- ✓ Identifying cultural, institutional, attitudinal and religious issues in community's understanding of victimization
- ✓ securing the trust of the women and children
- ✓ identifying more proactive ways of minimizing victimization in the community.

ACS hopes that the findings of this study will form a basis for the initiation of more progressive, responsive, accessible and effective programs for women and children victims from the African/Caribbean community in Peel.

Wambui Karanja, Executive Director
Tendai Marowa, Lead Researcher
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Methodology

For an in-depth understanding of victimization issues qualitative and quantitative methods of study were employed. ACS used questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, literature review, focus groups, case reviews and key informants interviews. (See annexure A, B, C, D and E.) These instruments enabled ACS to identify and examine the level of understanding of victimization issues by the African/Caribbean women and children in Peel Region.

The questionnaires where phrased in a way that enabled a respondent (after stating "Yes/No" or "True /False") to validate their responses. A number of the respondents did take advantage of the open spaces to elaborately substantiate their responses.

A total of four focus group sessions were organized successfully. The participants were given the opportunity to verbalize their opinions. Each focus group was made up of a specific age group, a move which the participants welcomed as they felt less inhibited and thus free to speak out about their opinions.

The key informant interviews were made up of victim service providers and community members respectively. Both groups provided some profound depth to the study. Their submissions illuminated the knowledge base of the issues surrounding victimization. They also had a lot of interestingly constructive recommendations, which ACS will find indispensable.

From its own archives, ACS pulled some victimization cases it had handled ranging from partner abuse to employer/employee victimization within the African/Caribbean community. The review depicted prevailing current deficiencies in both the victims' understanding of victimization and the extent of awareness of services available to victims.

Literature Review

A lot of literature on victimization is readily available to the public. The Internet has made it possible for the public to access information fast and inexpensively. However, literature on victimization issues of African/Caribbean women and children in the Peel region continues to be sparse. Particularly, there has been no study on the barriers these women and children face in their attempts to access victimization services.

The Center for Research on Violence against Women and Children conducted a research study into accessibility of women abuse services by Arab-speaking Muslim women in the London, Ontario community. In this study, the main aim was to determine what type of barriers Arab-speaking women face in accessing women's services within London. For this study the author, Mohammed Baobaid, interviewed people from Arab-speaking countries, which included African countries such as: Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Sudan.

Non-Muslim women from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean did not feature in the study. Baobaid concluded that most women in the communities he targeted prefer to bear the burden of spousal abuse instead of reporting to the relevant agencies[2]. This study and other studies still offer useful/valuable insights into the topic of victimization and how it relates to them even though they do not deal with non Muslim African/Caribbean women in the Peel region.

Study Limitations

 There were a few limitations noted during the study, namely:

1. Limited African groups

Peel Region, which includes Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, unlike its bigger and more metropolitan neighbour Toronto, does not draw as many diverse African immigrants. More diverse African groups prefer settling in Toronto. For example, one will find a bigger ratio of Zimbabweans, South Africans and Zambians in Toronto than in Peel while more Somalis, Ghanaians, Nigerians, Kenyans and Sudanese are more represented in Peel. Moreover, most African Canadians move to Peel after initially settling in Toronto. Inevitably, this irregularity was reflected in the study in the number of respondents/study participants from each community.

2. Misinterpretation of Study Topic

There was some significant misinterpretation surrounding the topic. A number of the women were either quick to link victimization with racism or would simply interpret it to refer to sexual or physical abuse. A significant number of women expressed that they found the term "victimization' too broad a term and they felt that the conductors of the study should have picked a term with a narrower meaning. Others had no concept of the term victimization or tended to deny its existence.

3. Exclusion of Women in Cultural/Ethnic Group Leadership

In trying to access participants for the study, ACS had to face up to some challenges. Men head most of the local cultural/ethnic groups in the region. Among some groups, men are viewed as the communities' gatekeepers and it was a challenge to get past the men to the women. Since men were not the main target group for the study, in the social Clubs and organizations headed by men that we contacted, the men were not very enthusiastic about providing contacts of their female membership for recruitment and participation in the study.

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[2] Baobaid, Mohammed. *Access to Women Abuse Services by Arab-Speaking Muslin Women in London Ontario. Background Investigation and Recommendations for Further Research and Outreach.* <http://www.crvawc.ca/documents/Final-AccesstoWomenAbuseServicesbyArabSpeakingMuslimWomeninLondon_001.pdf> *March 17, 2006* pg.18

4. Education/Literacy Levels of Women

The level of education/literacy of some of the participants affected their ability to understand some questions. While most youth understood the questions, still, some youth and some women needed elaborate clarification on some terms or context of the questions in order for them to respond effectively.

5. Costs of Participation

There were costs associated with participating in the focus groups. Transportation, babysitting and taking time off work to attend the focus groups were barriers to participation in the focus groups. This limited the number of focus group participants. It is crucial that in future studies, such costs be taken into consideration to allow for maximum participation.

Understanding Victimization

In his study, Baobaid stated that victims would rather turn to friends and family than to governmental or legal agencies. When help from friends and family is unsuccessful, the victim may turn to a religious leader within the community. The police and women's agencies are usually a last resort if all fails. There are various reasons why this is the case and it may lie with the cultural belief that family matters should not be discussed with people outside the community (especially agencies). There is ignorance of available agencies within their community; and negative views about these agencies and services[3].

