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BEHIND THE MIRRORS: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN COSMETOLOGISTS AND SALONS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

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BEHIND THE MIRRORS:
EXAMINING THE ROLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN COSMETOLOGISTS AND SALONS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By
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Lexington, Kentucky

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Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

BEHIND THE MIRRORS:
EXAMINING THE ROLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN COSMETOLOGISTS AND SALONS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

African American beauty salons across the country have historically served as settings for social interaction, political activism, and community organizing in the African American community. These settings often offer opportunities for intimacy between cosmetologists and their clients. Research findings suggest that the unique bonds between women in salons can be a viable option when providing health intervention and education to large numbers of women. Data indicates that salon campaigns and promotions which focused on health issues such as stroke and diabetes education, breast and cervical cancer awareness, healthy living, and smoking cessation, have been efficacious in changing unhealthy habits or increasing knowledge. There are a plethora of social and health issues that could also benefit from this culturally sensitive platform. In particular, abused African American women face multiple barriers when accessing services offered by legal, medical, and social services. These barriers can affect the help-seeking behaviors of victims/survivors. Developing strategic interventions that address the ways in which these women seek help as well as increasing access to services is essential.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used in domestic violence advocacy and education. Theories framing this research included intersectionality and the social ecological framework (SEF). The interrelatedness of intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and societal factors within each framework was used to understand how women experience violence and how the social phenomena in African American salons might provide alternative means of intervention to reach and empower marginalized, abused women. Eleven licensed, African American cosmetologists in three separate salons were recruited. Their perceptions (thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and opinions) about domestic violence advocacy and experiences with clients were collected and analyzed. In-depth interviews with each cosmetologist recreated their daily encounters in the salon and provided information about their relationships with clients. These findings were
triangulated by salon observations and survey instrumentation. Common patterns and themes from this data were identified and coded. The findings were reported using rich, descriptive narratives provided by the cosmetologists.

KEYWORDS: Violence, Beauty, Salon, Advocacy, Education

Pangela H. Dawson

May 9, 2014
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“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak and it will not lie.” Habakkuk 2:2-3

This project, although divinely inspired, was supported and enhanced by a phenomenal dissertation committee. Without their guidance, it would have surely tarried.

I was once told that leading and guiding were two completely different concepts. Writing this dissertation under the direction of my co-chairs has afforded me experiences with both. Dr. Judy Jackson, with her balance of patience and encouragement, led by example and demonstrated how success could be attained. She imparted qualities of wisdom that would take this vision beyond the pages of the research. Dr. Sonja Feist-Price through her commitment and love, provided immeasurable guidance since the conception. She was the force that motivated me late in the race, when I wanted to give up and could not bear the thought of running one more lap. Her words of encouragement echoed like those of any great coach; “You’re almost there!” Without her words, the vision may have been lost. Dr. Beth Goldstein’s contributions to the project guided me towards a greater understanding of the literature. Her support and suggestions were timely and a great source of encouragement. Dr. Jane Jensen remained a constant support and reliable listener. She inspired me to write beyond my own limitations. The remaining members of my dissertation committee—Dr. Christina Alcalde and Dr. Rynetta Davis—both contributed to this work through their careful reading and thoughtful comments. Together, this group of scholars have demonstrated the highest standards of scholarly integrity. I will forever be thankful for their support.
The women who participated in this study also gave generously of their personal and professional time. I am grateful for their willingness to share openly and trust me with the intimate details of their salons.

Finally, my family has provided an immense amount of love, support, and sacrifice. This study is dedicated jointly to my husband, Demarcus Dawson, who was the wind beneath my wings; to my mother, Evelyn Beckham, whose prayers kept the vision alive; and to April Higgins, who encouraged me in ways that are too numerous to name. I also thank my children, Jaylen and Joshua for their many hugs and enduring patience.
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Sister to Sister

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I’m not cute or built to suit a fashion model’s size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I’m telling lies.
I say,
It’s in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I’m a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That’s me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It’s the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I’m a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That’s me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can’t touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can’t see.
I say,
It’s in
the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
   I’m a woman
   Phenomenally.
   Phenomenal woman,
   That’s me.

   Now you understand
   Just why my head’s not bowed.
   I don’t shout or jump about
   Or have to talk real loud.
   When you see me passing
   It ought to make you proud.
      I say,
   It’s in the click of my heels,
   The bend of my hair,
   the palm of my hand,
   The need for my care.
   ‘Cause I’m a woman
   Phenomenally.
   Phenomenal woman,
   That’s me.

Maya Angelou
“Phenomenal Woman”
Maya Angelou Poems
New York: Bantam Books
1986. (p. 121) Print
Chapter One: Introduction

Study Context and Overview

I begin this chapter with Maya Angelou’s poem, “Phenomenal Woman,” in an effort to weave together what would seem, two diametrically opposed social phenomena. First is the concept of beauty. It is seen as an openly embraced culture, with historic political, social, and economic relevance specifically in African American communities. The second is domestic violence, a global gender war, which remains hidden from the public consciousness despite its growing prevalence among African American women. These two separate ideas about beauty and violence would lead to the assumption that they exist in dichotomous realms. Contextually, beauty and violence could never share the same space. Beauty with its glamour and lure, is worlds apart from the unsightly imagery and shame of violence. I am tasked with drawing together these isolated conversations into a single phenomenon in order to shape the constructs of this current study. Angelou’s work is appropriate and a more than worthy place to start.

First published in 1978, “Phenomenal Woman” was written by Maya Angelou to empower African American women and praise Black beauty. It served among a plethora of poems in her extensive repertoire, to speak out against discrimination and exploitation (Harriett Monroe Poetry Institute, 2014). Throughout her career, Angelou publicly shared the trauma of being raped as a seven-year-old girl and used her poetry, books, and essays as a platform to demand social justice. I insist that the survival from that pain and mandate for justice is embedded in the rhythm of “Phenomenal Woman.” As Angelou crescendos to pronounce that she is in fact beautiful, in spite of mainstream standards, she
instills a growing sense of pride among women. Her words eradicate violence as she declares they are indeed phenomenal.

Angelou is recognized as a poetic icon who shares social issues explored from a Black experience. She asserts, however, that her message is relevant and liberating to all human conditions (Harriett Monroe Poetry Institute, 2014). In “Phenomenal Woman,” she mocks both men and women who have challenged her self-confidence. The poem suggests that African American women have an inner strength and ability to rise above low self-esteem and abuse to become confident and empowered.

At the time the poem was first written, two historic social events were underway in the country: The Women’s Liberation Movement and The Black Power Movement. The Liberation Movement in particular had made great gains in developing crisis centers, hotlines, and shelters for battered victims. Women were being inspired and sustained through their relationships with other women. Organizers were successful in transforming the public consciousness about abuse. Similarly, during this time, the Black Power Movement provided a means for African American women to confront racial politics. Beauty was a central part of this Movement, despite the critique that Black beauty culture had previously mirrored mainstream standards. African American women began contesting popular images of feminine beauty, which rejected and demeaned them. Black beauticians, beauty experts, and entrepreneurs struggled to broaden the ideals about beauty.

It was during this time that Angelou wrote “Phenomenal Woman.” African American women were in an all-out tussle for their rights as women and their rights as Black Americans. They were seeking a voice and a face amidst systems of oppression,
which degraded or blotted out their existence. Yet, a small piece of hope emerged in the prophetic words of Angelou. She gained national attention as she echoed the essence of both Movements. I am a phenomenal woman. She began the revolution, which used beauty to fight violence.

A central part of this project is to recognize that African American women continue to struggle against the reality of growing violence in their lives; and to acknowledge that in order to reach them, a culturally relevant message must emerge. Looking through the eyes of the great pioneers provides an option of how to face this giant. This research evolves with the purpose of pitting beauty against violence, to draw beauty and violence into one space and gain the attention of African American women and their advocates. I argue that exploring existing staple institutions within the African American community, such as beauty salons, may offer viable opportunities to reach victimized women.

Organizations, such as The Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham and the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence, recognized the potential in mobilizing salon professionals to fight the epidemic of domestic violence in communities across the country. These groups began collaborating in 2002 to implement Cut It Out training seminars for cosmetologists to receive training on the topic of abuse. The curriculum was developed to build awareness of domestic abuse and train salon professionals to recognize warning signs and safely refer clients to local resources. Their efforts were further supported by such organizations as the National Cosmetologists Association (NCA) and Southern Living at Home. In recent years, The Professional Beauty Association (PBA) and a nationally-known salon franchise have begun to sponsor the Cut
*It Out* efforts to continue enhancing program visibility and educating thousands of stylists in salons across the country (Association, 2014).

These community efforts are supported by recent research endeavors which depict the use of beauty salons and training cosmetologists as lay health advocates as a feasible option for reaching African American women in abusive situations (Kleindorfer et al., 2008; Lieberman & Harris, 2007; L.A. Linnan, Ferguson, and Wasilewski (2005); Sadler et al., 2007). Beauty salons across the country have historically served as settings for social interaction, political activism, and community organizing in the African American community (Linnan & Ferguson, 2007). These settings have functioned as sanctuaries, offering a safe place for intimacy between women from different walks of life. Studies support that salons are accessible in all communities, frequented by African American women on a regular basis, and often unique bonds exist between cosmetologists and their customers (Linnan & Ferguson, 2007). Researchers have tapped into this phenomenon and found innovative methods to reach large numbers of women with health promotion messages (Kleindorfer et al., 2008; Lieberman & Harris, 2007; L.A. Linnan, Ferguson, & Wasilewski, 2005; Sadler et al., 2007).

The goal of this current project was to build from these foundational research efforts and assess if these earlier works are applicable to issues of domestic violence. There were, of course, subtle differences between domestic violence and these earlier bodies of work. Namely, most of the previous research focused on health initiatives such as stroke, breast cancer, cardiovascular risks, hypertension, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and sexually transmitted diseases. They are considered general health issues and are less sensitive matters than domestic violence. These common health topics can be
clearly identified in the practice of general medicine and are governed by etiology, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment choices. They include the leading causes of death and are among the most common health concerns for African American women. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC, 2013) reports that heart disease is the number one killer of African American women. Their 2010 listing indicates that 24.1% of African American women die from heart disease annually, compared to 23.5% of White women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC, 2013). In addition to these findings, the CDC reports that African American women are far more affected than women of any other race or ethnicity by HIV/AIDS, accounting for 60% of all newly infected cases. Other general health issues such as breast cancer have also been identified as epidemic concerns for African American women. In particular, the Office on Women’s Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, reports that African American women are more likely than any other women, to die from breast cancer (Services, 2013). This is largely due to the fact that their tumors are found at later, more advanced stages and are more difficult to treat.

Given the epidemic of these and other common general health issues among African American women, it is feasible that much of the salon research has focused on intervening to reduce prevalence in these areas. In fact, recent reports indicate that since implementing awareness and prevention initiatives, HIV/AIDS occurrences among African American women decreased by 21% between 2008 and 2010 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC, 2014). This current research considers that domestic violence is also a growing concern among African American women. The CDC
in particular, reports that there are numerous health disparities related to domestic violence. In fact, when researchers combined the prevalence of violence for African Americans, Asian American and Pacific Islanders, American Indian/Alaska Native, and mixed race participants, they found that individuals from these groups report significantly more abuse than do their White counterparts. African American women rated second only to American Indians/Alaska Natives (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC, 2013). In fact, homicide at the hands of a current or former intimate partner is the number one killer of African American women ages 15 to 34 (Homicides, 2005). Acknowledging this endemic can allow researchers to grasp the importance of interweaving research, education and community initiatives to reduce the number of victims in the African American community and replicate the accomplishments found in the HIV/AIDS efforts.

Understanding the differences between general medicine topics, such as HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, stroke, hypertension and diabetes, when compared to domestic, violence can offer clarity in how to organize this current educational research opportunity. It becomes important to recognize that topics of general medicine are much easier to discuss and promote publicly than are topics such as domestic violence. The stigma of shame and embarrassment are typically not associated with breast cancer and heart disease. Similarly, blaming the victim or misinterpreting her motives are also not commonly associated with general medicine topics. Thus, campaigns initiated by the Susan G. Komen and the American Heart Association can provide radical opportunities for educating the public and building research efforts. “Passionately Pink,” and “Go Red for Women” are widely supported initiatives and have successfully increased awareness
and prevention in both breast cancer and heart disease respectively. In comparison, discussions about domestic violence have the potential to be much more difficult to conduct.

Historically, in the U.S., domestic abuse was seen as a private matter between the victim and the abuser. Government, church, and community officials remained silent on what many considered were family matters. It was more socially acceptable to keep topics of abuse behind the privacy of closed doors. In fact, over 35 years ago the words “health” and “violence” would have never been heard in the same sentence; however, recognition of the link between these two has allowed domestic violence to be addressed from a public health perspective. Part of the development for this initiative was the acceptance of the behavior factors in the etiology of disease. Researchers found that behavioral modifications such as exercise, changes in diet, and smoking cessation were important in the prevention of heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Successful measures in these areas encouraged public health professionals that behavioral challenges related to domestic violence could also be accomplished (Dahlberg & Mercy, 2009).

Efforts to grasp these behavioral challenges began in 1979 with publications of several reports highlighting the significance of domestic violence as a health issue. The Surgeon General and CDC were among the government health officials focusing on promoting health and preventing violent behavior. Their initial efforts were to establish measurable objectives to decrease the rate of homicide, suicide, and privately owned guns. In 1994, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (Title IV of the Violence Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act) that established rape prevention and
education programs across the country and called for local demonstration projects to coordinate intervention and prevention of domestic violence (Dahlberg & Mercy, 2009).

The goals for disseminating and implementing health prevention and promotion campaigns for general issues of health may not necessarily include the above-mentioned legal avenues and tasks forces that are associated with domestic violence programs. This is why critical consideration must be given to understand how closely related the earlier beauty salon research efforts are to this current work. Domestic abuse is clearly a sensitive topic, which has the potential to meet resistance in open forums. While the social environment in salons allows for prevention and awareness discussions surrounding general health issues, I must ask if these same efforts are applicable to studies that involve stigmatized topics that are characterized as private and shameful. By exploring these limits in salon research, there is great potential to add to this body of literature and possibly fill-in the gap regarding discussions of sensitive topics in what is deemed as a “Black woman’s space.”

It was, therefore, important to consider the experiences of physically abused African American women and how community advocacy could influence their behaviors when accessing care. Understanding how these experiences are influenced by social locations such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status was essential. In this study, emphasis was given to social locations of race, class, and gender. Thus, the concept of intersectionality was utilized to consider how these women are further victimized outside their intimate relationships by structural systems such as racism, classism, and sexism. This research explored the help-seeking behaviors of physically abused African American women and employed the social ecological
framework to explain how social support could influence the decisions these women make when seeking to access care. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based advocacy and education for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention. I explored the idea of creating a space for advocacy around gender issues by considering the conversations or “shoptalk” that occur naturally in salons as well as the salon setting.

**Domestic Violence in the United States**

Violence against women continues to reach epidemic proportions in this country (Breiding, Black, & Ryan, 2008; Max, Rice, Finkelstein, Badwell, & Leadbetter, 2004). The consequences of these acts are detrimental to the victims, their families, and their communities. Domestic violence consists of violent or coercive tactics committed by one intimate partner against another. Moreover, intimate partner violence can present as a pattern of learned controlling behavior that may include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or economic abuse; however, physical abuse will be the emphasis for this current research. These acts of violence are usually considered in heterosexual relationships, but may also be present between parents and their children, between siblings, against parents, and in same-sex couple relationships.

It is estimated that more than 1 in 3 women (35.6%) and more than 1 in 4 men (28.5%) in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). Studies show that women are at a greater risk of partner violence than men, and will suffer detrimental effects on their
physical and mental health (Black et al., 2011; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The impact of physical health is not limited to obvious injuries such as fractures, contusions, concussions, lacerations and gunshot wounds, but may also include less obvious health issues such as reproductive health, functional disorders and maladaptive health behaviors like smoking, alcohol and drug abuse or risky sexual behavior (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Other psychological and behavioral issues, which are also less obvious, include poor self-esteem, suicidal behavior, and feelings of guilt and shame, depression, post-traumatic syndrome, and eating disorders (CDC, 2003).

Ultimately, these physical and behavioral health issues can lead to hospitalization, disability, or death. It is estimated that the annual health related cost and loss of productivity exceeds $5.8 billion, nearly $4.1 billion of which was for medical and mental health services (Max et al., 2004). In 2007, domestic violence resulted in 2,340 deaths; 30% of these were men and 70% were women (Justice & Statistics, 2012). Given the prevalence and severity of violence against women, it is imperative that domestic violence be seen as a major public health concern.

In considering the incidence of domestic violence in the United States, it is important to note that rates vary significantly among women of diverse racial backgrounds. Research shows that African American, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and women of mixed races experience more intimate partner violence than do their White counterparts (Breiding et al., 2008; Ellison, Trinitapoli, Anderson, & Johnson, 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) partnered to sponsor research investigating the prevalence, incidence, and consequences of victims of violence. This
study, the first of this magnitude, was administered to 8,000 women and 8,000 men. Participants were specifically asked about their experiences with rape, physical assault, and stalking. The study objectives were to collect empirical data on the relationship between certain types of violence against women, such as childhood victimization and subsequent adult victimization, as well as gain reliable data about minority women’s experiences with violence (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). According to Tjaden and Thoennes (2000), lifetime victimization rates for women from different communities were 24.8% for whites; 29.1% for African Americans; 37.5% for American Indian/Alaska Natives; and 30.2% for mixed races. In this same study, findings for other groups were dramatically different. In particular, 15% of Asian Pacific and 23.4% of Hispanic respondents reported being victimized by an intimate partner at some time in their lifetime.

Similarly in a more recent study, Breiding, Black, and Ryan (2008) investigated prevalence and risk factors of intimate partner violence in 16 U.S. states and 2 U.S. territories. Their prevalence estimates were similar to those reported in the NVAWS study. They found that the lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence was 26.8% for White women; 29.2% for African American women; 39% for American Indian/Alaska Natives; and 43.1% for mixed races (Breiding et al., 2008). Findings from both of these national studies show there is variation in rates of violence among different racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, they support earlier estimates from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), which show that African Americans are at greater risk of
victimization by violent crimes than are White persons (Ringel, 1996 cited in Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000).

**Domestic Violence among African American Women**

While the gravity of violence against women impacts this nation, without respect to race, age, sexuality, social status or other cultural identifiers, the voices of African American women often go unheard and their faces unseen, particularly in the realms of research and prevention. This deficiency contradicts the data that African American women are more likely to be victimized or killed by an intimate partner than are white women. For example, nearly one-third of African American women experience violence in their lifetimes compared with one-fourth of White women (CDC, 2003). There has been a suggested link between higher incidence of domestic violence and being African American, female, young, divorced or separated, earning lower incomes, living in rental housing, and living in an urban area (Rennison & Welchans, 2000). At one point, the National Black Women’s Health Project identified domestic violence as the number one public health issue for women of African ancestry (Joseph, 1997).

Other data collected by the U.S. Department of Justice shows that African Americans account for a disproportionate number of intimate partner homicides. In 2005, African Americans accounted for almost 1/3 of the intimate partner homicides in this country (usdoj.gov). African American women in particular comprise 8% of the U.S. population, but in 2005, they accounted for 22% of the intimate partner homicide victims and 29% of all female victims of intimate partner homicide. These data demonstrate that women from these communities suffer from deadly violence from intimate partners at
rates decidedly higher than their White counterparts. Thus, scholars and activists in African American communities are prompted to continue to look for solutions and interventions, which can combat the high incidence of domestic violence.

**Introduction of the Problem**

Given the disproportionate rates of violence endured by African American women, it is necessary to consider ways in which these women may have experiences that differ from their counterparts. Recently, researchers have begun to probe the experiences of physically abused women from ethnic minority groups and argue that the dearth of empirical research has contributed to the assumption that the needs of women from the dominant culture apply to women of all ethnic and racial groups (Sumter, 2006; Sue & Sue, 1999). Sumter (2006) argues that while there have been significant gains in providing criminal justice and social service initiatives to victims of domestic violence, many victims who are ethnic minorities underutilize the interventions and services available in part because their help-seeking behaviors differ from those of the dominant culture. Sumter (2006) builds on previous research to contend that services for domestically abused victims are anchored in the majority culture and controlled by service providers from that culture (Feist-Price & Ford-Harris, 1994; Sue & Sue, 1999; Sumter, 2006). Sue & Sue (1999) made a similar argument and contended that women from ethnic minority groups hold many worldviews and life experiences that differ from those of the dominant culture. Consequently, some victims avoid seeking services because of the lack of cultural sensitivity and mistrust of practices often grounded in White middle-class values (Sue & Sue, 1999). In fact, data show that more than 50
percent of clients from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic class backgrounds terminate services after the first visit (Sue & Sue, 1999). Shelters in particular, were previously identified as being underutilized by African American women (Bent-Goodley, 2001; Coley & Beckett, 1988; Gondolf, Fisher, McFerron, 1991; Sorenson, 1996). Bent-Goodley’s (2001) critical analysis of the current literature on domestic violence in African American communities supported these findings. She identified external barriers as a critical theme throughout this body of research. In particular, numerous scholars found that the lack of cultural competence among service providers was an external barrier that negatively impacted the help-seeking behaviors, effectiveness of intervention, and retention of African Americans who needed domestic violence services (Bent-Goodley, 2001).