Barriers

The Canadian Council on Social Development did a research study to find out what barriers immigrant and visible minority women face in getting out of abusive relationships and accessing services to help them recover. The tools of the research included focus groups discussions, interviews with frontline service providers and key informants. The result was published in a book entitled *Nowhere to Turn?* The research study emphasized the need for service providers to be culturally sensitive to immigrant women and visible minority women seeking help from abusive relationships. The study also emphasized the need for stakeholders to provide ways to reduce discrimination, stereotyping and marginalization of immigrant and visible minority women as well as making sure that the services provided are well suited for these women[4].

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[3] Baobaid, Mohammed. *Access to Women Abuse Services by Arab-Speaking Muslin Women in London Ontario. Background Investigation and Recommendations for Further Research and Outreach.* <http://www.crvawc.ca/documents/Final-AccesstoWomenAbuseServicesbyArabSpeakingMuslimWomeninLondon_001.pdf> *March 17, 2006* pg. 19
[4] Canadian Council on Social Development, *Responding to Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women < http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2004/nowhere/nowhere_to_turn.pdf>March 17, 2006*

The threat of deportation

In a follow up to the above study, The Canadian Council on Social Development developed two electronic bulletins for the national network of service providers for immigrant and visible minority women who were experiencing spousal violence. The bulletins included various articles on key issues concerning immigrant women and victimization. A particular article titled *Women face dilemma: Abuse or deportation* talked about the unique experiences of immigrant women whose status is tied to that of sponsorship from their husbands[5]. These women face the fear of threat of being deported back to their countries of origin if their spouse withdraws sponsorship of them. This article stated that even when immigrant women suffer domestic abuse they are less likely to report it. Often the fear that the husband may withdraw sponsorship of them is one of the reasons why they refrain from reporting[6].

The threat of homelessness

The second bulletin contained an article titled *Key Elements of the Homelessness Experience among Immigrant and Refugee Women*, which discusses the relationship between domestic violence and homelessness amongst immigrant and refugee women. The author, Ekuwa Smith argues that domestic violence is a significant contributor to homelessness and therefore understanding domestic violence amongst immigrant women will also help in understanding homelessness within this group as well[7]. Another article by Angie Aurora titled *Experiences of Frontline Shelter workers in Providing Services to Immigrant Women Impacted by Family Violence* discussed a research study that had been conducted into the issues that service providers face when trying to provide help to immigrant and refugee women. Some of these difficulties included: lack of sufficient training; language barriers; cultural barriers; and adaptation to Canadian counseling norms[8].

Cultural Racism

The FREDA Center for Research on Violence against Women and Children conducted research into the issues that immigrant women of color face in accessing health care services and what type of experiences they have encountered. This study titled *Intersecting Inequalities: Immigrant Women of Color, Violence and Health Care* showed

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[5] Canadian Council on Social Development, *Responding to Partner Violence, National Network on Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women*, Bulletin 1
<http://www.ccsd.ca/subsites/cd/docs/bulletin/1/index.html> March 15, 2006
[6] Canadian Council on Social Development, *Responding to Partner Violence, National Network on Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women* Bulletin 1
<http://www.ccsd.ca/subsites/cd/docs/bulletin/1/index.html> March 15, 2006
[7] Canadian Council on Social Development, *Responding to Partner Violence, National Network on Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Bulletin 2*
<http://www.ccsd.ca/subsites/cd/docs/bulletin/2/index.html>March 15, 2006
[8] Canadian Council on Social Development, *Responding to Partner Violence, National Network on Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Bulletin 2*
<http://www.ccsd.ca/subsites/cd/docs/bulletin/2/index.html>March 15, 2006

that immigrant women were more prone to experiencing violence because of issues such as isolation, lack of language skills and knowledge of Canadian culture, racism, sexism, *devaluing of their skills*, *ghettoization* and exploitation in underpaid and hazardous jobs[9]. Immigrant women of color who have suffered abuse receive inadequate health care from physicians and other healthcare providers for various reasons such as cultural racism.

Cultural racism involves stereotypes that healthcare providers have about certain cultures and their attitude towards women. For example many physicians may believe that woman abuse occurs in certain communities' because the cultures of those communities promote violence. Furthermore, immigrant women of color often find it difficult to report spousal abuse because they are often members of close knit communities and may fear ostracisation if they reveal they are experiencing abuse. Also due to language barriers women may turn to physicians of the same culture who are often chosen by their spouses. As a result it becomes difficult to trust the confidentiality of the physician[10].

Definitions

What is Victimization?

Victimization may be defined as physical, emotional, psychological and/or financial harm[11]. Victimization often occurs as a result of a criminal act.

Who is a Crime Victim?

In Canada, the definition of a victim of crime is area specific. The definition varies from province to province. If one needs to prepare a victim impact statement it is safe to assume the definition as stated under section 722 (4) of the *Criminal Code*, a victim is defined as:

(a) the person to whom harm was done or who suffered physical or emotional loss as a result of the commission of the offence; and
(b) where the person described in paragraph (a) is dead, ill or otherwise incapable of making a statement referred to in subsection (1) includes the spouse of any relative of that person, anyone who is in law or fact the custodian of that person or is responsible for the care of support of that person or any dependant of that person[12].