Bent-Goodley’s (2001) critical analysis is duly noted, however literature containing information on the comparative use and effectiveness of community and professional services is relatively sparse (Gordon, 1996). Research findings support that police, social service agencies, clergy, crisis lines, physicians, psychotherapists, women’s groups, and lawyers are the resources most utilized by abused women (Gordon, 1996). However, studies that focus on battered African American women suggest that these women have difficulties obtaining effective help from social services and the legal system (Weisz, 2005; Yegidis & Renzy, 1994). Thus, while seeking assistance from law enforcement is common for most women suffering physical abuse, African American women are faced with multiple issues that impact their decision to seek help from the criminal justice system. Most often, these women fear police brutality against their mates or against themselves. According to Richie and Kanuha (1993), most women of color
perceive that police officers routinely brutalize men of color and label them more deviant than their White counterparts. They state that women of color seeking help for abuse are forced to balance between care and loyalty for themselves, their batterers, and their communities (Richie & Kanuha, 1993).

Bent-Goodley (2001) described this systematic inequity of treatment as another external barrier that inhibits African American women from seeking help. Data showed that women from African American communities are being incarcerated at an increasingly higher rate and that these women receive harsher sentences than do White women for the same crime (Mann 1987; Bent-Goodley, 2001). In fact, police are more likely to make an arrest when the respondents are both African American (Roberts, 1994; Bent-Goodley, 2001). Furthermore, African American women are less likely to call the police, go to court, have their cases come to trial, have their trials result in a conviction, go to a shelter, seek a personal protection order (PPO), or seek counseling or other supportive services (Collins, 2009; Joseph, 1997). Researchers describe this process as a means for battered African American women to protect themselves and their communities from negative stereotypes and oppressive social policies (Crenshaw, 1994; Weisz, 2005; West, 2008; Workers, 2002). As a result of this “political gag order,” some survivors have been discouraged from revealing their victimization and some community members and leaders have been reluctant to participate in the research process (West, 2008, p.158). Collins’ (2009) discussion on sexual politics of Black womanhood explains how African American women have historically been discouraged from analyzing and speaking out about a host of topics. Thus, publicly airing “dirty laundry” and telling Black “family secrets” about abusive Black men is considered a
“transgression” in African American communities (Collins, 2009, p.137). Scholars also note that many African American women perceive racism as a more serious issue than sexism, thus denying an equally important part of their identity (Bent-Goodley, 2004; Crenshaw, 1994; Richie, 1996). Other social service agencies, medical care, and mental health services are also available to victims of abuse (Gordon, 1996). However, for many African American women of lower socio-economic status, with fewer resources, accessing these services can be a struggle as many of them perceive domestic violence services as inaccessible both physically and figuratively (Bent-Goodley, 2004).

Moreover, transportation constraints, lack of money to get to appointments, and fear of entering a perceived hostile environment were also identified as barriers and decreased the likelihood of African American women keeping appointments and fully participating in services (Bent-Goodley, 2004).

Given the many barriers encountered when accessing services offered by the criminal justice system, social service agencies, medical professionals, mental health providers, and shelters there are obvious concerns about how they impact help-seeking behaviors of abused African American women. Thus, understanding the ways in which African American women experience domestic violence and how these experiences are shaped by social locations based on gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, becomes essential in developing strategic interventions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based
advocacy and education for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention. I considered the interactions, conversations, and social environment in salons in order to explore how the physical aspects and connectivity between women and their activities could be utilized to advocate for gender issues. Thus, the study aims to:

1. Consider whether African American beauty culture can be an important medium in community education and resource enhancement.

2. Identify features within the physical and social environment of the beauty salon that facilitate advocacy/education/support.

3. Analyze the conversations between cosmetologists and customers, specifically discussions of gender and race issues as these relate to domestic violence and opportunities for advocacy and education.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions asked:

1. Does beauty culture within African American salons offer opportunities for providing anti-violence education?

2. In what ways does the salon setting/culture facilitate or inhibit a discussion of domestic violence?

3. What kinds of relationships exist between African American cosmetologists and their clients in terms of social support such as information sharing, advice giving, etc.? Do these relationships
and conversations influence help-seeking behaviors in situations of domestic violence?
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Intersectionality

In recent years, scholars have begun to expand on their investigations of how women in marginalized communities experience domestic violence differently than victims in the dominant culture. Many of the pioneering efforts by activists considered an universal approach in an attempt to avoid individualizing the problem of domestic and sexual violence (Richie, 2008; Sokoloff, 2008). “It can happen to anyone,” became a powerful emblem of rhetoric during the early antiviolence movement (Richie, 2008). Richie argued, “the notion that every woman is at risk...is in fact a dangerous one in that it....structured a national advocacy response based on a false sense of unity around the experience of gender oppression” (Richie, 2008, p. 52). While these initial efforts stemmed from the outcries for needed services in the mid-late 1970s, they only identified services as a collective issue, rather than as an individual need. As women began talking sister-to-sister and neighbor-to-neighbor about the devastating abusive realities of their lives, the first home-like shelters were established to offer support and guidance for victims/survivors. Although this strong feminist movement created safety for many women and sought to avoid the issues of separatism, racism, and classism, it unfortunately failed to give attention to those women with unique circumstances. This included women from communities of color, Native American and immigrant communities, rural communities, those with disabilities, and even those who were incarcerated. Since that time researchers, scholars, and advocates have looked for ways to address the struggles and needs of abused women from various backgrounds (Coalition, 2014).
Intersectionality is currently being explored as a response to ensure that the experiences and unique struggles of marginalized women are brought to the forefront. Scholars are taking this approach to domestic violence to “unsilence” the voices of abused women from diverse backgrounds. Social locations such as race, gender, class, religion, language, and sexual orientation all impact the ways in which women experience abuse. While this emerging body of literature focuses on these social locations to give voice to abused women from various backgrounds, other perspectives also consider the structural inequalities, which shape the different ways these women experience violence. Crenshaw (1994) coined the concept of structural intersectionality and described it as the “ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender makes (their) experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different from that of white women” (p. 94). She explains that many women of color are burdened by poverty, child-care responsibilities, and the lack of job skills that are largely consequences of gender and class oppression. This, compounded by racial discrimination practices in employment and housing, leaves these women burdened and disproportionately unemployed (Crenshaw, 1994). Thus, this structural approach recognizes that victims of abuse may be further victimized outside their intimate relationships by structural systems of power and privilege such as racism, classism, and heterosexism. A critical analysis of both intersectional and structural approaches can provide avenues for personal and social change.

Other scholars have also explored the concept of intersectionality and how structural inequalities can further impose hardships for victim/survivors from marginalized communities. Josephson (2008) elaborates on Crenshaw’s work and
maintains that the increased incidence of poverty among women of color, the lack of available jobs in their neighborhoods, and the lack of a financial network system to help them leave their abusers must be addressed in order to adequately meet their needs (Josephson, 2005). She goes on to argue that if the available services are not responsive to the particular needs of women in minority communities, then they are unlikely to have access to or choose to utilize those services (Josephson, 2008). Similarly, Bograd (2008) recognizes that racism, classism, and sexism can further impact how domestic violence is experienced by self and responded to by others; including whether escape and safety can be obtained. She contends that efforts to seek safety may expose abused women to additional social risk. For example, Latina or immigrant women may not have an interpreter to help them navigate services that can limit their ability to utilize shelters and legal support. Similarly, African American women may not choose to utilize shelter services simply because they are not accessible to Black communities or because they perceive shelters as racially hostile environments (Bograd, 2008).

While the main objective of intersectionality has been to explore the simultaneous, multiple, and interlocking oppressions that shape the individual experiences of abused women, there have been some challenges presented with this approach. Perhaps one of the major criticisms is that most sociological scholarship focuses on gender and race, yet the oppressive role of class is underemphasized (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Despite this limitation, domestic violence theorists maintain that employing both individual and structural analyses of race, class, and gender can provide abused women from diverse backgrounds with personal and social change needed for safety and growth at the individual and community levels.
Drawing from the theoretical framework of intersectionality, we can infer as mentioned above that the help-seeking behavior of women from various backgrounds may also vary depending on social locations and structural systems. Researchers are looking to data to answer difficult questions about victims’ responses to domestic violence. In one study, Neville and Pugh (1997) found that African American women who never disclosed being assaulted or waited a year or more before telling someone about it indicated that the reason for their silence was that they did not know whom to tell or they did not trust anyone with the information. Fear of negative consequences, such as assailant retaliation, not being believed, and burdening family members were also reasons that these women did not disclose (Neville & Pugh, 1997). Perhaps the most profound finding in their investigation was that half of the women who did not choose therapy identified what they perceived as a “inner strength” as a factor for not disclosing the assault (Neville & Pugh, 1997). According to Neville and Pugh (1997), Black women have been saddled with the heavy burden of being strong. They recognize that while on the one hand, this strength has aided African American women in surviving economic, racial, and gender oppression, it has not afforded them the opportunity to nurture themselves and seek the support of others (Neville & Pugh, 1997).

The Strong Black Woman Phenomenon

Many scholars have argued the importance of intersectionality in studies of domestic violence including the study of the ideology of “Strong Black Women” and its role in silencing violence among African American women. African American women have assumed extraordinary roles and responsibilities throughout history which help to
construct notions of strong Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; hooks, 2005).

While some scholars believe the “Strong Black Woman” phenomenon is a means to empower African American women and enable them to resist abuse, others insist that this concept is mythical and impedes their ability to seek help. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009) suggests that many African American women use this concept to construct their identities as capable persons who can provide for others’ emotional and financial needs. She continues by noting that this “role” in essence was created by society to soothe its troubled conscience for forcing the material conditions and injustices on African American women’s humanity. The myth of the “Strong Black Woman” is ultimately a mask that many African American women hide behind that potentially inhibits their ability to seek help when in abusive relationships. Beauboeuf-Lafontant’s (2009) work does not focus specifically on intimate partner violence; however, she recognizes that the label of strength requires Black women to act invulnerable to abuse and present themselves as capable of weathering all manner of adversity. She further asserts that in these hegemonic racialized gender expectations, a Black woman is not simply a woman or human being, instead she is viewed as a “superwoman,” one who cannot be victimized and does not suffer under any circumstances (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009).

Potter (2008) described this phenomenon as simultaneously stereotypical and reality. She explained that although African American women may possess strength, they are at the same time devoid of power; and that often their tendency to focus on being strong does not allow them to be seen or see themselves as being in need of emotional support or as victims of violence. Potter’s (2008) narrative accounts of these perceptions and experiences led her to coin the
concept of “resisters.” She uses this term to challenge the idea that African American women are responsible for the abuse committed against them and to remind us that their personal and ancestral history has required continuous confrontation with “socio-structural, cultural, and familial obstacles” (Potter, 2008, p. 52). Potter (2008) further utilizes this concept to suggest that abused African American women regularly employ “dynamic resistance”, to actively oppose the abuse against them.

Drawing upon the work of Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009), Potter (2008), and West (West, 2008) help to understand the resistance/survival strategies, as well as help-seeking behavior used when African American women are faced with violence. According to West (2008), when confronted with severe intimate and social violence, women undeniably engage in endeavors of resistance. She contends that resistance does not guarantee healing, however it does provide a space where healing can take place (West, 2008).

Thus, the phenomenon of the “Strong Black Woman” can be seen as both a protective measure employed by abused African American women, as well as a barrier that hinders them from getting support. While their self-sacrificing efforts are perceived as being for the “greater good” of the community, it is costly behavior that can jeopardize their personal physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being (Bent-Goodley, 2001). Despite being at a greater risk in abusive situations, African American women are 1 ½ times less likely to call the police, four times less likely to go to a shelter, and two times less likely to obtain an order of protection (Joseph, 1997). Multiple barriers have been
identified which prevent these women from seeking help including the “Strong Black Woman” phenomenon, the lack of culturally competent service providers, inaccessible services, and racial loyalty.

I argue that the historical and cultural dynamics, as well as the resources found in African American communities can offer a means for supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence. When comparing the use of salons and training cosmetologists to other resources available to victims, this method is quite promising. Research shows that the existing relationships between stylists and their clients is both intimate and nurturing which enables victims to feel safe and have the opportunity to talk to other African American women (Lieberman & Harris, 2007; Linnan. & Ferguson, 2007; Solomon, Linnan, & Wasilewski, 2004). This, coupled with the frequent visits to the salon and the time spent while waiting for services, increase the likelihood that victims can benefit from available resources. Other services provided by police stations, emergency rooms, medical offices, community centers, and shelters do not necessarily offer the same level of intimacy as beauty salons and trained stylists.

**Black Beauty Culture and Salons**

Historically, salons have served as communal “home-places and springboards for social interaction, political activism, and community organizing, as well as providing an avenue for economic mobility in African American communities. In the first half of the twentieth century, grooming women’s hair was a central part of African American identity politics. Employment in cosmetology or “Black beauty culture” offered Black women one of few occupational opportunities away from the field, factory, and kitchen
Madam C.J. Walker and Annie Turbo Malone were among the first to capitalize on the structure of beauty salons in the African American community. They promoted hair care products while providing economic opportunities, social support, and community organizing activities for women (Willett, 2000). Both Walker and Malone’s businesses were based on training sales agents to properly use their products and then earn a living offering these services in their respective communities (Gill, 2010). Agents were instructed to create a safe and comfortable place in which African American women could for a change, be the ones who were pampered. Walker believed this kind of personal attention and pampering gave Black women the self-confidence to endure the harsher reality of their lives (Willett, 2000). She eventually became known as the first Black woman millionaire in the United States and was noted for constructing the identities of African American women in the early twentieth century. Her products appealed to European aesthetics and promised to straighten hair and lighten skin.

Thus, Walker and Malone’s entrepreneurial efforts were attacked and criticized by advocates for racial uplift within the Black community. They argued that changing the texture of African American women’s hair imitated Whites. Although they were accused of lacking racial pride, they resisted these attacks and criticisms by drawing the attention away from the hair straightening properties of their products. Walker, in particular, accomplished this by focusing on selling beauty culture as a means to social, economic, political, and spiritual success for Black women (Rooks, 1996). She shifted her pursuits and actively sought coalitions with Black educational institutions. Her new strategy for training agents and beauty culturists was to place her beauty culture course in the curriculum of Black colleges such as Tuskegee and Roger Williams College.
Although she initially met resistance from community leaders and educators, her beauty culture curriculum eventually received endorsements from Booker T. Washington and numerous other educational leaders in the community. These educators recognized that beauty culture closely aligned with the overall educational goals of the institutions which sought to empower students with occupational skills (Gill, 2010).

Walker also had political pursuits that helped to link beauty culture to activism. Her initial efforts included supporting the rights of Black World War I veterans and fighting for the federal anti-lynching legislation (Willett, 2000). She encouraged her beauty culture agents to become community leaders and political lobbyists. Walker became one of the first beautician turned activist immersed in political struggles (Willett, 2000). Thus, her philanthropic pursuits and political efforts helped to validate the profession and establish cosmetologists as leaders in the African American community. Her example mobilized hairdressers to take advantage of their economic independence during heightened political activities and risk becoming leading activists across the movements. They actively participated in such efforts as the Black Socialist Movement of the 1930s, the Black Internationalism Movement in the 1950s, and the Black Women’s Health Movement in the twenty-first century.

Paradoxically, the Jim Crow ordinances imposed during that time mandated such places as churches, bars, social clubs, barber shops, and beauty salons as “Black spaces” (Gill, 2010). Gill (2010) explained that these spaces gave African Americans a place to hide and plan. The Black beauty salon in particular was the only space that was simultaneously a “Black space” and a “woman’s space” owned and frequented by Black women (Gill, 2010). This seclusion made Black beauticians an instrumental part of the
Civil Rights Movement, so much so that Martin Luther King Jr. addressed the National Black Culturist League (NBCL) during their summer convention in 1957 and gave a speech entitled “The Role of Beauticians in the Contemporary Struggle for Freedom” (Gill, 2010). The speech was well received and King was awarded the organization’s Civil Rights Award. The 38th Annual conference took place in New Orleans, LA, and included a panel discussion. King was later invited back to address the convention attendees in 1958. He declined, but asked if Ella Baker, a veteran civil rights leader, could address the group to discuss the voter registration efforts of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). King recognized that a “vast wealth of latent potential existed among beauticians.”

Even though African American women’s involvement in health initiatives and activism is recorded as far back as the 1890s, when African American sororities, midwives, and nurses addressed health care disparities, Byllye Avery established the first National Black Women’s Health Project (BWHP) in 1981. The Project’s first initiative convened over sixteen hundred health educators, health-care providers, and lay people on the campus on Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. One of the primary focuses of the conference was to confront the myth of the Black superwoman, the Black woman as the pillar of strength. During the meeting, the women discussed the triple threat of being Black, female, and poor in a racist, sexist, class structured society (Gill, 2010). They also shared their experiences of trying to live up to unreasonable expectations at the expense of their health. They identified the need to establish safe zones within their communities. Today, the Project is formally known as The Black Women’s Health Imperative. By the twenty-first century, health initiatives deemed salons as appropriate safe zones and
enlisted the help of Black beauticians to be a central part of their activists’ efforts. Projects such as Madam C.J. Walker Health Empowerment Project, Stay Beautiful, Stay Alive, and Beauty and the Breast have all trained beauticians to serve as health educators (Gill, 2010). Black salons became a place to increase health awareness about breast and cervical cancer or simply a place to encourage healthy living and lifestyle choices such as eating healthy and getting annual pap smears and mammograms. Additional topics included HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, domestic violence and sexual assault. The 1990 documentary, Diana’s Hair Ego, for example highlighted the efforts of a South Carolina based beautician who turned her salon into a repository for condoms and HIV/AIDS prevention literature (Gill, 2010). According to Gill (2010), Black beauty salons have provided Black women’s bodies a safe place to be dignified, cared for and explored. In fact, salons are thought to be the one place where black women do not feel guilty about taking care of themselves; and a great place for women to learn about the importance of health (Gill, 2010).

Black beauty salons have existed as safe places for women to find, not only pampering and indulgence, but also conversation and camaraderie. By the 1950s, African American salon owners were not only afforded a space away from obtrusive employers and white households; they also constructed community institutions and positions of leadership that would play an important role in Black communities and help to shape the industry (Willett, 2000). These spaces were often established as home salons in the “front rooms” and kitchens of houses in the community. Willett (2000) reports that trained beauticians worked tirelessly to style their clients’ hair, but often also served as “doctors, advisors, good listeners, relaxation therapists and more” (p.114). Beauticians
have been historically labeled as “old heads” in African American communities, yet they continue to serve in this capacity as natural community leaders who influence the lives of young African American women, even today (Lieberman & Harris, 2007). These intimate relationships help to explain customers’ frequent visits. Current research shows that Black women frequent beauty salons and schedule regular appointments approximately every 4 to 6 weeks. Customers typically see the same stylist and spend anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours or more depending on the service (L. A. Linnan et al., 2001).

These interactions allow women to share stories about their families, relationships, and jobs. Willett (2000) describes salons as a place where women can transcend daily life and seek support in coping with psychological, social, cultural, and economic stressors and allow for the “natural exchange of goods, services, and information in the lives of African American women” (p. 189).

Willett (2000) states that beauty culture in Black communities has aimed to serve the needs of Black women and their African heritage. Hair in African traditions has been and continues to be a medium for creative self-expression and required artistry, manual dexterity, and patience. Intricate styling cultivated an atmosphere of intimacy in the salon (Byrd & Tharps, 2001).

For decades, many Black women have cherished these intimate moments that have often proven to be times of healing, protection, and empowerment. Rooks (Rooks, 1996) provides vivid details of the atmosphere and culture of the salon:

I loved being in the waiting area (really just a few chairs clustered near the door) and listening to all the bits of advice and gossip that were flying about. Sitting in
a room full of African American women and hearing them talk about sex, white people, men, and money, I got clues on how to be and how not to act. I loved the smell of the place. The mixture of burning hair, sweet-smelling shampoos, chemicals, food, and sweat (there was no air-conditioning, only a fan). I absolutely adored having someone wash my hair for me. The feel of hands massaging my scalp as they worked the shampoo in, rinsed, and rewashed until I hear the squeak that meant it was clean...I was absolutely fascinated by the way my hair looked when she finished: flat, shiny, smooth... I must admit there were times I contemplated a career path that led me to where Miss Ruby stood. (p. 5)

Rooks’ description is indicative of the traditions and culture found in Black beauty salons. It epitomizes the rich socio-cultural environment embedded in African American salons. The intensity of her sensory-filled experience can be understood in the context of the setting and the interactions that occur. Rooks recounts the salon setting as a place that has always provided safety for African American women to openly share life-stories. She speaks of the intimacy and camaraderie between the older women from her girlhood perspective. Her adolescent mind was White people. The sense of security is evident, yet I perceive there is much more taking place. Drawing from Majors’ (2003) work on teaching and learning in African American salons can help to unload Rooks’ narrative.