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[9] Jiwani, Yasmin *Intersecting Inequalities: Immigrant Women of Colour, Violence and Health Care< http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/articles/hlth.htm>March 21, 2006*
[10] Jiwani, Yasmin *Intersecting Inequalities: Immigrant Women of Colour, Violence and Health Care< http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/articles/hlth.htm>March 21, 2006*
[11] Karmen, Andrew *Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology.* Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1990, 2nd ed. Pg. 11
[12] Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, *The Impact of Victimization <http://www.crcvc.ca/docs/victimization.pdf>July 4, 2006. Pg. 1*

In general, crime victims are mostly understood to be the people directly impacted by the offense. It should be noted that even though the perpetrator of the offense remains at large, the person affected is still perceived a victim. It is not only the person directly affected by the offense who suffers some kind of distress, but his/her friends and family may be affected and thus they may need advice and counseling.[13]

Revictimization

In *Revictimization: Examining its occurrence in the Lives of Survivors,*

> *"The term victimization may be used to describe a series of traumatic events that befall the same person over a lifetime"[14]..... Re-victimization can occur when someone who has suffered abuse or violence at one stage in their life experiences it again at another stage in their life. It can also take the form of how victims are treated by societal institutions or law enforcers and lawyers. Revictimization can also manifest itself in how family, friends or colleagues react once they learn about the victims' experiences. It is implied that there is a connection between child sexual abuse and revictimization[15]*

There is a study which has established that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was common in women who have suffered sexual abuse[16]

What are crime victim services?

Crime victim services are programs that have been established to assist a victim through the criminal justice system. In Canada the following are the programs which have been developed to assist victims[17]:

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[13] Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, *The Impact of Victimization <http://www.crcvc.ca/docs/victimization.pdf> February 22, 2006. Pg. 1*
[14] Reilly, Mary Anne *Revictimization: Examining its occurrence in the Lives of Survivors < http://www.havoca.org/Articles/art%20revictimisation.htm>July 4, 2006*
[15] Reilly, Mary Anne *Revictimization: Examining its occurrence in the Lives of Survivors <* http://www.havoca.org/Articles/art%20revictimisation.htm>July 4, 2006
[16] Cloitre, Marylene *Practical and Theoretical Consideration in The treatment of Sexually Revictimized Women<* http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/publications/cq/v4/n3/cloitre.html> July 4, 2006
[17] Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime. *Homicide Survivors – Dealing with Grief. <* http://www.crcvc.ca/docs/homsurv.pdf> July 4, 2006. Pg. 16

- Police-based victim services which are based in the community and are generally managed by trained local police personnel
- Crown/court-based services, which would be the Crown or court-based services such as Victim/Witness Assistance Programs. They focus on victim assistance in criminal justice system.
- Community-based services would include distress centres, sexual assault centres, safe homes, and victim advocacy groups.
- System-based approach is an all inclusive approach and provides a broad range of services from one location. Only a few provinces use this approach.

Study Statistics

In this study a total of 61 women and youth completed questionnaires fully.   Table 1 shows the countries of origin of the (questionnaire) respondents and Table 2 (below) highlights the various age groups of the respondents and respectively.
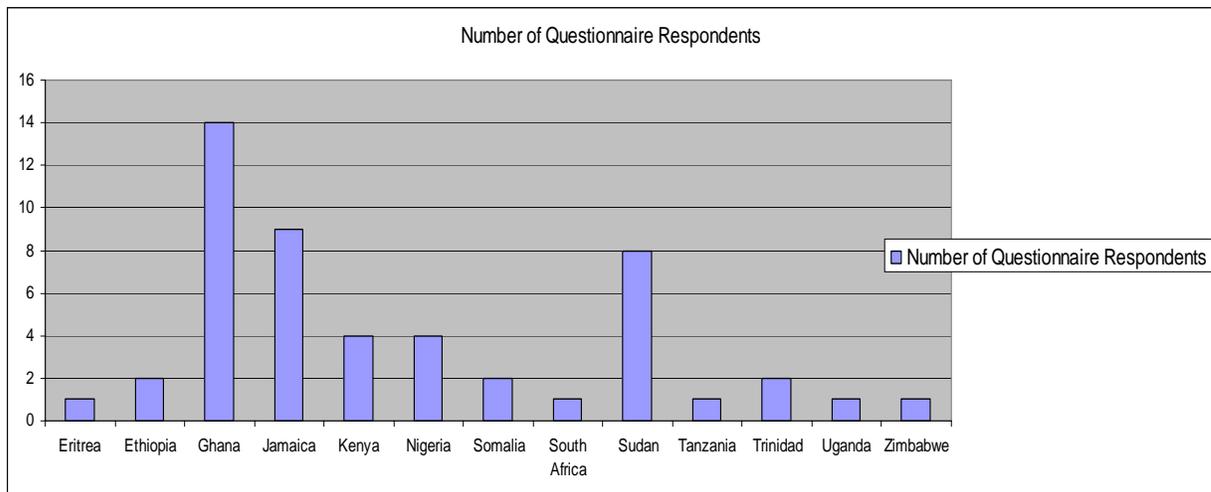
Table 1