Major (2003) moves beyond the discussion of safety in the salon and suggests that they also provide a place where alternative viewpoints and culturally informed structures are situated within the context of the African American community. She insists that
salons function as distinct “ritual settings” that allow the exchange of cultural and economic resources. Moreover, embedded within these salons are educational settings that allow knowledge to be “co-created, recreated, and shared” between the women (Majors, 2003, p.290). Thus, African American salon space remains a safe refuge for women in the community; it also exists as a site where knowledge is constructed and shared. This construction of knowledge, according to Majors, (2003) then defines the salon and ultimately recreates it.

I concur with Majors and recognize the opportunity to unpack Rooks’ experience further. Indeed, Rooks was in a position as a young girl to begin learning about self-hood, womanhood, negotiation, participation, collaboration, and community. Her experiences in the salon are about life-lessons; lessons that start at a very young age for many African American women. Yet, it is a process; a ritualistic process that continues shaping and reshaping both the setting and individuals participating in the life-long learning. Somewhere in the umpteenth cycle of this ritual, young African American girls evolve into curious adolescents; they then morphed into wise women sharing in relationships that have been fortified by years of acquaintance. At some point, the women learn to become gatekeepers of one another’s secrets.

**Black Beauty and Black Feminism**

It is essential to grasp the nature and importance of Black beauty culture in African American communities. Recalling the “Black is Beautiful” campaign in the 1970s, initiated by Black activists to resist racism and hegemonic beauty standards is one example. During this revolutionary movement, Black women used Black hair as a
primary strategy for resistance. They turned away from hair straightening practices and products and embraced afros as a symbol of political orientation and a way to express identification with other Black women (Craig, 2006; Gill, 2010; Rooks, 1996). Black feminists envisioned the natural state of their hair as a badge of racial pride. They contended that the act of wearing Black hair in its natural state was an act of genuine bonding between women who were “incarcerated in jails all across America and those who were in psychological jails accepting less from everyone because they believed they deserved less than anyone” (Rooks, 1996, p.7). Blackwelder (2003) explains that even today dressing hair “implies much more than mere cleaning, trimming, and arranging of tress” and that hair for African American women represents the embodiment of their identity, beauty, power, and consciousness (Blackwelder, 2003). Finney (1997) insists that beauty works in African American communities as a necessary language between like-minded people.

Language can be taught and handed down or immediately created out of the implicit need for like-minded life to talk and tell other like-minded life something. Sometimes language has to do with words, sometimes it has to do with hand and body movements, and sometimes it’s about how and what we do with our hair...Black Americans are expressing themselves by way of their hair-and in so doing, talking and telling anyone within hearing or seeing range, not only the particulars of how beautiful they feel, but also how they refuse to allow anyone to erase their memories or dull their imaginations. (Preface)
Finney goes on to describe Black beauty culture as a legacy in African American communities. She contends that “the attending of Black hair on a Black head by Black hands is one of our cultural provisions, something we guard and pack away in order to ensure our truth about our vision of race and cultural memory” (Finney, 1997, preface).

**Conceptual Framework**

**Social ecological and intersectionality frameworks.** The social ecological framework (SEF) proposed by McLeroy et al. (1988) gives attention to both individual and social environmental factors as options for health promotion interventions. This model assumes that appropriate changes in the social environment will produce changes in individuals, and that the support of individuals in the population is essential for implementing environmental changes (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988). This ecological perspective posits that individual health behavior is influenced at multiple levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy. (Linnan & Ferguson, 2007; McLeroy et al., 1988; Solomon et al., 2004). Furthermore, this model suggests that the effectiveness in changing health behavior is enhanced significantly through the coordination of individuals and groups acting at these different levels. Existing literature in beauty salon-based research focuses on the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels of this model, with few studies that address factors at the organizational, community, and policy levels. I will first review how this extant literature employs the first two levels to promote health education and then consider how the other levels can also be utilized in this current research.

First, the intrapersonal level in particular considers that the methods for bringing about behavioral changes lie within the individual and not the social environment. The
knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and skills of an individual are targeted characteristics, which researchers contend can be influenced to bring about behavioral change.

Strategies to influence change at the intrapersonal level include educational programs, mass media, support groups, organizational incentives, or peer counseling (McLeroy et al., 1988). The interpersonal level in the SEF model however, focuses on changing individual behavior through social influences (McLeroy et al., 1988). This level considers the interpersonal relationships with family members, friends, neighbors, work associates, and acquaintances as important sources of influence in health related behaviors of individuals. According to McLeroy et al., (1988) these relationships are essential aspects of social identity. They provide important social resources that are frequently referred to as social support and are vital “mediators of life stress” and “important to overall well-being (McLeroy et al., 1988).” House (1981) explains that social support can be distinguished between four types of support. Emotional support is associated with sharing in life experiences. This involves showing empathy, love, trust, or care. Instrumental support involves the provision of tangible aid and services that directly assist a person in need. Informational support involves the provision of advice, suggestions, and information that a person can use to address problems. Appraisal support involves the provision of information that is useful for self-evaluation purposes. These may include constructive feedback, affirmation, and social comparison (House, 1981; Solomon et al., 2004).

These different types of social support have been identified as important facets in African American beauty culture research. Researchers recognize that
the unique relationships between cosmetologists and customers involve exchanges that center around providing care, advice, information and affirmation. In particular, SEF has been utilized in beauty salon research to study the effectiveness of using these settings and social support to increase health advocacy. For example, Wilson et al. (2008) studied the effectiveness of using African American cosmetologists to promote breast health messages in salons. They chose forty salons in an urban, minority area and assigned some to provide messages to clients and others to serve as controls. Following the program initiation, researchers surveyed 1,210 clients. They found significant results indicating that after training stylists to talk with their clients about breast exams, 37% of participants in the experimental salons were exposed to breast health messages, compared to 10% in the control salons. There were also associated behavior changes in the experimental salon when compared to the control. Clients in the experimental salon improved both self-examination rates and intentions to have clinical breast exams. Findings from this particular study suggest that African American salons may potentially offer an important venue for promotion of health behaviors related to breast cancer detection.

In another study, Madigan, Smith-Wheelock, & Krien (Madigan, Smith-Wheelock, & Sarah, 2007) studied if the Healthy Hair Program was an effective means of intervention to influence health behaviors and increase risk awareness. The Program was developed by the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan to train African American hair stylists to promote healthy behaviors with their
clients through a “health chat.” The campaign included two 4-hour workshops to educate stylists on how to motivate their clients to make lifestyle changes that can prevent kidney disease, diabetes, and hypertension and to seek medical advice. Local community physicians and nutritionists helped conduct the workshops, which emphasized techniques for encouraging clients to improve their health behavior. The consequences of this study were that between 1999 and 2005, nearly 700 stylists were trained and reached more than 14,000 clients in eight Michigan cities. Researchers found that both clients and stylists reported the experience as effective and rewarding. In fact, the findings indicate that nearly 60% of clients reached by a stylist in the campaign reported having taken steps to prevent targeted diseases or seek medical advice. Thus, the program was effective in the short term in promoting attention to healthy behaviors and increasing awareness associated with diabetes, hypertension, and chronic kidney disease.

Similarly, qualitative studies have also had favorable results in using salons to disseminate health messages. For example, Solomon et al. (2004) conducted an observational study in 10 North Carolina salons (five serving predominantly African American customers and five serving predominantly Caucasian customers) to consider the naturally occurring conversations between cosmetologists and customers as well as to assess the features of the salon that might help to develop salon-based health interventions. The study consisted of two 4-hour observations in each of the salons to record details about the physical
environment as well as to document cosmetologists-customer conversations. Researchers concluded that the social environment of a salon is a place where cosmetologists and customers talk openly about many subjects, including health. They documented a significant level of trust and comfort among cosmetologists and their clients in discussing highly sensitive issues. The assessment of the physical setting suggested that beauty salons gave customers access to media resources such as print material, television, and radio, which could all be used to target health issues and prove useful in intervention strategies within beauty salons.

In another study, Lieberman and Harris (Lieberman & Harris, 2007) considered the feasibility of using beauticians as health literacy agents and beauty salons as health-education portals to discuss sexual health and information about sexually transmitted diseases (STD) with adolescent, inner-city, African American girls. They conducted focus groups with 25 women including salon clients, salon owners, and medical students. These discussions uncovered pertinent health intervention information such as how teens access health information, the role of beauty salons in health education, and the role of beauticians as information resources and health educators. Researchers found that in developing a health-education program for African American teens, beauticians and salons may be excellent health information agents and portals. They found that factors such as cultural appropriateness, comfort felt by beauty salon customers, and beauticians’ natural role as information sources could help facilitate health education in this setting.
Thus, research supports the use of beauty salons as valuable portals for reaching and promoting health among African American women. Linnan et al. (2007) recognize that beauty salons are located in all communities, regardless of size, geographic location or rural/urban status and are accessible to and frequented by African American women on a regular basis. They report that there are 312,959 licensed beauty-center salons in the U.S., each averaging 155 clients per week. Studies show that women spend between 45 minutes to 5 hours in the salon depending on services rendered and about 18% of talk that occurs during that time is health related (Linnan & Ferguson, 2007).

Most beauty-salon research explores how the salon settings can be mobilized primarily at intra- and interpersonal levels of SEF. Currently, there is a gap, however in the literature on how SEF and beauty salons can influence the lives of abused women. Researchers have focused on cardiovascular risk, Stroke, HIV/AIDS, Diabetes Mellitus, chronic kidney disease, breast cancer, eating habits, alcoholism, and smoking cessation, but none have sought its utility in impacting violence against women. Given the historical value of salons and the influence of stylists in the community, I employed SEF to study hair salons and violence prevention education in an effort to explore other options that may help support abused African American women.

In order to develop effective ways in which abused marginalized women can be reached, researchers must take a serious look at the unique ways in which these women experience violence. Employing the concept of intersectionality is a notable step in that direction. This concept states that the simultaneous interlocking of multiple social
identifiers shape the lives and experiences of individuals. For the purposes of this study, I inferred that abused women who are African Americans experience domestic violence differently than their White counterparts. I also looked for ways socioeconomic status impacted these experiences when dealing with abuse. Experience can be denoted as the way they respond, resist, survive or seek help. Thus, help-seeking behavior can differ for women in African American communities due to their social locations. It is important to remember that structural intersectionality also considers how oppressive institutional and societal structures such as racism, sexism, and classism further victimize African American women in abusive situations and how subsequently these influence the ways abused women seek help. Therefore, this model suggests that individually lived experiences as well as structural underpinnings are important determinants of how African American women experience violence.

The next crucial step in developing culturally sensitive ways to reach abused African American women is to look to frameworks that also consider interrelated factors. As stated above, SEF recognizes that intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and policy factors can influence experience. The importance of this model in social science is that it explains how behavior is affected by multiple levels of influence, i.e. individual and social environmental factors, which can influence how African American women respond, resist, survive and seek help in situations of violence. Historically, this model has been used in anti-violence research to understand the etiology or origin of gender-based violence. Most recently, however, SEF has been utilized by public health researchers to investigate how individual and social environmental factors can inform health promotion interventions. This current study replicates these goals in that it
focuses on how interpersonal relationships and community organizations can offer support and influence behavior.

By considering both intersectionality and SEF, researchers can combine theory and practice to begin to look at how marginalized women are experiencing violence. It is apparent in both frameworks that the interrelatedness of individual (intrapersonal), relationship (interpersonal), community and societal factors all have the potential to impact experiences with violence. Moreover, by exploring these same factors, researchers can find alternative means of intervention to reach and empower marginalized, abused women. Some researchers who draw upon the intersectionality framework, however, insist that personal empowerment and social change is primarily accomplished at the policy level by analyzing and critiquing existing systems of power and privilege (Josephson, 2008). I argue that while challenging policy can help empower women in abusive situations, taking additional steps to implement change at the individual and community levels are also vital options.

By employing SEF, researchers can begin to develop culturally appropriate responses by using the same multi-level factors that inform the concept of intersectionality. For example, this current study was built on the individual attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of women in African American communities. It began looking to interpersonal relationships, such as those between cosmetologists and their clients, as alternatives to influence help-seeking behavior in cases of domestic violence. Likewise, focusing on African American salons as a space for advocacy gave utility to community and empowered marginalized women to ensure they have access to resources.
Although SEF appeared to have reasonable utility for the purpose of supporting this current study, some researchers identified gaps in this model. For example, McLeroy et al. (1988) recognized that by collapsing physical and social environment into a single source of influence, it becomes difficult to identify appropriate interventions in health promotion efforts. Thus, while McLeroy et al. (1988) pushed SEF beyond the intent of its initial social science utility, they acknowledged that there may be a lack of sufficient specificity to guide conceptualization of a specific problem to identify appropriate interventions. Similarly, scholars such as Green, Poland, and Rootman (Green, Poland, & Rootman, 2000) recognized gaps in this framework. They argued that settings can be conceptualized both as physically bounded space-times in which people come together to complete a set activity as well as arenas consisting of sustained interactions with pre-existing structures, policies, characteristics, and institutional values (Green et al., 2000). Moreover, Green et al. (2000) insisted that despite this expanded definition, some researchers assume that settings can be easily manipulated by (Services) professionals. They argued that these assumptions may be inaccurate and possibly fail to consider historical, political, economic, and societal effects of a setting when employing SEF for health promotion and practice.

Other researchers such as Linnan et al. (Linnan. & Ferguson, 2007) have employed SEF in salon-based research and found it efficacious in health education. While they too have acknowledged gaps in this framework, they have addressed them by broadening the framework to emphasize how history, the economy, policy, and society affect the experiences of individuals and groups. This current study was modeled after this latter approach and remained open to the utility of SEF in meeting the specified
goals. More importantly, I aimed to be comprehensive in my approach by addressing the historical, political, economic, and societal backgrounds of salons in African American communities located in Central Kentucky.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Methodological Framework

Given the goal of this current work was to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based advocacy and anti-violence education, the most appropriate methodological approach was a qualitative study. According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods make it possible to study issues in depth and detail. Data collection often occurs through open-ended questions with responses that “permit one to understand the world as seen by respondents” (p.21). Results include a wealth of detailed information about a small number of people therefore leading to an in-depth understanding of these select individuals (Patton, 2002).

In considering the most appropriate research paradigm for this study, it was necessary to explore my personal assumptions about research and how it functions. For example, I perceived that a critical analysis of how race and gender affected the experiences of abused individuals was important in order to gain insight about how to implement change in oppressive systems. Thus, I considered employing research paradigms with ontological and epistemological approaches that engaged critical analyses of social locations and produced ways to challenge power structures and mediate change. Hatch (2002) offered some explanation about how scholars can choose among paradigms when implementing research. He reasoned that we must answer specific questions about how the world is ordered and how we can come to know things about it in order to have insight regarding ontological and epistemological approaches (Hatch, 2002). To begin this process, I considered both the critical feminist and critical race theories.
In his discussion on the “critical feminist” paradigm, Hatch (2002) described the ontology, epistemology and methodology that frame this approach. He explained that feminists see the world as made up of historically situated structures that result in social actions and relations that lead to differential treatment of individuals based on race, gender, and social class (Hatch, 2002). Hatch (2002) explained that feminist scholars are motivated to uncover oppressive structures and understand how they influence the life chances of those being studied. He insisted that the primary goal of feminists is to raise consciousness and encourage transformation, in an effort to make conditions better for those being oppressed, namely women. Hatch (2002) argued this methodology can be transformative and often lead to social change that impacts the lives of participants in a positive way. Similarly, other scholars such as Guba and Lincoln (1994) explained that the voice of the investigator in this paradigm is one of a “transformative intellectual,” an activist or advocate, whose training emphasizes resocialization, and is altruistic and empowerment based (p. 112).

Hatch (2002) also described the epistemology of the critical feminist paradigm as subjective and inherently political. He explained that knowledge within this approach is “always value mediated” since the researcher and participants are interactively linked. Thus, knowledge acquired within this paradigm is specifically mediated through the political positioning of the researcher. This is quite different from other paradigms where the investigator seeks to maintain an objective position in relation to the phenomena being studied and constant comparison of the data is made to ensure that personal impressions are not driving the findings. According to Hatch (2002), centralizing the
values of critical feminist in these works is essential to the research process. He argued that in order to meet the goal of social change, researchers most often have to be engaged in at least a moderate participation to work with participants.

Researchers have also uncovered the utility of the critical race theory to bring about social change. Given the focus of both the critical race and critical feminist theories, it is important to consider the intersections of these two paradigms. The critical race theory developed as an outgrowth of legal studies and is also grounded in social justice. It provides an analysis of race and racism from a legal perspective. The theory began as a movement of interdisciplinary scholars and activists interested in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). This group focuses on the ways in which white supremacy and privilege are maintained despite the law and constitutional guarantee for equality. They argue that racism is engrained into the institutional fabric of American society and agree with many feminists that the law is a central part of the problem. Hence, as feminist theorists seek to understand the role of gender and how to expose material differences, the critical race theorists look for ways to expose and dismantle the usually invisible privileges of white people (Chayes et al., 2014). Both point to the “multidimensionality” of sexism, racism, and classism and recognize that the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation influences the ways in which individuals experience life.

Although critical race theory originated from legal scholarship, most recently it was introduced into the public health community. Researchers have begun to link the effects of structural racism to health outcomes and health disparities. They recognize that social justice principles embedded in this paradigm can help to bridge gaps in health,
housing, employment, and other factors associated with living conditions (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). According to Ford and Airhihenbuwa (2010), knowledge production is the primary medium through which the critical race theory operates. They explain that this paradigm not only enhances opportunities for discussing racial phenomena and exploring the effects of racism; it also incorporates the knowledge of racial and ethnic minority communities regarding marginality (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). These theorists shift the focus from the majority group’s perspective to that of the marginalized group. Moreover, they ground their study in the perspectives of the minority communities and incorporate an analysis of their lived experiences and disciplinary conventions. Ford and Airhihenbuwa (2010) explain that integrating these lived experiences of marginalized communities provides the communities with more meaningful data for their ongoing efforts toward collective self-improvement. They also recognize that community participation and critical self-reflection enrich the research processes and when applied this paradigm can closely link research, practice, and communities.

These explanations of research paradigms helped to identify the appropriate approach for this current project. Given that the critical feminist theory and the critical race work intersect, I found that there are several factors that exist between them, which closely align with this project. First, my ontological perspective was that social locations such as race, class, and gender influence the experiences of abused women and that societal structures, such as racism, classism, and sexism impact their ability to get support. These views outlined my research position and were considered while the study was being conducted. I contended that African American women experience violence
differently than their White counterparts; thus, the services and support offered must surpass mainstream traditions and reach where they are physically and figuratively located. Secondly, I interacted with participants in this study. This means I moved outside the data collection role and became actively involved in each setting by participating in salon conversation and helping with daily task. I considered cosmetologists the experts on the activities and discussions that occurred in the salon; however, I remained subjective and reflexive in my role as a facilitator. Just as critical theory suggests, I integrated an analysis of the minority’s perspective in order to gain new viewpoints about violence in the community. Lastly, the nature of this project aimed to be transformative in its framework. Thus, my goal was to challenge existing barriers that limit the help-seeking behavior of abused women from diverse backgrounds and explore other options that can be utilized.

Grounding this study in both the critical race theory and the feminist theory, means raising consciousness about racial and gender oppressions endured by abused African American women. Both theories recognize the intersectionality of race and gender and encourage transformation of structural systems to make conditions better. This study therefore situates well within both frameworks. To give application to each provides a comprehensive approach in challenging institutionalized racism and sexism that inhibit the help-seeking behaviors of abused African American women.

Drawing from bell hooks (2003)(hooks, 2003), I recognize that feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. She contended that the aim of this work is not to benefit solely one specific group of women, nor privilege women over men. hooks argued that focusing on feminism as a political movement has the power to transform all
of society in a meaningful way (hooks, 2003). Likewise, the critical race theorists, such as Crenshaw, follow similar traditions. While many of them began by regarding themselves as feminists, they later aligned more closely with the critical race theory. They contended that mainstream feminism failed to respond and include the perspectives of women of color. Thus, they redirected their efforts to focus on legal institutions and legal doctrine from the perspectives of women of color and began regarding themselves as critical race feminists. Crenshaw in particular identified with this theory and contributed her early work on intersectionality. As mentioned above, this framework situates race as only one axis of a multidimensional system of status oppression (Harris, 2012).

I draw from both the critical feminist and critical race frameworks in an effort to impact the experiences of all women, especially those who are often in the margins and whose lives are least changed by political movements. By employing the intersectionality thread found in both theories, this project draws attention to the diversity of women’s social and political realities and anticipates of the transformation of these lived experiences.