Table 2

Ages of Women who Completed Questionnaires
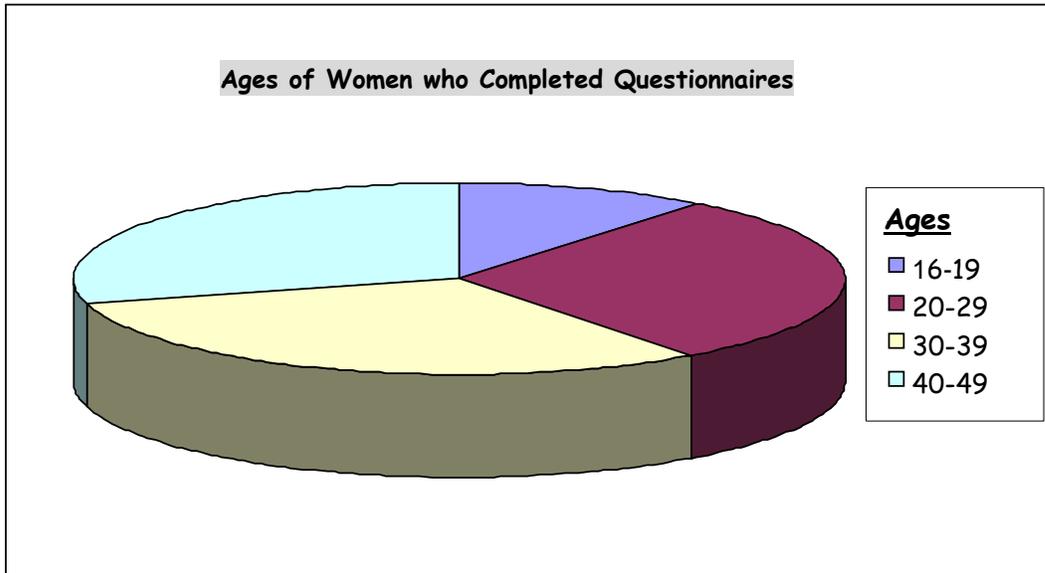

Ages
- 16-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49

Table 3 below indicates the total number of women and children who participated either as key informants or focus group participants. The table also indicates the total number of cases reviewed:

Table 3

PARTICIPANTS	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER
• *Key Informant*	*Service Providers*	*10*
• *Key Informant*	*Community Members*	*10*
• *Case Reviews*	*N/A*	*13*
• *Focus Group (9-14 years)*	*Group 1*	*13*
• *Focus Group (15-18 years)*	*Group 2*	*15*
• *Focus Group (18+ years)*	*Group 3*	*28*
• *Focus Group (18+ years)*	*Group 4*	*12*

Analysis of Data

The study focused on African and Caribbean women and children. Responses to questions revealed the influence of some socio-economic factors on how African and Caribbean women and children perceive victimization:

1. The role of culture

In the study, the woman's perception of abuse was largely influenced by her cultural values and beliefs. If in her culture the man generally enjoys dominance over the woman, then she was less likely to seek assistance regarding domestic abuse let alone do anything else to change her fate or improve her situation.

2. The role of education

In the study, it was observed that the woman's level of education determined the level of her confidence, ability to communicate, understand issues, seek and receive information. Women with high school, college diplomas and degrees were more vocal, sensitive and able to analyze victimization issues objectively than those without. Table 4 shows the percentage distribution of women having elementary, high school, college and university education respectively.

Table 4

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	%
o Elementary	2.5
o High School	45
o College and University	52.5

3. The role of employment

Of the women interviewed in the study, a larger percentage of Caribbean women were employed compared to their African counterparts. Incidentally, a number of unemployed women cited lack of money and transport problems as major barriers to seeking outside intervention. Please refer to table below.

Table 5

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	%
• Unemployed	33
• Part – time	5.5
• Full time	61
• Casual Employment	0.5

4. The role of religion

In this study it was acknowledged that religion influences a woman's perception of victimization and her reaction to it. A notable percentage of the participants indicated that women with strong religious backgrounds were more willing to forgive and protect their abuser than those without. These women were more intent on preserving the family unit through keeping all negative information within the family. Forced sex was often justified as the acceptable manifestation of man's dominance over the woman.

Regarding Victimization

Questionnaires

In questionnaires the African and Caribbean women were asked to give their definition of victimization. About 85% of the women defined victimization to exclusively mean physical abuse and sexual assault. Even fewer women linked suicide of a loved one and hit and run to victimization. As shown in the table 6 below, Caribbean women had a broader outlook towards victimization.

The table below shows the percentages of women and how they perceived/defined victimization:

Table 6

VICTIMIZATION FACTOR	%
➢ Domestic Abuse	85
➢ Sexual Assault/Rape	85
➢ Physical Assault	90
➢ Suicide of a loved one	60
➢ Homicide of a loved one	66
➢ Robbery	70
➢ Criminal harassment (stalking)	70
➢ Breaking and Entry	50
➢ Hit and Run	40

Further to the above, the women were then asked to pick from a list, the various ways in which a person may be abused by their partner. Table 7 below indicates the total percentage of women who identified various factors as abuse.

Table 7

IDENTIFYING TYPES OF ABUSE	%
❖ Financial	99.5
❖ Physical	100
❖ Emotional	95
❖ Sexual	100
❖ Psychological	100
❖ Spiritual	65

The questionnaire went on to test the women's knowledge base of organizations and services that assist victims in the Peel Region. Table 8 below, indicates the result:

Table 8

ASSESSMENT OF LEVEL OF AWARENES OF PEEL ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICES THAT ASSIST VICTIMS	%
▪ Yes, they exist	75
▪ No , they do not exist	0.5
▪ I don't know	19.5

The women and children were requested to identify the type of organizations and services where a victim may seek help. Women's shelters, crisis lines and community agencies were the most identifiable ones among the women. The women did not seem to have awareness of other victims' support services in their communities. The results are as shown in Table 9 below:

Table 9

AWARENESS OF TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICES WHERE VICTIMS CAN GET HELP	%
• Women's shelters	90
• Community Agency /Family Centre	80
• Crisis Centre/crisis line	50
• Other	3.5

The women were asked to identify ways they acquired information. Most of the unemployed women stated that they acquire information through word-of-mouth. The findings are as shown in Table 10.

Table 10

METHOD OF ACQUIRING INFORMATION	%
❖ Flyer	40
❖ Magazine	7.5
❖ Newspaper	39
❖ Word-of-mouth	87.5
❖ Television	4.5
❖ Internet	12.5
❖ I have used it	16
❖ Other	1

The women were further asked to highlight factors that may deter them from accessing victim services. Most women agreed that language barriers and long waiting lists would be the biggest deterrents that would stop them from accessing services. Shame and embarrassment were also major deterrents for seeking services. Fear of re-victimization as punishment for reporting was also identified a significant barrier. The women mentioned that the time factor is crucial for anyone who is dealing with issues that may threaten their lives. Lack of trust for authorities/apathy also featured as a barrier to accessing services. The women also pointed out that the location of the services was a big factor in that a close-by service provider would be more convenient. Unlike most African women, most Caribbean women did not cite language as a major barrier.

Below Table 11 shows the percentage of women who considered the identified factors as barriers which confront women when seeking assistance.

Table 11

BARRIERS WHICH WOULD DETER WOMEN FROM ACCESSING SERVICES	AFRICAN %
• Services unavailable within my city/town	60
• If waiting list too long	72.5
• Shame and embarrassment	62.5
• Fear that will not be believed	40
• Distance/Transport	45
• Language barrier	75
• Lack of money	45
• Cultural barrier	30
• Lack of trust for authorities	60
• Fear of re-victimization	70

Conclusion and Recommendations from Questionnaires

Through the questionnaires the women revealed how religion, cultural values, perceptions of the role of law enforcement/authority figures in victimization issues, financial/employment status and level of education affect their perception and reaction to issues of victimization. Service providing agencies will have to take these factors into account when identifying the strategy for handling victimization in the African and Caribbean communities.

The majority of the women recommended that the community based service providers conduct language and culturally appropriate workshops on victimization so that more women will have a clear picture of what it entails. They also stated that most programs come and go without continuation and suggested that there has to be a more sustainable-targeted approach towards educating the women. A lot of women agreed that most African/Caribbean women are not knowledgeable on how to access these services.

In justifying targeted awareness campaigns, one woman interestingly pointed out that because of their cultural background some men in the community may be initiators of abuse and not even know it. A few suggested that community based service providers engage in putting together dramatized teaching sessions – for example plays and drama about victimization.

Comments by the younger women (16-20years) of African origin justify the necessity of immediate targeted education and awareness campaigns. They exhibited a somewhat distorted and idealized notion of relationships. Most of them thought that abuse can be eliminated by showing the abuser more love and respect. Needless to say, such naivety may set up the young women for abuse in the future.

Overall, there was a general consensus that a service provider organization assisting women would be more effective if it focused on:

- o Exploring fresh ways that take into account the socio-economic and cultural background of the women
- o Identifying novel ways of dispensing information taking into account that most women rely on word-of-mouth as a source of information
- o Providing translators for different languages
- o Empowering women and children by educating them of their rights
- o Providing support groups and counseling sessions for affected families
- o Increasing awareness though information sessions at churches, colleges and universities and advertising on the radio
- o Educating the men as well. Some men are abusers through ignorance.

Focus Groups

All in all there were four focus groups. The groups were made of children, teens and mothers.

a. Focus Group 1

This focus group was held with 13 children between the ages of 9-14. When asked what they understood by victimization they unanimously stated that it meant physically or verbally abusing a child. The children were asked to differentiate between discipline and victimization. They said victimization "…is when you take it too far". The children came up with a series of examples to clarify what they meant. They stated that it is when a parent:

- o   Vents out his or her frustrations on the child for example after losing a job
- o   Drinks, loses control and physically abuse the child
- o   Exceedingly hurts the child through frequent beatings

The children were asked in their opinion how child victimization was viewed in the African/Caribbean community; they said that most parents view it as discipline.

Asked about whether the children would seek outside intervention to stop the abuse, they responded by saying that "unlike the white kids" the African children love and protect their parents from possible prosecution.