**Research Participants and Sites**

Salons and cosmetologists are located in different communities across the country. This study, however, focused on a homogeneous group of participants in the African American community. These participants included African American women over the age of 18 years, working in an African American beauty salon either as employees, booth renters, or owners of the shops in which they work.
The U.S. Census Bureau report indicated that in the state of Kentucky, 20.8% and 14.5% of African Americans lived in Jefferson and Fayette Counties, respectively (Bureau, 2011). Given that the second largest population of African Americans resided in the Lexington/Fayette County area, participants were recruited from that part of the state. By reviewing the demographics of specific zip code regions, I was able to identify salons located in areas where a large number of African Americans resided relative to other parts of the city. I considered privately-owned business sites, rather than large commercial or residential salons. Below are local beauty salons found in Lexington:

Salon # 1. Carolyn’s Crown and Glory Beauty Salon – 1801 Alexandria Dr. #80 Lexington, KY 40504


Salon # 3. Sister 2 Sister – 1403 N. Forbes Rd. #120 Lexington, KY 40511

These sites were identified using purposeful sampling as potential places to collect observation data and interview African American cosmetologists. They were identified as research sites since the cosmetologists working in the salons were African American women who predominantly provided services to other African American women. These sites also represented places where I had prior social contact with at least one stylist in the salon. I made initial contact with these individuals by telephone to allow time to briefly explain the research goals and to determine their willingness to participate in the study. After making contact with at least one cosmetologist at each site, I mailed cover letters (Appendix A) along with informed consents (Appendix B)
explaining the project in-depth. Once the informed consent paperwork was signed and returned, I scheduled observations and interviews at each site.

Salon #1 in Lexington was privately-owned and typically had five cosmetologists renting booths. This shop specialized in ethnic hair care and natural styles, and provided nail and spa services. Salon #2 in Lexington generally had four stylists renting booths and specialized in styling Black hair. However, this shop did not provide spa and nail services. Salon #3 represented a smaller salon where the owner worked with customers and usually one other booth in this shop is rented. The owner of salon #3 had worked for over 20 years and specialized in ethnic hair styling. There were no additional nail and spa services available. In summary, these salons represent: 1. a large, busy salon with at least 5 stylists working and additional individuals who offered nail and spa services; 2. a medium-size salon where at least 4 stylists provided only hair care services; and 3. a small salon consisting of two stylists working within the largest African American community in Lexington.

Once the consent forms were completed and the observations were scheduled, I noted that the number of stylists in salon #1 and #3 had changed. In salon #1, one of the stylists had recently stopped working in the shop and had begun to work full-time at the local airport. I was told by the owner that this individual had obtained employment that would provide better financial security; thus, she would not be available to participate in the study. Fortunately, the owner of salon #3 explained that she recently acquired a new booth renter in her shop. Thus, instead of two participants, there were three stylists from this salon participating in the study. Given this information, the inclusion criteria was reviewed for the study and I decided to continue with the scheduled observations.
Despite losing the variable sizes between the salons, the study would still include 11 stylists at three different sites.

Once this decision was made, interviews were conducted with each of the consenting African American stylists working at the three salons. I used this data along with findings from salon observations to begin analyzing the history of each shop, its physical location and size, and the social interactions, including salon conversations to learn more about Black beauty culture and social support. Since the conversations between the women in the salon, or “shoptalk,” occurred between the cosmetologists and customers, consenting African American women visiting the salon over the age of 18 years were also considered participants in this study. This information enhanced my understanding of the nature of the relationship between these groups of women and outlined the role of cosmetologists in their communities. As customers entered the salon, I asked the cosmetologists to introduce me. I had a prepared script to explain the purpose of this study, what was involved in participating, and what they would be exposed to during the study (Appendix D). In addition, all their questions about the research project were answered. The customer was then handed a consent form to read (Appendix C). If she agreed to participate, her interactions and conversations were included in the data. In the event customers declined participation, interactions or conversations were not included. During the course of the study, all clients agreed to allow me to observe and document their interactions.
Methods of Data Generation

The primary data generation methods for this study included salon/participant observations; semi-structured, in-depth interviews of cosmetologists; and a survey of cosmetologists. By depending on multiple data-collection methods, trustworthiness of the data was increased and threats to validity were reduced. This process of triangulation in qualitative research increased the confidence in the study findings and generally included participant observation, interviewing, and document collection (Glesne, 2006). Hatch (2002) explained that the goal of participant observations is “to understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspective of the participants” (p. 72). Observational data strengthened this research by increasing my understanding of the contexts in which social phenomena occurred. Through my observations of everyday interactions, I acquired an expanded sense of the culture, relationships, and conversations that would not necessarily surface during an interview. This method allowed me to explore the naturally occurring conversations between licensed cosmetologists and their customers. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were also important in generating data for this study since interviews “create a special kind of speech event” that allowed me to ask open-ended questions in order to encourage participants to explain their unique perspectives and experiences regarding community advocacy and social support (Hatch, 2002, p. 23). As the researcher, I had guiding questions prepared (Appendix E), but was open to digression and followed the lead of the participants. I sought to probe deeper into areas of discussion that arose from these conversations and incorporated follow-up questions based on participant responses. Research methods were grounded in the model of Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 268 as
cited in Hatch, 2002, pp. 91-2) and included the following five outcomes for interviewing:

- here and now constructions – participant explanations of activities, feelings and motivations, concerns
- reconstructions – explanations of past events and experiences
- projections – explanations of anticipated experiences
- triangulation – verification of information from other sources
- member checking – verification of information developed by the researcher

Triangulation and member checking of the interviews were an important part of my methodology and were purposeful in verifying and validating information obtained. I utilized a survey instrument to triangulate this data. Glesne’s (2002) member checking method was employed and a draft of the final report was shared with the 11 cosmetologists to ensure that their perspectives on domestic violence and community participatory research were accurately represented.

There are multiple advantages and disadvantages when using research surveys. Some advantages may include the ease in asking participants about their opinions and attitudes and being able to use standardized questions. (Nardi, 2006). Disadvantages may include a gap between reported participant behavior and actual behavior; and the need to rely on participants’ recollections of their behavior or events (Nardi, 2006). Nardi (2006)
argued however, that surveys allow greater opportunities for asking personal questions, guaranteeing anonymity, and addressing multiple topics at once. For this project, a brief survey instrument was included to verify information collected during cosmetologist interviews and reconstruct activities and conversations that typically occur in the salon. This questionnaire (Appendix F) was primarily used to obtain cosmetologist demographic information and collect data about how they have supported their customers when issues of violence are suspected. I also collected data regarding their willingness to share anti-violence information with clients and their confidence in discussing this topic. Questions were primarily close-ended and answered using a Likert-scale; however, a few open-ended questions were included that specifically asked about awareness and personal experience with domestic violence. These findings were analyzed using Qualtrics.

Participant observations, cosmetologist interviews, and survey administration were the sources of data generation. Below is a comprehensive description indicating how each method was incorporated into this dissertation research.

**Salon/Participant Observations**

Observations in the salon were conducted prior to interviewing each cosmetologist. The goal was to observe African American salons in the community and interview every cosmetologist at that location. These observations allowed me to observe the ethos of the salon. Specifically, the physical setting, the conversations, and social interactions occurring between the women were considered. The physical location/accessibility, layout, media resources, cultural sensitivity, ambiance, and privacy were analyzed. These findings are included in the results section of this research. I also
observed body language, physical touch, and time spent in the salon. Purposive sampling was employed and stylists in the community were contacted by telephone to recruit for this study. (Nardi, 2006). As an incentive to participate, each cosmetologist was offered a $10 Target gift card. This was given upon completion of the observation, survey, and interview. Once the appropriate number of cosmetologists expressed interest, cover letters (Appendix A) along with informed consents were mailed (Appendix B) explaining the project in depth.

After the recruiting process was completed and the informed consent documents were returned, multiple observations and interviews were scheduled at each salon. It was important to balance breadth and depth when deciding how much time to spend in the salons with the cosmetologists. Keeping in mind that in the United States salon owners report an average of 155 clients per week (Linnan. & Ferguson, 2007), I considered that time spent in each salon provided multiple opportunities to observe interactions between cosmetologists and their clients. Thus, the study included one week of observations in each of the selected salons. These observation periods were five to eight hours daily during the Tuesday-Saturday workweek. Visiting each salon at variable times in the day helped to document the differences between the “busy” and “slow” times, and to increase the chances of observing interactions with customers of differing occupational and socio-economic backgrounds.

Upon arrival to each salon, I introduced myself to the participant(s) and engaged in ongoing conversation in the shop. I was continuously in an observer role, as I collected information about the salon and interactions between women (Hatch, 2002). These data were useful in generating descriptions, analyses, and interpretations. I started
with a broad focus and then narrowed as the process progressed. I was sure to contextualize the data in an effort to represent the perspectives of the participants.

The data include maps of each salon which depict the physical features and provide points of reference for the analysis (Hatch, 2002). Field notes include time logs, descriptive notes about the cosmetologists, and drawings of the salon waiting room and booth areas (Glesne, 2006). I documented detailed, verbatim accounts and conversations during these observations. These condensed field notes were initially recorded in spiral notebooks and later expanded to provide more detail about the observation. The protocol was to bracket my impressions, feelings, and locate my perspectives as the researcher during each observation event. After observing at the salons, I asked each cosmetologist to answer a brief survey. (Appendix F) The questionnaire asked participants a variety of demographic information as well as specific questions about their experiences with clients and their own experiences of violence.

A review of qualitative research literature indicated that researchers may be involved at various levels of the study. Hatch insists that this decision is not an “all or nothing” proposition. There exist different continua with extremes from “complete observer” to “complete participant” or “limited observer” to “active participant” (Hatch, 2002). Scholars contend that several factors should influence this important decision; one of which is the issue of intrusiveness (Hatch, 2002). Given the findings from my pilot study at the Bluegrass Community and Technical College of Cosmetology and Esthetics, I adjusted the protocol for this current study. During the pilot work, several customers made inquiries about my presence in the salon. One elderly, African American woman suggested I was spying on the group, which allowed the cosmetologist
to reply that I was probably “stealing their beauty secrets.” Understanding that my presence as a researcher in essence makes the natural context of the salon unnatural and has the potential to influence the participants’ behavior, I opted to exist somewhere in the middle of the continuum. I remained an “active” participant in salon activities and conversations while simultaneously remaining a “passive” observer (Hatch, 2002). To accomplish this goal, I looked for ways to assist the cosmetologists and salon owners with daily tasks that I could complete at each shop. This moderate role described by Spradley (1980), helped to minimize any hindrance of the natural flow. As an African American woman seeking beauty services, I anticipated being able to mingle with customers and cosmetologists rather easily. As mentioned above, the primary goal for incorporating salon observations was to obtain data regarding the natural occurrences (conversations and interactions) between cosmetologists and their customers.

Carefully documenting the interactions between these groups of women helped me understand the nature of their relationships. By including the clients as participants, I was able to observe the role of the cosmetologists in the salon setting and their capacity to be “natural healers.” Namely, I noted interactions that suggested whether, or not, cosmetologists were community leaders, business entrepreneurs, or role models for the women they service. These interactions and conversations indicated ways in which stylists offered social support for their customers; and if, in fact, customers offered support in return to the stylists. It was important to document how the clients responded to these acts of support. I looked for verbal clues and body language that suggest agreement, disagreement, or indifference to topic discussions. I documented how readily customers participated in open shop conversations, or whether they preferred private
conversations with their stylists. It was also important to consider how the clients moved about in the setting and how they spent their time waiting in the salon.

To recruit clients for this study, I asked the cosmetologists to introduce me to each of their customers as they arrived in the shop. After the introduction, I offered a verbal explanation of the research goals including what was involved for participants and what exposures could be anticipated. I also answered any questions. A customer consent form (Appendix C) was provided for each client to read. This form clarified that if any client declined to participate in the study, their conversation and interactions would not be documented and that I would focus on the interactions of other women in the salon.

**Cosmetologists interviews.** The interviews with cosmetologists generated much of the data for this project. Current literature states that there is often a close bond and camaraderie between cosmetologists and their clients; and that subsequently there is more that occurs in Black beauty salons than just cutting and perming hair (Linnan. & Ferguson, 2007; Madigan et al., 2007; Solomon et al., 2004). Interviews with cosmetologists helped to uncover the dynamics of these relationships. For example, talking with these women helped to gather first-hand their attitudes about being natural helpers. Interviews also allowed me to consider their understanding of gender topics, including violence and whether, or not, they provided social support. By exploring their perspectives and experiences regarding relationships with their customers, motivations and willingness to offer social support, and personal opinions I gained insight into the supportive role of African American salons and cosmetologists take in regards to their clients.
I interviewed every cosmetologist working in each of the selected salons who consented to participating in the study. The interviews sessions lasted at least 90 minutes and occurred following one of the observation periods at their respective salon. As an introduction, I asked about basic demographic information and history of working in the salon. I developed interview questions that guided this process and sought to gain the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of cosmetologists on their relationships with their clients and domestic violence (Appendix E). I included questions that would elicit information about experience/behavior, opinions/values, feelings, and knowledge (Glesne, 2002). For example, several questions asked for information about their career as cosmetologists and their general experiences with clients. Other questions focused specifically on their relationships with clients and asked about the conversations that occurred in the shop and the types of support they provided. Additional questions asked about their beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors when dealing with issues of domestic violence. Although I developed questions and gave ample time to discuss the various topics of relationships, gender issues, and domestic violence, I remained flexible and followed the lead of the participant. The interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder. They were later transcribed. The cosmetologists were contacted for a follow-up interview by phone. This gave me the opportunity to ask additional questions that had formulated after the initial interview.

Immediately following each initial interview, I noted my impressions and opinions about the interview. I considered the rapport between the participant and myself, as well as our comfort level. I used the time to be reflexive about my involvement in the interview and consider any bias that I had as the interviewer.
Data Management

Observations. The data collected depicted the physical structure of the salon such as cosmetologists work stations, customer seating, magazines, available literature, décor, radio, television locations, and the food and beverages available to workers and customers. The data also included notes describing the interactions and conversations that took place. I documented information about the geographical location including the neighborhood/community in which it was located, and the history of each salon. I also looked for existing community resources that provided support for women including support for victims of violence.

The observation data were initially handwritten and later typed and saved electronically to my personal computer. This computer was loaded with encryption software and required a login password. All files on the computer were password protected and did not include personal identifiers. The data were entered into the QRS NVIVO 10 software program for manipulation. The data, except personal identifying information, were also stored as backup on a removable, external drive and kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked office in a separate location from the computer. The observations did not include participant or salon names, only broad and general descriptions of the shops and cosmetologists. Likewise, customer names, information and personal identifiers were not recorded. Salons were numbered for reference purposes and cosmetologists were given pseudonyms.

Interviews. I created an electronic file that listed participant pseudonyms, salon number, and dates of interviews. These interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder and later transcribed. These transcriptions were typed, organized, and logged
according to the salon number and then by stylist pseudonym. These files were imported into QRS NVIVO 10 data management software program for manipulation. The only place that the salon name, participants’ identifying information, and pseudonyms were listed together was in a single, hardcopy log kept in a locked file cabinet separate from other data. The code key will be destroyed as soon as it is no longer needed for the analysis, at the completion of the project. All audiotapes will also be destroyed once the study is completed. Transcripts will be kept for 6 years and destroyed after the end of the IRB approval period. All signed consent forms were kept in a separate locked file in a locked office and will be retained for 6 years after the termination of IRB approval.

Survey. The cosmetologists were each given a hardcopy of the research survey to complete. The data were then entered electronically into Qualtrics. This program was secure behind the University of Kentucky firewall in a password-protected server. All personal identifying information was encrypted when the survey data were uploaded.

Data Analysis

Analyzing data collected through qualitative research methods can be complex and challenging. Unlike structured, objective data associated with the positivist paradigm, analysis of qualitative data is often portrayed as subjective, inductive, nonlinear, and labor-intensive (Hatch, 2002, p. 147). While there may be variations in the approach when making sense of data, the purpose in either respect is the same. Data analysis is a search for meaning and a systematic way to process what has been learned and how it can be communicated. For this study, I interrogated findings in an effort to seek out patterns, themes, relationships, explanations, and interpretations.
This project used a mixed deductive and inductive analysis. Thus, several typologies were developed initially by considering the research questions and study goals. According to Hatch (2002), data analysis starts by dividing the overall data set into smaller groups or categories based on typologies. Typologies are predetermined categories that are generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objectives. I employed this model and started with pre-selected typologies prior to reading through the data. This “start list” was general and based on the participant observations, the interview questions, and survey instrument. (Appendix G) This code list was useful in beginning the coding process; however, there was room to expand, change, or remove any of the items based on how my ideas developed through repeat interaction with the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). By drawing from these topics, I was able to start looking for categories to anchor my analysis. Once the initial codes were identified, the process for coding and analyzing data listed below was followed. Prior to following the steps, transcribed data were entered into the QRS NVIVO 10 data management program. The program allowed me to organize the material into codes and themes, compile information about people and places, and visualize the project as a whole. The interviews and recorded observations were initially transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. Very similarly, data from the survey questionnaire was initially collected as a hardcopy and then later managed and stored in Qualtrics. All of the files were later imported into the NVIVO 10 program. Once in the program I was able to follow the processes below and include bracketed information such as my impressions and perspectives. Using NVIVO 10 allowed me to organize data in a succinct, systematic manner. The program did not however take the place of building codes and analyzing the data.
The steps below build from the “Typological Analysis Model” developed by Hatch (2002, p. 153). He stressed that his models were merely frameworks for designing analysis strategies and were less prescriptive than exemplary (Hatch, 2002). This model was adapted and used it in the analysis process for this project.

*Steps for Coding and Analyzing (adapted from Hatch’s Typological Analysis Model (Hatch, 2002))*

1. **Identify typologies/pre-selected categories to be analyzed** – Since this study relied on interviews and observations as a primary data source, the initial list of categories stemmed from the guiding interview questions and goals of the observations. The initial list of categories can be found in the question matrix (Appendix G). The categories allowed me to start to divide the data into smaller manageable groups.

2. **Read the data and mark entries related to specific typologies** – I read completely through all data, paying close attention to one typology in particular. I marked/highlighted comments, observations, feedback, and answers that were related to that specific typology. (NVIVO 10 allowed me to highlight or pull this data into “nodes”). I continued this process of sorting through the larger data and dividing it into smaller sets until all typologies/categories were addressed. At this point, I also began “broad brush” coding by running text search and word frequency queries within NVIVO 10. This allowed me to look for additional categories inspired by participants’ words and any of my margin notes that were previously made. Both of the above steps respectively represent the deductive and inductive analysis protocols. This allowed me to expand and build upon the
initial code list. During these steps, I did not attempt any formal interpretation other than verifying specific information relative to each typology.

3. Read entries by typology and record main ideas of each entry – In the next step, I read data within each category and made a “summary sheet” for each participant or observation event. I recorded a brief statement of the main idea from each excerpt. Again, at this point I did not attempt to interpret the findings, but only documented a summary of participants’ words and my observations. This process allowed me to access, identify, and, manipulate summarized information for large amounts of data in an organized manner.

4. Look for hypothetical patterns, relationships, themes within the typologies - Next, I used the data organized above to look for patterns or regularities of similarities and differences. This involved analyzing the data to verify if things were happening in the same way each time or if they occurred in predictably different ways. I assessed how often or how seldom things occurred and in what sequencing order they took place. This step allowed me to consider the correspondence of events, i.e. how things happened in relation to other activities. Finally, I looked for cause and effect relationships, where one dynamic appeared to cause another.

5. Decide if patterns are supported by data and search for contradictions of these patterns – I next verified whether or not each group was justified by the data and assessed how well it fit into the categories. I also looked for contradictions to my proposed hypothetical patterns. If indeed data were found that differed from my findings, I provided explanations for these discoveries.
6. **Look for relationships among the patterns**- Up to this point, my analysis focused on each category individually. The next step was to consider connections across these findings. I employed the use of charts, maps, and models to help visualize themes, relationships and connections that existed between these categories.

7. **Write pattern as one-sentence generalizations**- While the goal of qualitative research is not to produce generalizable conclusions; in this next step I constructed a one-sentence generalization developed to illustrate the relationships between contexts. These generalizations helped organize my thinking, communicate findings to others, and provide closure for the analysis (Hatch, 2002, p. 159).

8. **Select data excerpts that support these generalizations**- Finally, I returned to both the coded data and the protocol page to identify key excerpts (previously marked) that supported these generalizations. By including excerpts that are associated with my findings, I was able to draw readers into the study and allow them to hear the voice of the participants. This last step served as a final check on the overall analysis process (Hatch, 2002, p. 160).

Ultimately, this process allowed me to look across codes and analyze patterns, themes, correlations, and difference. I used word frequencies and text searches, along with visualization tools such as charts, maps in this process to help with the analysis. I began to ask questions based the salon setting, naturally occurring conversations, and social interactions in an effort to draw conclusions about the role of salons in domestic violence advocacy. As I started the data analysis, I looked at the participants’ perspectives about how African American women encounter violence. I used this
information to draw from the intersectionality framework and identify ways in which African American women may experience violence differently from other women. I also used the participants’ viewpoints to understand if and how interrelated social factors and structures influence African American women’s response to abuse. In addition, I used SEF to examine if and how social support manifest in this environment. I analyzed the data to identify the specific types of help that occur during the interactions between the cosmetologists and their clients. Namely, I looked for those social supports discussed by House (1981) at the interpersonal level including emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal supports. I also analyzed the data to verify if these and other supports can be found at different levels of the framework such as the community and organizational levels. To accomplish this, I first examined the “shoptalk” to understand how the community of women in the salon offers aid to one another; then looked for features in the physical setting that also may prove conducive to advocacy.

Given the disproportionate rate in which African American women experience fatal domestic abuse and the fact that they are less likely to seek legal or social support, it is imperative that researchers find culturally sensitive options to reach these women. The purpose of this project was to gain insight into how the beauty salon setting and cosmetologists can inform the development of anti-violence education. Identifying features in the physical and social environment of the salon and understanding the relationships and interactions between cosmetologists and their customers can help to provide answers about how African American beauty culture may be an important
medium in domestic violence advocacy for women in these communities.
Chapter Four: Salon and Participant Descriptions

Phenomenal Women

This study walked into the open doors of three African American salons and into the lives of 11 stylists who worked in them. Although the salons had comparable infrastructures that allowed the women to flow from the waiting room, to the shampoo bowl, to the hair dryer and finally to the styling chair, they also had their own unique atmospheres. Likewise, the stylists had similar aspirations and training, yet their individual attributes and personalities were quite distinct. Uncovering these unique characteristics among the women and the spaces they inhabited was critical in deciding how best to develop a means for disseminating information about domestic violence. Ideally, these findings could help decide which features in the salon are necessary for efficacious implementation of anti-violence programs; as well as which stylists’ characteristics are most favorable when trying to reach victims of violence. This section will include descriptions of the 11 stylists and three salons in which they work. It will also explore the similarities and differences among them.

Participant Descriptions

Descriptions of the 11 participants were gathered from semi-structured interviews and observations in the salon. The initial interviews were conducted in the salons and provided information about interactions with clients, training history, and domestic violence advocacy. A second interview was conducted by phone in order to clarify initial answers and ask additional follow-up questions. Most of the cosmetologists appeared comfortable and relaxed during the interview process; however, Joy and Carol seemed somewhat guarded and nervous while answering questions. My first thoughts
were to try to reassure each of them that the process was not graded and that their answers would be kept confidential. I accomplished this by reminding them that they were the experts on this topic and that everyone’s answers could be very similar or exceedingly different. Carol in particular seemed nervous when giving answers. She sat at the wooden table in the middle of the salon and looked anxious for the process to end. She often repeated or changed her responses and confirmed many answers by referring to Jackie. I attributed these initial reactions to her recent return to the salon. She had previously completed a second internship with Jackie after a 12-year sabbatical and decided to “take things slow” this time. She openly described the challenges of clients from the past and eventually became comfortable in discussing topics with me. At one point, she shared that she believed her adult son was in an abusive relationship. She just was not sure how to approach the situation.

Joy also appeared uncomfortable during the interview process. She was guarded in many of her responses and answered as vague as possible. I found myself working to find topics that specifically interested her that would enable her to expound. For example, she had a genuine interest in increasing racial diversity in the salon. She stated that crossing racial lines in the beauty industry was profitable. Thus, I provided space during the interview to focus on her passion for marketing. This method seemed to allow her to become more comfortable during the interview session.

Most of the interviews took place face to face during the course of the workday; however, Keisha and Tanya remained busy and asked that I conduct their interviews while they worked with clients. During these interviews, I sat in a separate seat pulled close to their workstations. This creative option did not seem to hinder the process. Both
stylists, on separate occasions, answered questions thoroughly and often asked the client they were working with to join the interview or confirm an answer. Keisha in particular was very open during her interview despite the client sitting in her chair. She became emotional to the point of tears when asked about following up with clients on the advice she provides. We stopped the recorder and interview for a brief moment to allow her to gather her thoughts.

The study survey and daily conversations that occurred in the salon also provided information to describe participants. Each of the stylists preferred to complete the survey on paper and have it entered electronically at a later date. This was primarily due to their busy schedules. They were all open to answering questions throughout the day while I observed in the salon.

Given the data collected from these methods, the findings suggest that the 11 participants in this study each identified as African American women who were professionally trained as cosmetologists. Eight of the 11 were booth renters and three were salon owners. As indicated in Table 4.1, their experience in the beauty industry ranged from 7 to 25 years, and their initial training was obtained from several different cosmetology schools in the state of Kentucky. Nine of the 11 expressed goals that surpassed solely working “behind the chair” in the salon. More than half of the women had received some level of higher education beyond their training as cosmetologists and more than half of them were between the ages of 40-49 years. These demographic data are depicted in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, respectively. Below I have provided individual descriptions about each of the participants and details of the salons in which they work.
This will be followed by a discussion of key characteristics that would be beneficial to an anti-violence educational program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salon #1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beverly (owner)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denise</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lisa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nikki</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Salon #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angie</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ché</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tanya (owner)</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Salon #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carol</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jackie (owner)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keisha</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.1 Cosmetologists’ Experience, Training, and Aspirations**

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Fig 4.1, Participant level of education

Fig 4.2 Participant age
**Salon #1.** Salon #1 was owned and operated by Beverly for the past 11 years. She managed the shop much like a small business and less like a family gathering place. There were noticeable differences in some of the tasks and services provided when compared to the other salons. For example, the stylists all purchased and laundered their own towels to use while working. This was typically a shared tasks and cost in the other two salons. Salon #1 was also the only shop in the study to offer manicures and pedicures as optional services for clients. Beverly also made beauty products available for purchase; small combs, brushes, satin caps, hair-dye, nail polish, and body lotions all sat just above eye level in a glass display case next to the television.

Perhaps the most unique aspect in this salon was the floor-to-ceiling partitions placed between each stylist’s station. These walls prevented the full view of women as they talked; however, they provided a small sense of privacy. Despite the dividers, the stylists talked freely and in depth about a large scope of topics. Most often, the tone and volume were moderate and lacked any real intensity. This atmosphere matched Beverly’s laid-back, professional demeanor.

The décor in salon #1 also matched Beverly’s personality. It included several contemporary abstract artwork pieces and a wall full of framed pictures of her with political and athletic officials from around the state. Included on the wall, were signed pictures of Muhammad Ali and President Obama with First Lady Michelle Obama. These items could be viewed best from Beverly’s station. Her office and work supplies were arranged in an isolated section of the salon that was located off to the right of the front door. Her office door was often shut and displayed gold signage with her full name. This limited Beverly’s interaction and conversation with the larger group of women;
however, she often walked in out and of the main area, especially if she was rendering a manicure or pedicure service to a client.

A small break area was also located in the salon. This area was partitioned by a thin curtain and located in the rear. It housed a table and two chairs that were seldom used since the stylists rarely took breaks. The front door remained locked during early morning hours and then again during the late afternoon/evenings; this was a precautionary method they adopted two years ago after a “strange man” walked-in to the salon asking for money. This safety measure was acknowledged and accepted by the stylists and their clients.

Despite the locked front doors, the stylists had their own separate “cubicles” and shared the rest of the salon space without incident. There was an orderliness that translated throughout the physical space and the social environment. By far, Salon #1 was the most subdued and tranquil of all three salons. Beverly, Denise, Nikki, and Lisa were the four stylists who shaped the conversations and contributed to atmosphere.

**Beverly.** Beverly was the owner of salon #1 and the most senior of the participants in the study. She was a tall, well-dressed woman, with long tresses and dangling jewelry. She maintained a professional demeanor while in the salon and gave great attention to the latest fashions and make-up trends. Although she expressed little emotion throughout the study, she seemed excited to find new ways to boost business and help her clients. Beverly was a true entrepreneur who began her career as a cosmetologist over 26 years ago. As a native to the area, she described in an impromptu interview, that her interest in hair and beauty began as a child. She shared the details of playing with dolls and painting the nails of friends as a young girl. During this
encounter, I recall standing at her private booth in the rear of the salon; watching as she placed new weave among her own circularly braided hair. My expression must have said a lot about my amazement as she looked back at me in the mirror. Her response to my look of confusion and wonder was to explain that sometimes beauticians have to do their own hair too. She also explained that the salon opened over 11 years ago, at which time she along with her husband personally managed the construction of the facility. Her initial training was completed at Kaufman Beauty School; however, she later achieved a doctorate degree in cosmetology. Beverly had been the president of the Kentucky Congress of Cosmetologists for 6 years and seemed enthusiastic about the role of the organization. In a follow-up interview, she explained that she had recently been named Chairman of the Board for the National Beauty Culturists League. This organization was founded in 1940 as a nonprofit entity in hopes of improving the conditions in the cosmetology industry. Almost 75 years later, they continue with the mission to unite thousands of cosmetologists across the U.S. Included in their lists of objectives is the goal of gathering, preparing, and disseminating educational materials. Beverly explained after 7 years of classwork and dedication, she was able to obtain her professional degree from the National Beauty Culturists League.

Perhaps the most unique aspect about Beverly was her aspiration to conduct research in the salon. She hoped to find ways to help her clients understand the importance of healthy living and its effects on hair. When asked to explain the most difficult aspect of her career, Beverly without hesitation described the racial discrimination she endured when she first tried to open the salon. She explained that
getting a loan was nearly impossible and that only after having a White counterpart co-sign was she able to open the business.

**Denise.** Denise had been a cosmetologist for 26 years. Although she knew Beverly for many years prior, she began renting a booth in salon #1 about five years ago. Denise had also previously owned her own shop. She found the financial obligation of being in business too stressful. She openly recalled being unable to pay the salon’s bills when other stylists would leave or clients cancelled appointments. Denise was a single mother of two adult children. She disclosed during the study that she was a survivor of domestic violence. Denise seemed less consumed with fashion and make-up but had a basic, neat up-keep to her appearance. She wore her shoulder-length hair in its naturally curly state and varied its styles from day to day. Her freckled face kept a “matter-of-fact” expression throughout the study, giving off occasional smiles and laughter depending on the conversation. She seemed honest and shared that her inspiration to become a cosmetologist evolved during her childhood. She reminisced about playing with dolls and helping family members with their hair. Denise was eager to help with the study and often provided random facts about Black history and pioneering cosmetologists in Lexington. She completed her initial training at Western Vo-tech and achieved her goal of becoming a master esthetician. Denise seemed to connect closely with her clientele, which was mostly comprised of elderly women from the community. She shared that interacting with different clients who visited the shop was the most rewarding aspect of her job.
Lisa. Lisa started her career as a cosmetologist 22 years ago. She had rented a booth in salon #1 for three years. Her inspiration to become a cosmetologist started during childhood, which led to her initial training at Kaufman’s Beauty School. She expanded her career two years ago and became an educator at Paul Mitchell Beauty School. While she continued to teach aspiring students, Lisa explained that she most enjoyed interacting with her clients. She found leaving the salon talk at work and not taking it home at night to be a difficult part of her job. Lisa seemed consumed with her hectic work schedule and was almost robotic with regards to accomplishing her tasks. She displayed attributes of a “Type A personality” and managed to use Monday, typically a day-off for stylists, as a “catch-up” day in the salon. Even during the study, it was challenging to find a good time to talk with Lisa. She left no time for breaks or lunches and was always on the move to finish her work. She explained truthfully during her interview that she was willing to help but not necessarily motivated. She recognized the topic of domestic violence was serious and needed attention; however, she simply felt limited and pushed for time. Lisa was married to her same husband for over 20 years and was the mother of two adult sons. She had a conservative demeanor and spoke in a low, monotone voice. Her style was simplistic and her hair was neatly cut short and relaxed. Only with a quick glance, could I get a glimpse of a faint smile on her make-up free face. Although Lisa never raised her voice, she shared often in the shoptalk but remained primarily focused on her work.

Nikki. Nikki was inspired to become a stylist after visiting a local salon as a young adult and seeing cosmetologists perform skills. She described vividly the sights and sounds she experienced in that brief moment. While visiting this salon in Ohio, she
witnessed stylists clicking curling irons, swinging chairs, and creating art with hair. Nikki explained that being a part of that setting had her hooked. Since then, over 22 years ago, she attended Kaufman’s Beauty School and taught cosmetology students of her own at the Paul Mitchell Beauty School. At the time of this study, she had been renting a booth in Salon #1 for four years. When asked to share the most enjoyable aspect of her job, Nikki described embracing the opportunity to change her clients’ lives through her work. She was at a point in her career of rebuilding her clientele after a recent breakdown from being overworked. Nikki explained that it was difficult to always be there for clients as a single mother. She sacrificed her family to be in the salon for clients. During our encounters, I could hear the frustration and fatigue in her voice. She spoke a language of “tough love” to her clients and rarely bit her tongue to filter her thoughts. Despite this weariness, Nikki remained stylish, kept a fashion sense for the latest trends, and wore a relaxed, color-treated, short haircut. Nikki’s goal was to establish her own salon one day.

**Salon #2.** Salon #2 exhibited an energetic and youthful atmosphere which complimented the robust, “no-holds bar” conversation between the clients and stylists. The stylists in particular, seemed more closely knitted and care-free as compared to the other salons. They laughed, talked, and pranked so much so that there was never a dull moment. Tanya, Angie, Ché, and Joy regularly socialized outside the salon. They attended parties, church services, and community events together. Tanya opened the salon a year and a half ago with Angie in tow. The two had worked side-by-side over the years at other salons. Ché and Joy began renting booths several months after the initial opening. Each of them complimented the lively social environment, which mirrored
Tanya’s “cut-up” charisma. Amongst the fun, the stylists shared tasks such as folding towels, cleaning, and running to get lunch. They multi-tasked throughout the day, just as the stylists in the other two salons. Their motto, however, seemed to be “just have fun while doing it.”

The salon had an open design with six working stations. The décor included brightly painted orange walls and a single framed picture displaying the price list for services. Unlike Salon #1, there were not any beauty products for sale. The two empty stations housed extra supplies that afforded clients and guests an extra place to wait for services and participate in the shop talk. Often the conversations in salon #2 were candid and controversial. The salon had an authentic “rawness” that was not observed in the others. The groups of women were permitted to talk freely and argue without reprimand. They often agreed to disagree, but remained friends despite the outcome. The television was always on and often instigated a debate or discussion.

Perhaps the most unique aspect about salon #2 was the presence of Tanya’s boyfriend. He was permitted to sit in the salon for extended hours talking with the groups of women. At times he sat quietly listening, yet at other times he chimed in as the center of the conversation. He, along with several other men visiting this salon, was more connected to the social interactions when compared to men who briefly visited salon #1 and salon #3. They were permitted to come into the shop and wait while their female companions received services. This seemed favorable for Angie, Ché, Joy, and Tanya.
**Angie.** Angie had been a cosmetologist for 21 years. She had rented a booth in salon #2 since it opened about a year ago. She worked with Tanya at two different salons over the past 10 years. She completed her initial training at The Salon Professional Academy (TSPA) and was first interested in becoming a stylist during her adolescent exposure to beauty salons. Angie had two older daughters who both attended beauty school. At the time of the study, Angie was a full-time student at a large university. Her goal was to obtain a degree as a dental technician. She was determined to prove that she knew more than just doing hair. Despite the fact that Angie wanted to achieve higher goals, she shared openly about her challenges in juggling a full-time career and attending school. Amongst the ambition, Angie had a practical sense. She was comfortably settling into her late-forties and spoke her mind freely. She seemed to be the most level-headed in a young salon filled with fun and games. Her quick wit seemed to earn her the upmost respect from all the women in the salon. She worked hard and kept long hours. By far, Angie managed the most clients at one time than any of the other stylists in the study. She found interacting with the women most enjoyable and looked forward to the array of conversations.

**Ché.** Ché was a fun-loving, youthful stylist. She was short, sassy and spoke her mind freely. She was single and the mother of two young daughters. She seemed confident in her skills as a cosmetologist, yet aware of her limitations. She was open to the ideas of this study, but initially had difficulty seeing the connection between beauty salons and domestic violence. In the salon, Ché often probed the clients for topics and would ask intimate and difficult questions openly. She was well respected by her peers and quickly gained their professional trust. Ché completed her initial training 11 years
ago at Kaufman’s Beauty School. She had rented a booth in salon #2 for the past 8 months. She previously worked with the owner at another salon and was in the process of building her clientele. Angie made a point to help by making referrals on Keisha’s behalf. She enjoyed the intimate contact with customers and the opportunity to interact daily; however, she recognized that many of the difficult aspects of her work were related to providing services to the clients.

**Joy.** Joy had been a cosmetologist for seven years and had rented a booth in salon #2 for the past five months. She most enjoyed the fashion side of the industry and hoped to gain ground with the business aspects. She completed her initial training at Bluegrass Community and Technical College and aspired to one day obtain a business degree in marketing. Joy was jazzy and walked as if she had very few cares in the world. She was single without any children and had an innocence about her personality. Joy spoke candid during our encounters, but seemed unsure of my initial motives. She was the stylists in salon that the others scolded for borrowing items without asking, but was quickly embraced after the incident. Although new to the group, she was not treated like an outsider. The other stylists seemed to have patience for her, and recognized that she walked to the beat of her own drum. Joy was friendly and had a unique sense of style. Her attire was youthful and trendy, mostly jeans with t-shirts. She typically wore her hair short, but opted to put in her own page-boy weave at the time of the study. Although she identified as African American, her freckled fair-skinned face could pass for that of a young White woman. Joy managed to smile and laugh often among the group of women in the salon, but it was apparent her objectives were quite different from the norm. She shared her goal to break through racial lines and increase diversity within salons. She
explained with some frustration that many times she hears negative feedback about wanting clients from all different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Nonetheless, her forward thinking was to cross those barriers and increase her economic portfolio.

**Tanya.** Tanya was the owner of salon #2. She had been a cosmetologist for 18 years. She opened the salon a year and four months ago. She began her training at KY Vo-Tech and completed the last 800 hours as Lexington Beauty College. She was first interested in becoming a stylists during childhood at which time she had the role of helping family members with their hair. She initially had a goal of attending medical school but after a couple of semesters decided to pursue the beauty industry. Although Tanya’s grandmother was a beautician who visited the salon regularly, she explained that her family desperately wanted her to become a physician. She stated that even after 18 years they continue to urge her to go back to school. She laughed at the thought of how much money she made as a cosmetologist, but still struggled for respect from her family regarding her career choice. Tanya had a fun-loving personality and was a “cut-up” in the salon. She laughed loud and talked louder. She was often the center of attention and well respected by the clients and her colleagues. During the study, she never seemed preoccupied with her own appearance, yet there was an obvious flare for trendy styles. Most of her clients opted for short quick-weave looks, which seemed to be Tanya’s specialty. She shared that the most enjoyable aspect of her work was helping her clients feel better about themselves. Tanya was previously divorced and a single mother with two daughters.

**Salon #3.** Salon #3 had the most traditional feel when compared to the other two sites. It had been established over 12 years ago in the current location. Jackie previously
helped in her grandmother’s salon as a young girl by providing services to the clients. She worked to take care of any requests such as getting drinks or escorting the elderly to the restroom. In many ways this current salon mimicked the heritage of the “store-front” beauty shop where she once worked. The décor included traditional comforts from home including a black leather couch in the waiting area, a large round wooden kitchen table and chairs in the middle of the salon, and bookshelves stocked with books. A computer, coffee pot, and microwave were also available at the front work station. The walls displayed pictures of clients and their families as well as wooden African figurines in the shape of two women facing one another while swaddling babies on their backs (see Figure 4.6, p.186). There were two sets of this artwork; they each epitomized the essence of the salon. Jackie explained that the two female figures represented the women in the shop. The babies they carried symbolized all the issues and problems the women came in the salon to talk about with one another. She explained the artwork illustrated the exact meaning of the salon name, “Sister to Sister.” It displayed two women talking, sharing, and supporting one another, sister to sister. There were also memorabilia displaying historical artifacts from Jackie’s grandmother’s original salon in the waiting area (see Figure 4.7, p.187). The shadow box included the original certificate of occupancy, newspaper clippings, a hot comb, and the sign, Brown’s Beauty Salon, which once hung on the front door of the salon. Each of these items had been a central part of Jackie’s grandmother’s career as a beautician. The newspaper clippings indicated the volunteer work that Mrs. Brown accomplished at God’s Pantry. Her hot comb appeared well-used indicating the numerous hair straightening services she must have previously provided for clients. Jackie explained the shadow box was given to her when she first
opened the salon by her uncle. It represented the legacy of her grandmother’s salon and in many ways hung on the wall as a reminder of the rich traditions embedded in Black beauty culture.