Fear also was a real issue amongst the children, they indicated that they fear telling on their parents for fear of having their parents incarcerated or (the children) sent to foster homes.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The focus group 1 results revealed that children define victimization as merely physical and verbal abuse. No children identified emotional trauma from witnessing victimization as victimization of them selves and work needs to be done in this area. The children were asked about what ACS can do to assist victimized children. They suggested:

- ▪   Teach the children about their rights and neutralize their fear of the police
- ▪   Educate the parents on the effects of victimizing their children
- ▪   Promote the separation of the children from parents in instances of serious abuse

In conclusion, the children need enlightening on other forms of victimization. They stated that community based service providers need to find ways to gain access to the kids and educate them in a way that would not be considered intrusive and confrontational by the parents.

b. Focus Group 2

This focus group was held with 15 youth whose ages ranged from 14-18. They were aware of what victimization entails. They were able to bring forth some remarkable observations which ACS will find instrumental in mapping the way forward.

Table 12

Discussion Topic	Responses by Youth
What does child victimization mean to you?	- Abuse - Vandalism of your property - Kidnapping - Sexual abuse - Physical abuse - Child pornography - Molestation - Verbal abuse - Sexual harassment - Teen victimization - Making a child do something against his/her will - Bullying or peer pressure - Drug dealing
How can a child be victimized?	- Physical assault - Degrading them - Hurting them emotionally - Verbal harassment - Peer pressure - Forced to do things you don't want to do
Who can victimize children?	- Strangers - Family members - Anyone
What is the attitude of African/Caribbean community on the issue of child victimization?	- It depends, some say its bad, some say it's the parents' business - Some parents engage in abusive acts and do not care - Some react only when an outsider victimizes their child - Orphans have to seek help elsewhere
Do victimized children in the African/Caribbean community look for help?	- They usually do when victimized by a stranger - Some times they are scared or embarrassed to notify parents - Child may fear that parents will stop loving them or they will not be believed if the abuser is a family friend or relative - Many fear that their parents may send them back to their countries of origin - Most children will report the victimization if they know it to be wrong - New immigrants might not know how to report the abuse

	▪ African children who have lived in Canada longer time are more willing to report abuse ▪ Some parents do not teach their kids what is acceptable or not
If you knew someone who was being victimized and they approached you for help, what would you tell them?	▪ One child said she would advise the friend to talk to their parents and if parents do not listen then the police should be notified
What barriers do children who have been victimized face?	▪ Embarrassment ▪ Fear of consequences ▪ Parents may stop trusting them and parents may use that against them later on ▪ Parents will tell everyone ▪ Fear that if you tell a teacher that teacher might tell the police or counselor

Conclusion and Recommendation

African and Caribbean teenage youth seemed to be quite informed and very knowledgeable over most aspects surrounding victimization. Taking into account what the youth said, community based service providers have to come up with a strategy geared towards bridging the communication gap between parents and children. The parents and children may be operating on different levels to the extent that the children have a two - pronged burden of protecting themselves from harsh parental treatment and ironically protecting the parent from possible prosecution.

When asked what an agency like ACS can do to help the children who have been victimized, the youth clearly stated the following:

- Encourage the children to report any abuse to their parents
- Facilitate counseling for parents of children who have been victimized
- Organize counseling for children and encourage them to cooperate with social workers and where abuse is serious to go into foster care.

c. Focus Groups 3 and 4

Focus group 3 and 4 were held with women aged 18 and above. A total of 28 women attended Focus group 3 while 12 women attended Focus group 4. The women unanimously agreed on the fact that society through its norms, values and beliefs can nurture an environment, which is unhealthy for women. One woman said if the culture in which one lives has a general disregard for women then the women will inevitably suffer victimization.

The table below shows the discussion topics and their responses:

Table 13

Question	Response by Youth
What does victimization mean to you?	- The way society regard women - Physical and emotional abuse - Kidnapping - Oppression - A sense of helplessness - Financial - Racism - Sexual victimization - Psychological
Where can African/Caribbean women seek help after victimization?	- A good size of African women may not know where to seek help. - From church ministers - Confiding in someone of same culture as yourself - Friends and women in the community
What are the barriers that could prevent African/Caribbean women who have been victimized from accessing help?	- Lack of finances - Accommodation - Fear of loss of privacy - Low self esteem - Lack of trust of the police - Absence of minorities in police force - Absence of confidence in lawyers - Fear of being shunned by community - Pride - Distrust of agencies - Stigma surrounding seeing a psychiatrist, social worker, or sociologists

The women were asked what the views of the African/Caribbean community were on the issue of violence against women. One woman stated that depending on which culture one is from, some cultures condoned violence against women.

Conclusion and recommendations

A woman in the focus group, made this comment, "Culture stops where education begins and the support begins". In order to change things one needs education and support from the community. It was pointed out by some of the women that in their opinion, some children raised in abusive homes also abuse later on in life and that this is a cycle which has to be broken.

Some women suggested the adoption of Christianity, its values and way of life. A woman from Jamaica said that most Jamaicans love church but at times this distorts their way of thinking as they assume that they have to indiscriminately put up with anything. She proposed a new way of thinking that teaches that Christianity is supposed to set one free from subjection and bondage.

It was highlighted that a culture of secrecy and conservatism serve to nurture abuse, as one does not feel comfortable sharing her problems. Fear of not being believed was

another valid factor raised by the women as a deterrent. Some women have a perceived inherent fear of not being believed. In the case of not knowing where to seek help, one woman who was having a hard time living in Canada, flew back to Jamaica and confided in her church minister there.

When asked what an organization like ACS can do to minimize barriers, the women suggested the following:

- Engage in aggressive advertising
- Commence location awareness campaigns - the women need to know that the community based service providers exists and are available
- Outline what services are available
- Find mentors for young boys

In order for ACS to improve the knowledge/awareness base of African/Caribbean community about victimization the women suggested the following:
1. Workshops
2. Advertising -
   a. African/Caribbean neighbourhoods,
   b. stores
   c. churches
   d. local newspapers
   e. social groups
   f. television
   g. police associations
   h. use of flyers

One woman said she felt that there is a general distrust for social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists. Women are ashamed to seek help from them. Community based service providers have to be proactive in breaking this societal distortion. The women have to feel comfortable about seeking help from an institution. Another woman also said the average African/Caribbean woman does not feel comfortable approaching a white woman and confiding in her for fear of being misunderstood or denigrated. The color and cultural difference is perceived as a barrier in itself. The women further stated that for services to be effective, agencies need to take into account the way of thinking of black people and work around that. It was suggested that agencies and organizations need to lobby the support of progressive people. The women felt that at the end of the day even the African/Caribbean man was a victim too and his needs should not be over looked.

Key Informant Interviews

1. Service providers

In the book *Nowhere to Turn*, the Canadian Council on Social Development study underscored the need for service providers to be culturally sensitive and responsive to immigrant women and visible minority women seeking help from abusive relationships.

The study also highlighted the need for stakeholders to explore ways to reduce discrimination, stereotyping and marginalization of immigrant and visible minority women. As well as making sure that the services provided are well suited for these women.

In this study service providers and members of the community were used as key informants. Both groups were asked to pick from a list of types of victimization issues an African/Caribbean woman was likely to seek assistance for. The table below indicates the percentage of women who picked each factor:

Table 14

WHAT TYPES OF VICTIMIZATION ISSUES DO AFRICAN / CARIBBEAN WOMEN SEEK HELP FOR?	%
➢ Domestic Abuse	90
➢ Sexual Assault Rape	80
➢ Physical Assault	90
➢ Child Abuse	75
➢ Child witness of domestic abuse	80
➢ Robbery	0
➢ Criminal harassment (stalking)	75
➢ Homicide	0
➢ Fraud	10
➢ Traffic offense (victim of drunk driving, hit and run)	0

When asked of the chances of an African/Caribbean woman (who has been victimized) seeking help from victim services/agencies, six out of eight service providers stated that the chances were low. They further went on to say most of the women instead of approaching agencies they would rather contact the following:

- family and/or friends,
- crisis centre/crisis line,
- relied on self
- women's centres/shelters
- community and family centre
- faith groups or church.

The service providers also confirmed that the women were least likely to seek counseling, legal counsel or contact the police.

When asked whether they (the service providers) in their opinion thought the women had easy access to information regarding victim services/agencies, there was a split of opinion – four interviewees responded in the affirmative and the other four to the contrary. One of the service providers said that it was difficult to gain access to information mainly because the women are either too busy with family or work responsibilities or both and may not have the time to visit community centres and other mainstream services. She went on to say that women stay away from agencies because they feel they will not be understood when they express culture-specific issues or language alone might be a big deterrent.

Lack of money for childcare and funds for transportation might also dissuade the women from seeking outside help. For more issues raised please see table below:

Table 15

BARRIERS WHICH WOULD DETER WOMEN FROM ACCESSING SERVICES
• They feel they will be discriminated against because the service provider may not be of same culture as themselves - different values, and different perceptions.
• Lack of money for child care and transportation
• Fear that the police might arrest the abusive partner. Some women do not trust the police in the first place because of the alleged racism that exists in the force.
• Fear of stirring up custody issues
• Fear of being stereotyped
• Language barrier
• Shame and guilt
• Fear that the system will fail them leaving them in a more vulnerable position with the abuser
• Fear that they have to wait for services
• Fear that they will not succeed with their children

The service providers were asked whether they had ever come across an African/Caribbean that they could not help due to language barriers. Six (out of eight) service said "yes". Five of them pointed to language as the major problem and how they resolved that by locating an interpreter. Only one mentioned cultural reservations of the victim as the cause of the problem.

On whether the agencies the services providers work for have information pamphlets on victimization issues in different African/Caribbean languages, four of them said yes. Some had pamphlets in French, Somali, Arabic, Farsi, Spanish and Amharic. Two said their agencies are in the process of incorporating Twi and Arabic.