The other two stylists in salon #3 were Carol and Keisha. They were new booth renters. Although they did not socialize outside the salon, they maintained a rich relationship as they worked. All three women shared in tasks such as walking the towels next door to the local laundry mat to wash, dry, and fold. They cleaned up their individual stations, but never seemed to mind if they had to pitch in and help one another. The salon had less of a business presence and more of a “welcome home” feel. This was likely the most unique aspect in Salon #3. Along with this wholesomeness, was the discussion of real life issues. While there was excitement in the room as the women talked, there was also a soft intimacy that clouded the laughter. All the interactions were laced with respect and connectivity. Carol, Jackie, and Keisha used humor and respect to set the social atmosphere and to model sisterly bonding.

Carol. Carol had been a cosmetologist for 22 years, but was just recently returning to the salon after being away for 12 years. She explained that she missed working in the salon, but needed the break to secure her finances. During her hiatus, she was employed at a local hospital. After completing coursework to regain her license, she began her apprenticeship under Jackie. Her initial training was at Kaufman’s Beauty School. Carol was in the process of reestablishing her clientele. She vowed to be patient in the process and selective about the clients she worked with this time. She most enjoyed working with clients from different backgrounds in the salon and having the opportunity to network. Carol found trying to meet the demands and needs of the
customers as the most difficult aspects of her job. She was a single mother and talked openly about her adult son. She was practical and seemed to have a growing confidence in her abilities as a stylist. Her personal aspirations included becoming financially stable and returning to the salon full-time.

**Keisha.** Keisha began her career as a licensed cosmetologist seven years ago; however, she worked privately at home as a stylist for more than 14 years. She had been renting a booth in salon #3 for two months, but previously completed continuing education courses with Jackie. She was inspired as a child to care for the beauty needs of her neighborhood friends, but only first grasped cosmetology as a career option after being influenced by her high school counselor. She obtained a full scholarship to a cosmetology school in Ohio, however needed time to mature before completing the coursework. Once motivated, Keisha graduated with honors from Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) and completed her internship at Mia’s Salon. Her personal aspiration was to educate other cosmetologists. Keisha was completing coursework to meet this goal at BCTC at the time of the study. She most enjoyed helping to boost her clients’ self-esteem, however found meeting some of their beauty demands challenging. She was newly married and had two high school aged children. Keisha was well known in the salon for her advanced skills as a cosmetologist. Her most notable attribute was her ability to recreate styles after one look at a photograph. She was highly regarded by the other stylists throughout the community. Keisha was quick with her work and easily multi-tasked throughout the day. She was perhaps the most welcoming stylist in all three salons. She was genuine in her interactions and openly shared her frustrations and emotions.
**Jackie.** Jackie was the owner of salon #3. She had been a cosmetologist for 23 years and was initially inspired by her grandmother’s work as a beautician. Jackie was raised assisting in the salon and learned to take care of the clients. This childhood experience instilled a mothering nature in her personality. She exhibited wisdom beyond her years and had a calm patience she shared with everyone. She was formally trained at Lexington Beauty School and completed her internship at JcPenny’s Hair Salon. Jackie had been in the current salon for about 10 years but was in her previous salon next door for about 8 years. Her career was based on things she learned as a child. She modeled salon #3 after her grandmother’s kitchen beauty shop. Jackie described it as a place for women to come and share their life experiences. She enjoyed meeting the needs of her clients, but found keeping the other stylists motivated was one of the most challenging aspects of her job. Jackie had a personal aspiration to become a cosmetology educator. There was so much more to Jackie than her external appearance. Her wisdom and kinds words almost voided any preconceived notions about her fashion sense. She was neatly groomed in comfortable work attire. She was adorned in comfortable tennis shoes, basic black slacks, and a black work smock. Her hair was cut just below the ears and was relaxed with a slight upward flip of the ends. Jackie greeted everyone who entered the salon with the appropriate salutation. Her presence could be felt as soon as you entered through the door.

**Overview of Stylists’ Characteristics**

It was apparent that all 11 stylists had strong attributes. They were each ambitious in their career goals and made sacrifices in their personal lives on behalf of their clients.
They each displayed characteristics of being “natural helpers.” There were, however, three stylists who, by virtue of their personal attributes, provided insight into which qualities would help implement an anti-violence education program. The first was Carolyn, the owner of salon #1. She began the study with an interest in using her salon as a portal for reaching her clients. Her goal was to use the salon to disseminate information about living and eating healthy. This personal ambition for research and utilization of the salon space was not observed in the other 10 stylists. Although her interest focused on nutrition and beauty, she recognized the potential for similar programs that focused on domestic violence in the salon. This suggests that she had a great degree of understanding about how stylists and salons could be influential in the African American community. This initial insight offers a favorable starting point, and could be helpful in implementing educational programs.

Keisha also displayed an exceptional level of insight into the study topic and use of salons. She had previously attended domestic violence training during her initial coursework in beauty school; however, she recognized that attending one class was not enough. She was eager to gain more information and have access to resources that could benefit her clients. Her prior exposure to domestic violence awareness and intervention made her more cognizant of the reality of abuse. Although Joy also received the same training during her initial coursework, she seemed less consumed by the need to make a difference. Keisha however, provided details of her clients who had been in abusive situations. She accomplished this more readily than the other stylists in the study. Her descriptions were vivid re-enactments of encounters she had over the years. She described clients’ scars, missing hair, and nervous habits. As she shared these stories, she
spoke with disbelief and horror. The more she talked, the more she became insistent about getting actively involved with advocating for victims. Keisha was moved to tears several times during the study, as she identified her role in the salon as a “calling.” She openly admitted it was a call that she had finally decided to answer.

Jackie, the owner of salon #3, was the third stylist who displayed unique attributes that could prove beneficial in implementing advocacy programs. By far, she was the participant most rooted in the traditions of the beauty industry. She provided historical facts about pioneers in the industry, such as Madame CJ Walker, SB Fuller, and Joe Dudley. Jackie related these individuals closely to her personal career. She recognized how key historical moments in Black History, such as the Civil Rights Movement, directly influenced the lives of African American women. She readily shared her belief that abuse in Black homes was related to the history Black Americans had endured. These discussions were unique and only occurred during my time in salon #3 with Jackie. She demonstrated understanding of her role as a leader in the community and related this closely to the efforts of industry pioneers. Jackie was the ideal natural helper who made the connection between salons and domestic violence intervention programs.

**Overview of the Three Salons**

All three salons had unique qualities in the social and physical environments that could potentially accommodate an anti-violence educational program. Salon #3 in particular, offered a safe place for the women and closely mimicked the earlier shop where Jackie helped her grandmother. It was steeped in tradition and provided clients the comforts of home. In addition to the couch, coffee table, and family photos, salon #3 was
furnished with an old, oversized, wooden table. The table sat in the middle of the open floor with four chairs tucked around its circular frame. The women congregated at this focal point as if they were coming to an altar to make open confessions. They sat when possible, but stood if necessary to engage in breakfast, lunch, and group therapy. There seemed never to be enough seats around the table; which only meant the women shared in conversations in other areas of the salon. It was from this place, the women talked openly about their personal relationships, employment, school, health, and church. This salon was distinct; Jackie had taken great steps to ensure it was laced with a rich African history. Even the other stylists, Carol and Keisha, recognized the unique aspects that salon #3 offered. Keisha was initially concerned with the table in the middle of the salon. She explained that after working over 10 years out of her home, there was resistance in renting a booth somewhere she felt like a “kitchen beautician.” She complained about hair being all over her house during that point of her career. She hated it. She quickly recognized however, the table in salon #3 created an ambiance or sense of security that was welcoming to the stylists and the clients. It is important to note that these furnishings created a physical environment that greatly complimented the social environment. The clients and stylists were able to closely network, collaborate, and communicate to create a safe space. Ideally, disclosure of sensitive topics could occur in a private encounter or in an open group discussion.

The other two salons also offered individual characteristics that could be utilized in health promotion campaigns. Beverly, the owner of salon #1, took pain-staking precautions to ensure her salon had a professional conservative flare. Unlike the open
concept found in the other two sites, this shop had partitions that could offer a greater sense of privacy. This could prove important for clients not willing to disclose sensitive information publicly. The conversation was less robust and the stylists seemed more reserved. These characteristics resembled the owner’s personal attributes.

Similarly, the tone of salon #2 closely mirrored Tanya’s personality. She was humorous, loud, and quite casual. Thus, the character of the social environment was much the same. In this open design layout, the women shared without inhibition. They spoke candidly about a host of issues that were quite similar to those discussed in the other two sites. The stylists were youthful and fun-loving. In fact, two of the cosmetologists with the least amount of years in experience worked in this salon. There may be some concern with how an open disclosure could occur in this space; clients seemed more readily open to discuss sensitive topics related to their family members and friends.

Needless to say, each salon provided great potential to increase domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention. There are key elements to consider when developing anti-violence programs in beauty salons. The partitions seen in salon #1 may be important features to allow victims of violence the privacy needed to disclose personal issues; however, the open concept in salons #2 and #3 allowed the women to interact with ease and complimented group therapy. The women seemed more inclined to share sensitive information about family members and friends openly; however, personal issues were shared in private.

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Chapter Five: Results

Recent research suggests that beauty salons represent a viable option to disseminate health information to women. The purpose of this study was to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based advocacy and education for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention. Specific objectives included: considering whether African American beauty culture can be an important medium in community education and resource enhancement; identifying features within the physical and social environment of the beauty salon that facilitate advocacy; and analyzing “shop talk,” or conversation in the salon, which focused on gender and race issues related to domestic violence and opportunities for advocacy and education. To accomplish these objectives, I observed the interactions, conversations, and social environment in three African American salons comprising of 11 cosmetologists.

The research inquiry was guided by three questions:

1. Does beauty culture within African American salons offer opportunities for providing anti-violence education?

2. In what ways does the salon setting/culture facilitate or inhibit a discussion of domestic violence?

3. What kinds of relationships exist between African American cosmetologists and their clients in terms of social support such as information sharing, advice giving, etc.? Do these relationships
and conversations influence help-seeking behaviors in situations of domestic violence?

The results for each research question are presented in this chapter.

**Opportunities for Anti-Violence Education in Salons**

One of the primary goals of this research was to assess if African American beauty salons were an important medium in community education and resource enhancement. This study considered which aspects of beauty culture in African American salons offered opportunities for providing anti-violence education. Two central themes were identified that addressed this research question. The first was the process of advocacy that existed in the salon. The data indicated that the women had well established means of advocating for one another. In fact, much of the behaviors, conversations, and attitudes about domestic violence existing in these salons lent themselves to developing prevention, intervention, and awareness programs. The second theme that addressed the question about developing anti-violence education was the process of training and educating that occurred within in beauty culture. The findings suggested that there were multiple levels of training that continued throughout the course of the stylists’ careers. Understanding how the women were motivated to learn at these different levels could be an avenue to incorporate anti-violence education in salons. Moreover, considering how their commitment to life-long training impacted knowledge about gender topics in the salon may also provide opportunities for anti-violence education.
Advocacy

In exploring the ways the women advocated for one another in the salon, I found that the stylists’ attitudes and knowledge about domestic violence, as well as their social interactions, were a central part of the process. Embedded within these processes of advocacy were also the ideas of how the stylists perceived preparedness to help clients in abusive situations, as well as their willingness and motivation to provide support. The following discussion will consider these aspects of support and how they translate into developing community education.

First, the stylists recognized that they were in the ideal position to provide information to clients. At the time of this study, 5 of the 11 stylists reported they had been verbally, psychologically, or physically abused by an intimate partner. The survey data also indicated that 1 additional stylist had a close family member who was physically abused. In considering these personal experiences, it was also important to document the participants’ perceptions and knowledge about the topic of domestic violence, as well as record if and how they were providing support for their clients. Additional survey data found that 82% of stylists talked about domestic violence with their clients at some point. Given these findings, along with the fact that 45% of the participants reported they were very willing to deliver information about domestic violence to their clients and another 45% were willing; I continued to explore how African American salons and cosmetologists could be utilized in the development of anti-violence community education and how their social support processes might impact the personal choices made by their clients.
During the interview process, I found that 8 of the 11 stylists were familiar with salons being utilized as portals for community health education. They explained that they were familiar with various programs that focused on safe sex and the distribution of condoms, wig drops, which campaigned to collect wigs for breast cancer survivors, as well as various other health screenings in the community. Ideally, these experiences with health promotion and advocacy could be used to model intervention and prevention campaigns for domestic violence victims. Angie, the practical stylists in salon#2, explained that her experience with health promotion was primarily linked to the efforts of the Health Department. She recalled when a representative from the local office came to the salon to discuss how condoms could be distributed to clients. She described being supportive and agreed to make them available for clients in the restroom. The idea, they agreed would allow some privacy if a client decided to take any. Angie spoke favorably of the campaign and remarked that if they could distribute condoms to clients, they could also help with issues of domestic violence. She explained that her colleagues were comfortable with the initiative and the clients were receptive. Denise, from salon #3, also described previously helping in a specific health promotion campaign. While her experience took place outside the salon, she provided her expertise as a beautician to advise cancer survivors. Her efforts included supporting and educating women at a local cancer center. She provided information about beauty techniques that the survivors could use after completing chemotherapy. Denise found the experience rewarding and beneficial to the women. She also recognized that women could benefit from these types of support if they were in abusive situations. Denise and Angie provide two examples of how anti-violence education could potentially be incorporated into the salon setting.
Furthermore, over 70% of the stylists in this study were familiar with the concept of using beauty salons and cosmetologists to disseminate health promotion materials. This previous exposure suggests that the participants are familiar with the benefit of developing programs of this nature and would potentially be receptive to a domestic violence intervention campaign.

Although none of the stylists had participated specifically in programs that focused on domestic violence awareness and prevention, I found that they were motivated to gain this knowledge. Many of them stated that if in fact having information about domestic violence could help their clients, they were willing to get involved. Only Lisa indicated that her busy schedule limited her motivation to learn more about domestic violence. She felt that there was value in learning about the topic; however, she did not want to confuse willingness with motivation. During the time of this study, Lisa worked in the salon four days during the week and spent her remaining time teaching at a local beauty school. She explained that although Mondays were typically a day off for most stylists, she used this time as a “catch-up” day to provide services for clients. Given this schedule, Lisa clarified that she would like to attend domestic violence awareness and intervention training; however, she was always stretched thin with other commitments.

The other 10 stylists, including Joy, found willingness to be synonymous with motivation. According to Joy, the newest stylists in salon #2, domestic violence training was another opportunity for her to utilize her career in a positive way. She insisted that supporting her clients was not only about educating them about how best to manage their hair when they go home, but it was also about improving their self-esteem. Joy seemed to equate “coming out” of domestic violence with low self-esteem. She felt that training
on this topic went hand and hand with being a beautician, since most women looking to escape abusive relationships lived with low self-esteem. She believed that helping them to feel better about themselves could be accomplished by caring for their hair and talking with them when they visited the shop. When asked whether the topic of domestic violence was too sensitive to discuss in the salon, Joy continued by explaining,

“Could it save somebody’s life? Then I don’t think it even matters though. There’s always going to be conversations about domestic violence as long as it’s happening. Someone is going to come in and talk about it. So if we are discussing domestic violence in here, it would depend on…of course, if everybody is sitting in the shop we wouldn’t put somebody’s business out and discuss domestic violence. So if a person has that feeling, they don’t have to participate. Because it may be sensitive if a person may be going through it. I don’t think it should be something that you walk in and there’s a video on about it.”

This perception was consistent among 10 of the 11 participants. Tanya, the owner of salon #2, reiterated this point when she shared her thoughts about domestic violence discussions in the salon. She stated, “I think it’s kind of empowering when you have women standing behind you saying, ‘Do you need my help…here’s my number.’” She described the salon as a “safe house” and emphasized that her clients come from different backgrounds and fields, which allows them to network. Nikki on the other hand insisted that the salon was not an appropriate place to have conversations about domestic violence. While she admitted that she had previously had these discussions, she explained why she thought the topic was too sensitive. “Because you don’t know who is
in here. And you don’t know if what happens in the salon, stays in the salon, is not always the case.” Her concern had to do with privacy and confidentiality. This point of view varied from the other stylists who believed those issues could be addressed in the moment. During the study, the need for privacy could be seen when the women stepped outside to talk or lowered their voices for private conversations. This was consistent in all three salons. Salon#1 and salon #3 both had private areas in the rear of the salon that could potentially be used to discuss sensitive topics with clients. This option was not observed at any time during the study.

Despite these different perspectives regarding privacy, 55% of the stylists perceived domestic violence in the African American community as a very serious issue, and the other 27% believed it was serious. Thus, they recognized that the topic was relevant and deserved their attention.

In order to grasp the implications of the stylists’ perceptions, it was necessary to correlate the knowledge they had about the topic of domestic violence. While 27% of them reported being very confident in delivering domestic violence facts, another 27% stated they were confident; and 27% reported being somewhat confident; only 2 of the 11 stylists stated they were not confident when talking to clients about domestic violence.

This was consistent with findings that indicated 64% of the participants felt prepared to talk to clients about domestic violence, while less than 20% (or 2) of stylists stated they felt unprepared. This was noteworthy since Keisha and Joy, graduates from BCTC, were the only two stylists in the study to complete domestic violence advocacy training during beauty school, yet they were also the only two participants who insisted they felt unprepared to help clients in abusive situations. Joy in particular mentioned
needing a “refresher” on the information she received during her initial training. Keisha asked about obtaining resource information from me. She stated she wanted to be prepared if someone came in and needed the numbers. She wanted to be ready. It appeared both women seemed to feel that after receiving the previous training, they had a better understanding about the seriousness of the topic. They seem to have a different revelation about their role and were left feeling they could not effectively help their clients. This is important to think about as domestic violence training opportunities are developed for cosmetologists. On the one hand, this sort of training can increase knowledge about abuse and depict the seriousness of topic. While on the other hand, stylists may be left feeling unprepared to help in follow-up training is not offered.

When asked specifically about delivering information regarding domestic violence resources, 27% of the stylists stated they were very confident in providing resource information; 27% stated they were confident; and 27% reported being somewhat confident. This was further supported by data collected during the individual interviews. Six of the 11 stylists (55%) were able to identify specific informal resources in the community or neighborhood that were available to women in abusive situations. They named agencies such as the Women’s Hope Center, The NEST, The YWCA, and The Salvation Army as places to refer clients for help. However, when asked specifically about referrals they had made, the stylists indicated they had not actually made referrals to these agencies. In fact, the survey data showed that 73% of the stylists had never referred clients to social service agencies or healthcare providers, 82% had never referred clients to a domestic violence advocacy program, and 91% of them had never referred clients to a domestic violence shelter. After inquiring why they had never made referrals
for clients to specific agencies, the repeated responses included that they were not certain of phone numbers and only knew in general whether or not services were offered to women in abusive situations. In fact, when asked specifically if they knew of phone numbers for local agencies dedicated to helping victims of abuse, none of the 11 participants could provide a number. Ché commented that she would search Google to find a number if needed; while Lisa stated she would look through the yellow pages to find the number for the domestic violence hotline. The data suggest that the stylists were vaguely familiar with community resources and did not have information readily available to use. After completing interviews with each stylist, I contacted several of the agencies they identified to inquire about services for victims of abuse. My findings indicated that 3 of the 4 agencies identified actually provided support for victims. The Hope Center clarified that they only provided support for male victims. The other three stated they had available resources for victims; however, they typically referred women to the local domestic violence shelter. The Salvation Army representative in particular explained that they had some limitations in keeping victims safe since they provided shelter for both men and women. The NEST on the other hand explained that while they referred victims to the local shelter, they recognized their institution and facility as a “safe place.”

Perhaps the most striking and memorable stylist’s response about making formal referrals to advocacy programs was provided by Keisha. I asked the same question that I had asked the other 10 participants, “Do you make referrals for clients who you suspect are in abusive relationships? If no, why not?” Her quick answer was without thought or breath, “I will. I am going to try to get all the numbers and resources lined-up…people’s
names. I am going to try to do something.” Keisha, like many of the others, was moved to action in an instant. She continued by sharing her experience one night when supporting a client needing help.

“I know one safe house that sticks out in mind. It’s off Third and Georgetown Street. I only know that because a young lady was there, when she was in the system and I dropped her off one night…I think I did her hair and took her home. They had the big safe sign…it looked like a regular house, and it had the big safe sign in the window. So it had to be on this side of town…that would be somewhere that I know she can go get help. It’s where the railroad tracks are on Georgetown St, turn when you get to Third…not far past the railroad tracks on your right side…It’s called something. It has the big safe hands in the window. It’s part of the government or state, whoever takes care of those kids…that system. I didn’t know it existed until I took her there. I past there for years.”

Since many of the stylist reported that they perceived domestic violence to be a serious topic, it was important to document how they defined abuse and their perceptions about the etiology. While all 11 participants recognized domestic violence included violent physical acts perpetrated by a husband or boyfriend, only three answered that it could include emotional or psychological abuse. Only one participant recognized sexual violence as a form of abuse, while none identified economic abuse. Similarly only three stylists recognized that abuse existed between individuals outside of heterosexual or marital relationships. In particular, Denise, Jackie, and Keisha identified parent to child abuse; however, none of them recognized abuse in same-sex relationships.
When asked about the etiology of domestic violence, the 11 participants gave similar responses that identified the abuser as the problem in the relationship. However, most of their perceptions were that the perpetrator was on drugs, stressed, insecure, had anger issues, or had previously been abused. Only three participants responded by equating domestic violence with power and control tactics employed by the abuser.

The survey responses for many of the stylists also blamed the victim for the abuse, citing weakness, low self-esteem, and fear as reasons for the problem. Carol in particular thought, “If a person sees you are weak then they know how far they can go with you…. it’s got to be low self-esteem if you are going to let someone put their hands on you and make you believe that you did something wrong and that’s the reason they doing this to you.” Keisha concurred and also thought the issue of violence stemmed from the victim.

They don’t feel loved. They feel like nobody else would want them. They are so concerned with their flaws. One of them (a victim) even told me, she don’t take her shirt off for nobody, even in the bedroom. She leaves her shirt on the whole time, even with her boyfriend for years. Insecure of themselves and how they think of themselves.

Given these perceptions, it was also important to document how the stylists approached clients they thought might be in abusive situations, as well as how they understood African American women were affected as victims of violence. Many of the stylists explained that they typically asked direct questions if they suspected a client was being abused. Nine of the 11 looked for physical scars such as bruises or marks on their faces, arms or bodies. However, only 2 of the stylists considered the demeanor, facial
expressions, lack of eye contact and changes in conversation when looking for warning
signs.

There were variations in how the stylists understood African American women
were affected by domestic violence and how they received help. Although all the
participants responded that African American women were negatively affected by
domestic violence and suffered multiple mental and physical issues, such as depression,
weight gain, weight loss, and low self-esteem, many of them had different perceptions
about their help-seeking behavior. Their responses were organized into two groups. Five
stylists believed that African American women received help from family members, local
churches, or in the salon. They explained help was typically sought at a point when the
violence had escalated to a severe state. Denise, although the only participant to openly
disclose during this study, described her personal decision to leave a verbally abusive
spouse. She sat looking straight ahead during her interview and in a monotone voice
shared her private story. She explained, “I mean that was my thing…I had kids…and it
wasn’t physical abuse, it was just verbal and so one day I just decided, I’m packing up
and leaving….my babies and all.” She went on to share that this realization helped her to
see she could make it without him. She decided to seek help from family members and
her church. She was able to obtain financial support, emotional support, and a place to
stay with her children.

The other 6 stylists had a different understanding about the ways abused African
American women sought help. This group indicated they did not believe these women
actually received help. The primary thought was that abused African American women
stayed in these relationships, prayed, and managed the issue on their own. Many of the
stylists suggested that strength was a major indicator for being able to manage the abuse. For example, Keisha talked about a client she had who was in an abusive relationship. She believed that the abusive situation was closely related to the fact that the client was unable to stand up for herself. Keisha labeled this an attribute of weakness. She seemed shocked at the thought that an African American woman could be abused and not be in a position to fight back.

Like I have a client, she’s never really talked to me directly about it, but I was aware when it all went down. She was in the hospital for weeks. She was telling everybody that she fell off the porch and hit her eye on the corner. She still has never come out and directly said that’s what happened. She talks around it as if it’s third person. I always wait for the opportunity. I’m always trying to figure out a way to make her stronger….because she’s really weak minded…It’s kind of surprising because you know we ain’t fooling…‘What! You gonna hit me?’ ‘Girl, I wish he would…’ Because we are a little bit more stronger than that. We can protect ourselves if we have to. I’m surprised…because we give so much…we know not to accept and tolerate those relationships. It blows my mind like what!

Carol, Ché, and Joy also referred to the quality of strength among African American women in the context of resistance. They perceived that women who did not display strong characteristics suffered from low self-esteem and were less likely to seek help in abusive situations. When asked why African American women stay in abusive relationships, Carol, immediately responded by stating these women have low self-esteem and are fearful. She described victims of violence in her own words.
I think anybody can be a victim. Anybody…including me. I think it’s the way you are as a person. If a person sees you are weak then they know how far they can go with you….it doesn’t have to so much be low self-esteem….but somewhat in there; it’s got to be low self-esteem if you are going to let someone put their hands on you and make you believe that you did something wrong and that’s the reason they doing this to you. But my opinion, a person who does it is a coward…an asshole. I ain’t getting ready to let nobody…I can sit here and say…cause I’ve never been in that situation…I can sit here and say I ain’t gonna let nobody put his hands on me. He’s only going to get one chance. Only one. I’m not getting ready to let you hit me over and over again. Forget it. You not getting ready to butter me up, kiss on me, and tell me I’m sorry. It’s over. So I think it’s *(domestic violence)* within that person.

Interpreting their perception necessitates returning to Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009) and Potter’s (2008) discussions on internal barriers and resistance methods employed by abused women. Both Beauboeuf-Lafontant and Potter considered the Strong Black Woman Phenomenon a construct of identity for African American women. Their work supports the thought formulated by several of the stylists in the current study. Four participants associated strength as an attribute that could potentially prevent or alleviate abuse. For example, Joy, who had been a stylist for seven years, shared her perception about how African American women utilize attributes of strength in difficult situations, yet fail to seek help.
I think African American women have already got a challenge. And I think that a lot of African American women have low self-esteem. I think a lot of African American women come from proud families who say, ‘Don’t tell what’s going on…keep it at home.’ I think African American women want to look strong, so we won’t face anything that makes us look weak.

Joy believed that African American women exhibit qualities of strength as a means to cover up weakness out of fear. She recognized that women in abusive situations fail to seek help in an effort to protect their families and communities. Her assessment aligns with scholarly discussions about African American women resisting the need to “air dirty laundry” or tell “family secrets” as measure of keeping the community safe. Collins (2009) and West (2008) recognized that these efforts to be strong can be detrimental to the physical, mental, and emotional health of abused women in African American communities.

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009) insisted that donning a mask of strength was a costly performance that often enforced silence. She acknowledged that strength was a defining quality of Black womanhood, as did more than a third of the stylists in this current study; however, she argued that there were two halves to the concept. Similarly, Potter (2008) recognized there were both positive and negative aspects to the Strong Black Woman Phenomenon. They agreed that the inner quality of strength helps African American women to resist oppressive systems of sexism, classism, and racism and enabled them to singlehandedly manage a multitude of responsibilities in their lives and care for those around them. These were the positive aspects that Carol, Ché, Joy, and Keisha identified in themselves and their clients. All, but Joy, however, demonstrated a disconnect from
the second half or the negative aspects of the phenomenon suggested by Potter (2008) and Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009). Both scholars recognized that the additional tasks and desire to protect those around them typically hindered Black women from meeting their personal needs. While the stylists identified with the resistance tactics of “fighting strength with strength” (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009, p.7), and believed Black women were capable of “weathering all manner of adversity” (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009, p.7), only Joy made connections between inner strength and help-seeking behavior. Her statement that Black women will not face anything that makes them look weak was profound and grounded in the Strong Black Woman Phenomenon literature. Although Joy made clear reference to internal barriers that hindered abused women from seeking help, other external barriers such as lack of culturally competent providers and inaccessible facilities were not perceived by any of the 11 stylists as issues related to help-seeking behavior.

Personal perceptions about domestic violence and the experiences of abused African American women seemed to inform the conversations in the salon. It is important to consider these and other conversations that occur between the women when developing health education programs or domestic violence awareness and prevention programs. Ideally, the shoptalk that already exists in the salons could also provide a means for discussing anti-violence education. While the stylists insisted an array of topics were included in the shoptalk, the consensus in all three salons was that they “talked about everything.” Keisha explained how she embraced the variety and depth of the conversations that took place in the salon. “Every day ain’t the same. It’s totally different here. I think that’s one thing I love too. Not just from hairstyles, but the
conversation. Every conversation has a different result, solution…It’s crazy. It’s different.”

Jackie, the owner of salon #3, also recognized the progression and intensity in the shoptalk that occurred daily.

“We start out by saying, ‘How’s your week been?’ You know, we start out talking just on the surface talk; how we’ve been; the weather; and then it will go into a little personal about what’s been going on in their week, or my week. It can get really personal as to the home life, children and husbands, and jobs. It can get pretty personal down to pain. You know. Depression, a lot of things like that. ‘I can’t sleep at night.’ ‘My money.’ We discuss everything.”

Among these profound topics was a plethora of discussions about health. According to the observation and interview data, one of the most common conversations emphasized in each salon were the health issues of the stylists, their clients, and close family members. These findings are consistent with data reported by Linnan et al., (2001). They found that nearly all the cosmetologists in their study talked to their clients during an appointment; and that much of the conversation was about health issues. Healthy eating, dieting and weight control, high blood pressure, and physical activity were among the most reported health topics discussed (L. A. Linnan et al., 2001). In this current study, typical medical problems such as hypertension, previous surgeries, gastrointestinal problems, and physical pains were the primary points of discussion observed in each salon. These findings were supported by the survey data, which also indicated that health topics were common discussions (see Figure 4.4, p. 99). In particular, the survey data indicated that exercise and physical activity were identified by
10 of the 11 stylists as common topics discussed among the women in the salons. Very similarly, stress and healthy eating were recognized as regular topics by 8 participants. The survey also indicated that relationship issues were frequently discussed in the shops; and that domestic violence was a part of these conversations.
Figure 4.3, Health topics discussed in salons
Other health complaints discussed included issues commonly classified as women’s health such as pregnancy, menopause, endometriosis, menstrual pain, fibroids, breast cancer, weight gain, and depression. For example, while observing in salon #3, several clients began personal conversations about gynecological issues. They shared their experiences with dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, endometriosis, and fibroids. The group of about five women cringed as they each retold embarrassing stories about heavy menstrual bleeding in public and crippling abdominal pain. One client reminisced about the months prior to her hysterectomy. She described being hospitalized due to malaise and weakness because of the extensive blood loss. She explained that her primary support came from other Black women around her. The group continued in unison talking about the importance of caring for one another, especially during difficult times. The women eventually broadened the conversation to include talk about how they were not able to stop working at home even when they were ill. They emphasized that their households would “shut down” if they dared to stay in bed. At the end of the conversation, the women provided a consensus that their husbands and boyfriends “could not take care of us like we do them.” In fact, the client describing her hysterectomy shared that she did not stay in bed after her recent surgery; she chose to get up and clean the house. Her decision was openly supported by the other women in the salon.

Additional shoptalk included forums about topics outside of health such as finances, religion, travel, social politics, social media, family, children, and personal relationships. When asked specifically about conversations regarding domestic violence, 10 of the 11 stylists indicated they recalled discussions about abuse. Lisa, with her
meticulous, robotic efforts, could not remember having a specific conversation with a client about the topic.

While observing each salon during this study, conversations related to domestic violence were in fact openly discussed among the clients and the stylists. Although there was 1 disclosure during the study, the women typically shared information about friends and family who had previously been abused.

On one occasion in salon #2, a client entered, quickly laid her purse down in a chair, sat next to me in the waiting area, and joined an already escalated conversation. The discussion began with 7 women and 1 man talking about relationships and infidelity. Inevitably, the conversation progressed to include experiences with violence and abuse. The late arriving client stood and began yelling across the half-wall dividing the room. She shared with passion the intimate details of a brutal attack against her friend. The group gasped in horror as she depicted the scenario of a large African American man towering over a small framed Black woman. She described her efforts as a bystander to pick her friend up off the floor after being punched multiple times by her boyfriend. The facial expressions of the group showed outrage across the room. Each of the women grew loud and defensive as they verbalized that they would never let this scenario of violence happen in their lives. At one point, the story-teller looked at me to exchange a “high-five.” I demonstrated my support by slapping both of her hands, as she held them high. As I looked around the shop, the shared verbal and non-verbal responses seemed to grow more unified and the women seemed to speak freely.

Although many conversations in the salons focused on gender issues including domestic violence, the women had to consider their role in the discussions and decide
whether to participate, dismiss it, or offer support. As previously mentioned, there was
one personal disclosure of abuse that took place during this study late one Friday evening
in salon #2. It was late, about 9:00 PM and the salon remained as busy as the early
afternoon. The lights were bright, the women were loud, and the room was full of
energy, laughter, and noise. The disclosure of violence that evening illustrated the
complexity and necessity of addressing gender violence in African American salons. On
this given night, there were 8 Black women, 2 young girls, and Tanya’s boyfriend
remaining in the salon. A disheveled White woman was one of the last people to enter
the salon. Once she entered, no one looked at her or greeted her. A few minutes before
this I had noticed her outside taking a few steps past the salon front door, back track, and
peep through the front glass. Once inside, she stood in the entryway waiting to be
acknowledged. She was ignored for several moments. Joy looked her way for an instant
and asked, “May I help you?” The White women rushed over to her station and
whispered something that seemed to astound Joy. Joy moved quickly and escorted the
White woman behind a second set of divider walls where the shampoo bowls were
located. By that time the area was empty since most clients were under dryers or at
stations receiving services. After a few moments in private, Joy emerged back to the
middle section and grabbed her wallet. She disappeared again behind the wall. The entire
salon had grown silent, not a word was spoken during this interaction. This was a total
contrast to the lively, energetic environment seen just moments before. The White
woman rushed past the group in a bit of a run and exited the salon. Once she has gone,
the group of women in the salon began talking to Joy to find out what had just happened.
Joy was asked directly, “What was that about?” “What did she want?” She explained in
what seemed to be a shaken and intimidated voice that the woman had just been beaten up by her boyfriend and needed help. She needed money to get help. The salon was in an uproar. The other stylists began shouting their thoughts and scrutinizing Joy’s decision to help in this manner. Even the clients voiced their opinions. One client stated, “She probably is going to go use the money on alcohol. She smelled like alcohol. She even looked like alcohol.” Another remarked, “Whatever she does with it, she has it now.” Joy was then admonished by the women and told specifically by the other stylists that she should have stayed in the open with the woman. They thought it was dangerous that she had moved in the back with her alone. They explained that they needed to handle the situation together. Joy’s response turned a bit defensive. She screamed back and seemed anxious. She explained in a loud voice that she did not know what else to do. She assumed that my interview and study was associated with the woman that had just left the salon. She repeated, “I just wanted to pass the test.” Given that Joy was one of two stylists who received formal domestic violence training during her initial cosmetology coursework, her response to the situation is important. It seemed that Joy’s reaction to the victim was based on my presence in the salon and not necessarily a thought out plan to help.

These findings identified specific dynamics within the salon environment that must be considered when developing anti-violence education programs. The stylists’ preparedness, confidence, and willingness to address the victim’s needs were factors that surfaced during the incident. Joy in particular voiced being uncertain of how to help the victim. While she made the decision to give the women money, she did not utilize other resources in the salon or community despite her prior Cut It Out training. Instead, Joy
opted to make use of the salon space and found a private area to talk with the client. This indicated that even in salons with open concepts there are ways to carve out privacy. The interactions between the stylists and clients were also important during this disclosure. While Joy offered tangible support to the victim, the women in the salon admonished her decision and suggested they might have responded differently. Although they emphasized the need to work together to solve the problem, they were cynical and distrusting of the White woman.

**Advocacy Summary**

These findings suggested that multiple aspects must be considered as we look for opportunities to incorporate anti-violence education in salons. Namely, the stylists’ knowledge and perceptions about abuse played an important role in thinking about how they advocate for their clients. Likewise, their perceptions about being prepared to make referrals, as well as their willingness and motivation to help, were just as important. The data suggested that the stylists were quite willing and motivated to disseminate messages about domestic violence. In many ways, it seemed apparent that the stylists were already advocating for their clients, even in the conversations that occurred in the salons. The shop talk was all inclusive and permitted discussions about sensitive topics such as domestic violence. There were however, two limitations to this process. The first included the stylists’ inability to make formal referrals to community agencies. Their lack of knowledge about available domestic violence resources indicated a gap in the current social setting. Moreover, their misunderstanding about the victims’ roles and behaviors in violent relationships was a shortcoming. Many of the stylists blamed the victim for being weak and failed to connect the negative effects of the Strong Black
Training

Another theme that emerged from the data that addressed the research question about salons providing opportunities for anti-violence education was the process of training in beauty culture. Understanding these training requirements within the cosmetology profession can potentially help identify when and how to add the topic of abuse in the process. The findings suggested that multiple levels of training that continued throughout the course of the stylists’ careers. It was important to uncover their personal experiences with training at different levels and how their commitment to lifelong training impacted their clients and their knowledge about gender topics. Assessing this data could provide direction about how to incorporate domestic violence training opportunities for clients and stylists within this existing system.

All 11 participants met the requirements of the Kentucky State Board of Cosmetology and thus, were licensed cosmetologists in the state. They obtained high school diplomas, completed 1800 hours of coursework, passed their state board examinations, and completed a 6-month apprenticeship under the supervision of licensed cosmetologists. Nearly all of the stylists described their initial classroom work as primarily theory-based with emphasis on techniques and skills for styling Caucasian hair rather than ethnic hair. Repeated descriptions of training at this level included learning the basics such as holding a comb, roller setting, and cutting skills. The stylists explained that the initial classroom work taught them how to successfully pass their state board
examination. There were however, two exceptions in the group. Joy and Keisha both recalled receiving early training on how to recognize clients who might be victims of abuse. They both explained that the *Cut It Out* training was part of the Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) curriculum. During their training, they watched videos, completed worksheets, and participated in small group discussions to learn more about their role as advocates for victims of violence. When asked if the domestic violence training was effective, they both explained that initially they did not see the connection between their roles as cosmetologists and domestic violence advocacy; however despite the brief presentations, they both found the information valuable and effective. Keisha, one of the booth renters in salon #3, explained how the *Cut It Out* training was beneficial.

But after getting educated about it…that helped me to be more mindful of looking at demeanors, facials, postures…I’m just looking at everything…not just their hair. I’m taking in everything in to consideration. I’m looking at their neck…I even spotted out one of them…picked her eyelashes. I was like, ‘Good God.’ She was laying back….and I tried not to look at them, but I did, I looked at them. I was like…‘Your eyelashes are gone…what the heck?’ All of them…she had a few pieces in her nose. That *Cut It Out* helped me to be more observant. I’m already a particular person, but it really helped me to look at my clients. That’s what I took from it…I need to be more observant.

Joy, with her unique perspective, also offered details about her training experience with *Cut It Out*. 
It informed me of another way that I’m going to utilize my job to help other women. And that’s a positive thing. It feels good to be helping somebody…I think it (domestic violence training and advocacy) would go hand in hand together because if you have someone who’s coming out of domestic violence, I think they probably would have self-esteem issues and of course if you have self-esteem issues you can have someone teach you and help you look pretty. You know, because you don’t just do the client’s hair…you educate the client on how they do their hair when they go home.

As a result of the initial Cut It Out training, both Joy and Keisha continued to be motivated and willing to participate in domestic violence awareness and prevention. This was consistent with the remaining nine stylists who had not completed formal training. The women all agreed that if in fact attending training around the topic of domestic violence could benefit their clients they would be willing to participate.

Despite the limitations of the initial cosmetology training, the stylists all recognized that the practical hands-on opportunities in their careers started during the apprenticeships. It was during these six months that the stylists learned the techniques to care for African American hair. Moreover, it was at this time they partnered with experienced African American stylists to learn the profession and trade of the Black beauty industry. This training included learning to manage a business and learning the techniques to care for ethnic hair. Nikki, who still desires to own her own salon, described working early on in the salon with the skilled stylists.

“I watched them and learned to do the advance skills. I remember I didn’t go in one morning and they called me. They told me I had an appointment waiting. I
was like ‘I don’t have an appointment this morning.’ They told me they were teaching me how to be there and that if I wanted it, then I was going to have to go get it.”

Nikki reiterated that in training with these women she was able to enhance her understanding of the professional side of cosmetology as well as learn the advance techniques in the industry.

Denise also shared her first “accident” in the salon and how the “seasoned” stylists helped to build her confidence and remedy the mistake.

“When you get out, the 6 month apprentice is when you really learn….because that’s like on-the-job-training. I can remember turning this lady’s hair green. Because white hair turns green when you put relaxer on it. I just boo-hooed and cried. One of the other stylists was like, ‘Denise, just calm down…we got white mix. We will just put in on there and it will be fine.’ I just was like, ‘man’ but now, I do white hair with no problem.”