On the issue of identifying better ways to educate African/Caribbean communities on issues of victimization, the service providers suggested the following:

- ❖ Workshops
- ❖ Seminars and training
- ❖ Information sessions and forums
- ❖ Booths in malls, libraries and stores
- ❖ Compiling and distributing information packages
- ❖ Solicit volunteers from the community
- ❖ Identify community leaders and use them as "ambassadors"
- ❖ Pay more attention to the trends in the community
- ❖ Be more culturally sensitive and secure trust
- ❖ Use schools and employment agencies

ACS wanted to know from the service providers how the victims service / agencies can be improved to better help the African/Caribbean women who have been victimized. The service providers mentioned the necessity of:

- Establishing more ethno-specific agencies at grass-root level
- Being more culturally sensitive and inclusive
- Improving leadership skills
- Securing more funding
- Sharing better practices with other agencies
- Engaging in anti-oppression and anti-racism training sessions
- Investing in literature in relevant languages
- Acquiring staff and volunteers who can relate to the particular group
- Set up a networking system through email

Conclusion and Recommendation

The service providers provided some valuable insight on what community based service providers can focus on. There is need for more outreach in a cultural sensitive way.

Key informants from the Community

ACS interviewed African/Caribbean community leaders as key informants with the goal of gaining a more in-depth look into the issues of victimization. They were asked to give their opinion on the attitude of the African/Caribbean community about the issue of domestic abuse. The following are their comments on the issue:

- o Amongst the older generations the man is the unquestioned head of the house
- o Abuse may be condoned and the woman is urged to bear it because it is a shame to walk out of her marriage or her own family might not allow her back.
- o A woman is expected not to expose her husband for whatever reason
- o The woman is usually said to be the one who provokes her husband into assaulting her, in other words he is the victim
- o There is a lot of denial of domestic abuse in the community
- o The woman is expected to forgive, forget and move on

The key informants (interviewees) were asked what unique circumstances women face when it comes to accessing victim services. The interviewees cited ignorance of the services as the biggest barrier. Seven of the interviewees mentioned shame/embarrassment and fear of the abuser as big deterrents too. Language and cultural inhibitions were also cited as barriers in seeking out assistance.

In response to the question where the African/Caribbean women who have suffered victimization will usually seek help, the interviewees mentioned the following:

- a) Family/friends support
- b) Relying on self
- c) Women shelters (to a small extent)

They stated that the victims would only as a last resort approach the police, doctor, community/family centre or support. Of the ten interviewees, none of them mentioned counseling and lawyers as an option for the women.

When asked if they thought enough was being done within the African/Caribbean community to tackle the problem of domestic abuse, all the key informants unanimously said no. All the informants except for one stated not much was being done. They felt that not much targeted outreach was being done. They mentioned there is just not enough information in the community as they rarely see any flyers or literature in the communities.

In order for community based service providers to educate the community about domestic abuse and other forms of victimization, the informants suggested the following:

- ✓ Sessions, focus groups and workshops to educate both men and women
- ✓ Identifying black psychiatrists and working with them
- ✓ Targeting new comers and educating them through information packages
- ✓ Empowering the women
- ✓ Distributing information in a sensitive manner
- ✓ Targeting the youth and aiming at shaping new attitudes about victimization
- ✓ Bringing families together to share information on issues like anger management
- ✓ Focusing on the implementation of culturally sensitive programs
- ✓ Working with churches and other social or cultural groups

The informants added that community based service providers should look deeply into the matter by zeroing in on the root causes of victimization such as violence, stress, financial problems and racial inequality.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The community key informants were adamant that not much was being done in the communities to educate both men and women. The solutions they offered were almost similar to those by the service providers. Both groups strongly urged community service providers to concentrate on outreach and education of women as a starting point. While service providers saw solutions as coming from the support services in the community, community opinion leaders were overwhelmingly of the opinion that victimized women should seek family or community support first before seeking help outside.

Case studies

In order to have a balanced study, ACS dug in its archives for victimization cases it had handled among its clients.. It pulled up 13 cases ranging from 1996 to 2004. Of the 13 cases of victimization one case was between a Ghanaian nanny and her employer. Because of the victim's fear of deportation the case was never concluded. There was another case of homicide, and the rest were abuse between children and parent/step parent/guardian and between spouses or partners.

The review of the case studies revealed that in the child/parent/guardian cases, the abuse was mostly verbal and financial. In cases of domestic violence between spouses or partners, ACS was able to offer constructive assistance in the form of supportive counseling and legal referrals.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Victims Support organizations and community agencies such as ACS need to continue looking for innovative ways of making the community aware of the services they offer. They also need to identify ways of assisting the children living with guardians or step-parents in a way that safeguards the child's interests and alleviates his/her anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This study provided the necessary platform for effectively appraising African/Caribbean women and children's level of understanding of victimization and issues surrounding it in the Peel Region. The research methods and analysis were meant to provide as accurately as possible a snapshot of the reality in the community and close the current information gap. Thus, the information obtained will be instrumental in providing a proper perspective to the issues surrounding victimization in the African/Caribbean community in Peel.

The study was able to illuminate the extent to which the African/Caribbean women and children access victim services. Further more, it was able to expose the barriers that women and children in the Peel region encounter when accessing those services. ACS and other community service providers will benefit from the study in the development of an effective strategy in confronting the barriers that women and children face in accessing victims' services.

It is quite clear that the strategy should be culturally sensitive for it to be relevant and effective because each community is unique in the way it perceives and reacts to various knowledge and information acquisition tools.

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