While these advance techniques were deemed necessary to ensure a successful career, the stylists identified early on that it would take more than these styling skills to accomplish their goals. Many of them explained that during their apprenticeships, they quickly learned their roles would encompass much more than doing hair. It was during this time of training that their peers taught them their roles as “coaches, counselors, and therapists. Although a few of the stylists believed their natural nurturing attributes stemmed from early childhood exposures with family members and friends, most of the others described the importance of training under the supervision of their peers.
Another critical time in the training process, which afforded the stylists the opportunity to develop in their roles as natural helpers, was the practical curriculum found in continuing education (CE). The Kentucky State Board of Cosmetology previously required cosmetologists to obtain 6 hours of CE annually in order to maintain their licensure. Each of the stylists reported that in 2012 this requirement was removed from the state legislature. Many of them described the benefits of previously requiring this additional training. They insisted that it ensured they stayed abreast of their current skills and were able to obtain knowledge about new techniques. Many of the CE courses were provided by beauty schools and product manufacturers. When asked about additional training they acquired over the years, they reported that they took computer classes, helped with hair shows, and attended technique classes to learn more about hair coloring, styling, cutting. These classes were available through multiple sources including product manufacturers. Dudley Products Company was the most widely referenced product manufacturer for maintaining and enhancing their skills. Historically the Dudley Corporation was a Black owned company founded by Joe L. Dudley and Eunice Dudley in 1967. The company flourished in product sales and established the Dudley Cosmetology University in Kernersville, NC. They inevitably expanded to four additional locations and created the Dudley Beauty Schools System. Dudley began in the beauty industry in 1957 when he purchased a $10 kit from Samuel L. Fuller and began selling products door-to-door. Both Fuller and Dudley mimicked philosophies and methods founded by the Madame CJ Walker lineage. Walker was the first African American woman to become a millionaire in the 1920s. Her door to door method of selling hair products and training cosmetologists continued to be utilized in the beauty
industry. Kathy, a Dudley distributor, offered details about training African American cosmetologists during a visit to salon #3. As the newly named “rookie of the year” for the Dudley Company, she sold products to the cosmetologists and recruited for upcoming training opportunities. One of the primary goals in recruiting stylists was to train them to become educators and demonstrators for the company. The newly developed teams worked to educate stylists in the area. These classes helped build their professional businesses and enhanced their cosmetology skills and techniques.

While all 11 stylists reported completing 3-4 additional training classes a year through various sources, each of them were familiar with Dudley Products. Jackie in particular completed training with Dudley instructors to become an educator. She previously attended hair shows to demonstrate techniques, but soon would teach classes for aspiring cosmetologists. Nikki’s career was also influenced by Dudley Products. She described attending Dudley’s Advance training course for 1 weekend in North Carolina about a year after she had graduated. She explained that this experience was the basis for her success and showed her cosmetology was about more than hair. Although she was taught advanced hair styling and coloring techniques, she also was equipped with information to build her business such as health insurance, life insurance, and 401K retirement funds. Nikki explained her passion for cosmetology began after her advance training with Dudley Products. She stated, “That’s when I fell in love with doing hair. Because if they could do it and were willing to teach you how to do it…He had the business, product knowledge, how you are going to do it, how to build up your clientele. They taught you how to love your business…how to make it work. Work smarter and not harder. So I fell in love with it.”
These additional training experiences beyond the initial basic coursework primed each of the participants to think of their careers in terms of helping others. Throughout the study, many of the stylists persistently referred to having goals beyond their current roles as stylists in the salon. They used the phrase, “from behind the chair” quite often. In fact many of them had already obtained goals outside of being licensed as cosmetologists. For example, Jackie and Keisha from salon #3 and Nikki and Lisa from salon #2 all received formal training to become educators in the field. They worked at various locations to train new students and stylists. When asked to explain this extra task and achievement, Jackie explained, “I don’t think you can ever know enough. I like to learn about hair…and it’s time for me to move to the next level.”

As for others such as Joy, she talked in length about how the beauty industry had been foundational in the global economy. She believed that she could achieve higher goals by broadening her scope. Joy recognized the benefits of diversifying her clientele and aspired to obtain a bachelor’s degree in business with an emphasis in marketing. Angie however, had one semester left before completing her dental technician degree. She also was interested in widening her knowledge base by grasping opportunities in higher education.

Some people think of us as just hairdresser and that we don’t know anything and that we are dumb. But what we are is very knowledgeable of social issues and everything that’s going on…you know…that’s one reason I wanted to go back to school. I didn’t want to be this social network that people come to when they want to spill out their guts and when they are having a problem they will ask for
advice. I wanted to be knowledgeable, so I’ve done 3 years of college. I wanted
to shock my brain. And it has… it’s sharpened my brain.

Still others had already accomplished higher-level degrees like Denise and Beverly. Denise in particular had completed a master’s degree in esthetics, and Beverly had obtained a doctoral degree in cosmetology. The stylists were open to talking about their accomplishments and their future goals. They were all motivated to advance their careers from “behind the chair.” They each recognized the necessity of achieving more in order to accomplish more. This was true for both their personal lives as well as for their clients. For example, Jackie described taking a computer class at a local community center. She invited her sister, father, and several clients from the salon. Jackie desired that they learn basic skills for navigating through technology. Upon completion of the course she, along with her clients had enhanced their computer skills.

Very similarly, Beverly, the owner of salon #1, thought it necessary to utilize her doctoral training to educate her clients. She sought to change the culture and thinking in salon #1 by drawing the connection between health and hair. Beverly voiced her aphorism throughout the study stating, “If you look good, then you feel good.” She talked extensively with me about organizing health promotions and research in the salon to help bring forth her vision of having healthy clients inside and out. Like Jackie and Beverly, the other stylists were adamant about the process of naming and creating self. Each of them had the goal of empowering their clients by empowering themselves.

It is important to examine how each of the different training experiences influenced the stylists and their clients. The required six-month apprenticeship was a time when the stylists enlisted in a process where they trained one another. It was during
this time that the stylists learned the full extent of their role as cosmetologists. While the requirement for CE hours was discontinued, the stylists considered this training an important medium to learn and improve their techniques. In fact, all the stylists in the study continued attending advanced training classes. It is through this process the women learned their role within a historical context. Corporations like Dudley Products endorsed principles established by pioneers in the industry such as CJ Walker. The stylists were given the opportunity to advance their skills, business, and uplift the community. Lastly, their self-determination to empower themselves by seeking higher education and training experiences was also a means to model success and empowerment for their clients.

**Training Summary**

Thus, the process of creating self in the salon was persistent among the group of women and proved important when considering developing training and education models that focus on domestic violence. The initial training was a period when the stylists received basic education about the industry and instructions on simple techniques. Only two of the participants received formal training that focused on domestic violence at this level. By their account, the curriculum was beneficial and deemed appropriate. The second level of training included apprenticeships with their more experienced peers. This offered a period of gleaning to help grasp the higher levels of learning and advance techniques. The final level of training in their career included continued education opportunities and product distributor demonstrations. This level required self-directed learning and motivation. Ideally, each of these different levels of training could offer
opportunities to educate both stylists and clients about issues of violence. Just as the Cut It Out curriculum was offered in the initial training process, programs of this nature could be available as continued education or part of the advanced training offered by product distributors. Contacting beauty schools such as Dudley could open doors that allow domestic violence curriculum to become a formal part of the training process.

Education was a principle theme among the stylists. It played an important role in many of their previous accomplishments or future achievements. Eight of the eleven women had either received advanced training or were in the process of educating others on advanced techniques. In particular, Beverly and Denise, both in salon #1, had previously accomplished higher education degrees in the beauty schools. Beverly achieved a doctoral degree in cosmetology after a seven-year pursuit, while Denise became a master’s level esthetician. Others such as Joy and Angie, both in salon #2, aspired to obtain higher education degrees outside of the beauty industry. Keisha, along with many others, was either becoming beauty school educators or had experience teaching cosmetology students. This is important to the current study in that education is vital to the beauty industry. Finding ways to tap into formal cosmetology training can help answer questions about incorporating anti-violence education into the existing infrastructure. The fact that 72% of the participants in this study were either seeking additional training or educating others is an important part of answering the research question about opportunities for anti-violence education in the beauty industry.
Features in the Social and Physical Environments that Facilitate or Inhibit Discussion

This study also considered the social and physical features in the salon that may facilitate or hinder discussions about domestic violence. Three persistent themes emerged from the data to answer this question, which included religion, resources, and the notable changes or differences in the salons. The role of religion in particular, allowed the stylists to make connections with clients based on their shared faith beliefs that provided avenues to offer encouragement. These themes will be the focus of this section. They will explain how conversations about domestic violence are supported by the social and physical environment. The first sections will focus on features that could facilitate discussions about violence and the final sections will consider those features that have the potential to limit these types of discussions.

Salon Features that Facilitate Discussions about Violence

Religion

Conversations and discussions about religion emerged during observations and interviews with stylists. This topic was important among the women in that it motivated them to work in the profession and grasp the concept of their role as natural helpers. It also provided a way for the stylists to support their clients by building on shared faith principles and religious beliefs. It was important to consider how religion as a part of African American beauty culture could answer questions about facilitating or hindering discussions about domestic violence in the salon.
The findings indicated that 10 of the 11 stylists talked openly about religious and spiritual topics in all three salons. While their preferred denominations were not stated, each stylist identified with Christian principles. They discussed faith-based disciplines such as attending church, praying, fasting, and meditating as a natural part of the shoptalk. However, Joy was the exception. During her interview, when asked about appropriate topics for the salon environment, she referenced religion in the context of respecting her clients’ privacy and avoiding sensitive topics. She stated, “…like we are not going to talk about church in here…like give someone advice to go to church. We are not going to discuss church, I mean the religion part of it, because people have different opinions about it and could get offended.” Unlike Joy, the remaining stylists openly regarded their faith as an integral part of their careers. Many of them voiced that it was “by faith” they started in the profession, and it was “by faith” that they remained. Jackie in particular talked extensively about her early training experiences and how closely inter-related faith was in the process. She explained that the co-founder of Dudley Products and Beauty School, Joe L. Dudley Sr., underlined the technical training in cosmetology with practical Biblical teachings. When asked how she came to understand her role as a cosmetologist and whether or not she knew she had signed up for late night phone calls from clients, she stared attentively and shook her from side to side.

“No. I never thought that, until I met Dudley Products. Praise God….Dudley is much more than a product. It’s a ministry. And when he told me, Mr. Dudley…‘knowing who you are and how you will affect people’s lives…and that you need to live upright, because of who is watching you.’ I never thought that it was that serious until I met Dudley Products.”
Many of the other stylists agreed with Jackie and had either attended Dudley’s training sessions or were familiar with his principles. They insisted that these philosophies shaped their careers and continued to help maintain their businesses. Thus, I explored Dudley’s faith teachings closer after receiving a copy of his book from Beverly. The book, entitled, “Walking by Faith, I AM, I Can, & I Will” coalesced with Dudley’s difficult childhood upbringings with his now multi-million dollar success. He utilized Christian values to encourage the reader that success in life was attainable. His 10 basic principles including “accept challenge in faith” and “making a difference in the world” were written to help stylists to “walk by faith and make their dreams come true.” He writes, “Do you want to make a difference in the world?” “Do you want to change the lives of other people around you?” “In our time, and in our space, and with the grace of God, you and I can make a difference.” (Dudley, 1998) Many of the stylists respected Dudley’s teaching and embraced his philosophy to empower people and to raise them to a higher level of existence. At one point the stylists related these principles to this study on domestic violence, insisting that if women are being abused, they “can” and “will” get out of the situation.

In a separate conversation with Nikki, she also referenced Dudley’s book to explain the difficulty she was having in re-establishing her clientele since returning to the salon two years ago. She admitted that she had not looked at the book in quite some time; however, she acknowledged with great emotion that her faith was the only thing keeping her coming to the salon day after day. As she reflected on her earlier training, she shared, “…faith keeps my business going…faith brings in the clients…I started my business over 20 years ago in faith, even before I sustained my household.” Tanya, the
boisterous owner of salon #2, shared similar beliefs regarding her faith and salon business. As a daughter of a local pastor, she was raised in the Black church and very easily made connections between her career and faith. She stated, “…this profession is based on faith. There are times in my appointment book when I don’t have any clients scheduled. I pray and rely on my faith that someone will call…that’s when someone usually will call.”

It was apparent after hearing many of their stories that they closely related their success as cosmetologists to their religious beliefs. In fact, the name of salon #1 was chosen by utilizing scripture from the Holy Bible. Beverly explained that her faith was influential in the decision to formulate a name and mission for the salon. During the time of this study, the signage on the front of the building, the front door, and the empty receptionist’s desk, all bore the salon name, Carolyn’s Crown and Glory. Next to the name was the scripture reference, I Corinthians 11:15, which states, “If a woman has long hair, it is her glory and is given as a covering to her” (see Figure 4.5, p.185). I asked Beverly to expound on her decision to name the salon according to scripture. She explained, “I chose that name because I wanted it to be kind of biblical and I was talking to my sister-in-law, and she was like I should get the scripture out of the Bible.”

In a second interview with Beverly, I revisited this topic to inquire about her motives for choosing this scripture. I asked for her personal interpretation of how the verse related to the salon. She was brief and without any specific exegetical response. She simply stated that the verse pertained to a woman’s crown or head and she thought it was appropriate for the salon. Her literal interpretation caught me by surprise. I had half expected a detailed explanation of both Old and New Testament teachings on spiritual
coverings. I sought after a complex meaning for how a contemporary and ever-growing beauty industry situated with Holy Scripture. Beverly however, had made the verse less problematic and focused on the fact that the work she was accomplishing was helping to glorify the women she loved. It truly was simplistic to her: the hair that she managed daily had the potential to bring health and wealth to her clients. This was consistent with her declaration, “If you look good, then you feel good.”

In observing the customers’ responses to the open display of Christian faith and principles, it seemed clear they did not complain or quarrel with the matter. In fact, according to the stylists, many of these same clients attended the same churches with them on Sunday mornings. Thus, they shared stories throughout the day about recent church services or about their personal experiences with God. These open conversations provided a means for the women to reminisce about their shared worship experiences and to obtain information about other local churches in the community. During observations in salon #3, clients were also seen privately reading their personal Bibles and processing information from spiritual self-help books. They could be heard recommending the names of authors and titles of books to one another.

While the women consistently made mention of God in their daily conversations in the salons, they also specifically used spiritual references to provide encouragement and support for one another. For example, while observing in salon #3, I overheard Jackie talking to a client about issues African American women have when raising children alone. The client was frustrated and anxious about her 8 year-old daughter’s behavior at home and school. Jackie encouraged her by sharing her personal childhood story of being raised in the “housing projects” and how she is now raising her 3 year-old
grandson. She also utilized Dudley’s book to explain principles of faith and success. She emphasized the things she had read about Dudley’s academic challenges in school and how walking by faith helped him to become a renowned entrepreneur in the community.

In the same salon, Keisha could also be heard with clients sharing her faith as a source of encouragement. After describing her work as a ministry, she explained that her clients also utilized prayers and faith messages to inspire her. She told of a conversation she had with a client who was determined to minister to her about changing salons. According to Keisha the client believed that God had given her an assignment to encourage her.

Keisha explained through a quivering voice how she received the message.

“God told her to ask me why did I lose my zeal for Him, in the choir…I haven’t been singing for about a year. I just started bawling…I was crying…hard…I just feel like this last year at that salon was just trying. I love the Lord, but man, I just couldn’t be myself in there. I was tired…It was my third salon…I didn’t want to be jumping around again.”

She went on to explain that the message was “good” for her and the client helped her to focus on spending time with God in order to make the difficult decision about changing salons. Keisha shared that she openly receives faith-filled encouragement from her clients.

In addition to these findings, other data indicated that there was potential for stylists to utilize their religious experiences to help clients in other ways and discuss issues of violence. Three of the 11 stylists recognized that local Black churches could be used as an informal resource to provide services for women in abusive situations. While Denise shared her personal story about getting help from her church to escape an abusive
spouse, Chê identified another local church as a possible place for victims to get help. Keisha was unable to provide the name of a specific church; however, she perceived that local church leaders would be accessible and knowledgeable about other social services in the community. Thus, the stylists made connections between their faith and personal experiences with local churches to provide help for their clients.

This notion of connecting spiritual and entrepreneurial discourses is quite common among cosmetologists in the African American community. Historically, both Madame C.J. Walker and Annie Turbo Malone closely aligned their careers with religious beliefs. Walker’s biographer and great-great-granddaughter wrote that Walker attributed her invention to reverse hair loss as an inspiration from God. She felt spiritually obligated to offer her products to those who appreciated beautiful hair, which she believed was the glory of woman (Bundles, 2001, cited in Jacobs-Huey, 2006). Interestingly enough, this resembled the same spiritual principle that Beverly, the owner of salon #1, embraced when naming her salon. The significance of I Corinthians 11:15 was evident throughout the generations of cosmetologists, beginning with the pioneers of the industry. Malone also combined philanthropy and spirituality into her manufacturing companies and beauty schools to build her cooperation. She patented the pressing comb and established the multimillion dollar beauty product business, known as Poro. It seems reasonable then to draw parallels between today’s beauty industry tycoons such as Joe Dudley’s, with the efforts of these pioneering entrepreneurs. Like them, he maintained the religious principles of “walking by faith” and changing lives of those around you; but also factored into the curriculum information about retirement and
building a business. His method to success was widely embraced by many of the cosmetologists in this study.

Other studies have focused on the ways in which African American cosmetologists reconcile spiritual and entrepreneur discourses in their careers. In particular, Jacob-Huey (2006) considered language and gender to gain insight into the practices and discourses surrounding Black hair. Her observational research documented stylists’ perspectives that cosmetology was a Divine calling that enabled them to socialize with other women who embraced similar views (Jacobs-Huey, 2006). Jacob-Huey (2006) used descriptive narratives to explain that the African American stylists’ in her study believed they possessed a God-given “gift” to touch and change the lives of their clients. Her findings closely relate to this current study in that the participants’ use of religious discourse informed the interpersonal exchanges with other cosmetologists and clients (Jacob-Huey, 2006). She found that the women formed a nonprofit organization called Cosmetologists for Christ (CFC) and participated in fellowship, Bible study, and prayer sessions in the salon. One participant was inspired by scripture to create the slogan for her business cards and salon name. She referenced 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” This motivation was very similar to Beverly’s desire to name her salon according to a woman’s hair being her glory.

This close association between Black salons and religion may best be explained by considering their historical overlap. The ways in which African Americans have expressed themselves through religion has always been a rich and distinctive subculture within the community. In fact, religion in the Black community is recorded in part as an
attempt by African Americans to deal with the phenomenon of racism. Thus, scholars believe that religion has always been a means for African Americans to deal with social oppression (Hughes, Meltzer, & Lincoln, 1983). During the Civil Rights Movement, it was quite common for leaders to use Black churches and beauty salons to serve as places to organize. The salons were known as “halfway houses” and were thought to be less visible than the church (Willett, 2000, p.135). With less pressure, salons became more readily available to challenge systems of racial oppression. They were over-looked based on their small, informal neighborhood presence with only one or two stylists. They were thought to be limited to the home and domesticity, despite the numerous roles beauticians and their shops played. Inevitably, the role of salons morphed into something beyond the front-rooms and back kitchens where they started. They became a place, which offered endless resources and eventually caught the attention of Movement and religious leaders.

Religion Summary

The data suggested that at the time of this study, many of the stylists and clients shared in a culture of religion that offered opportunities to discuss intimate topics. They used these principles of faith as a way to uplift one another and offer encouragement. They stylists believed that their faith was the sustaining source of their success in the beauty industry. They drew from these experiences to support their clients. Likewise, the clients were inclined to help the cosmetologists and incorporate their spiritual beliefs. Thus, religion was a central part of the beauty salon social environment. Just as African American history indicates, the women in the salon felt empowered by the value systems of the Christian Church. It would seem then that building on this culture to facilitate conversations about domestic abuse in the salon is feasible.
Resources

Many properties in the salons made it an important medium to consider when developing community education. Answering questions about how resources in the salon setting and culture facilitate or hinder discussions about domestic violence is pivotal for this research. These resources include both the personal assets and experiences the women shared in the setting as well as the physical structures that already existed in the salon. Examples of the personal resources were the training, education, and employment backgrounds that the stylists and clients utilized to network. While the resources existing in the physical structure of the salon included the media sources, written literature, and technology. Both of these sources will be discussed in this section to understand how they aid in conversations about abuse.

Participant Social Resources

Eight of the 11 stylists reported that their clientele was comprised of only African American women. Jackie, Ché, and Joy stated that they also provided services for a few Hispanic and White women; Beverly provided services for a few African American men. Despite the fact that most of the women in the salon were from similar racial backgrounds, they presented from many different socioeconomic classes. The stylists reported that physicians, attorneys, researchers, pastors, students, janitors and bus drivers among others visited the salons. However, these vast economic differences were welcomed and capitalized upon by the women. Jackie explained how the process of networking worked in salon #3.
“I do give a lot of advice. I have my college kids that come in. They may ask me questions, and if I don’t know, I will find out. And I will let them know. I try to find out what I can find out. And like I said, if I don’t know, then I know someone who does know…thank you Lord…you know as a cosmetologist I meet everybody…from the rooter to the tooter. People that clean up your house and the doctor and the lawyer…thank you Lord.”

Other stylists also explained that there were enormous opportunities to network while in the salon. These processes helped the women to empower one another and increase the likelihood of upward mobility. Angie, the proud mother of two aspiring cosmetology students, described a time when her daughters received support from one of her clients. She explained as the client left the salon, “She wrote a letter of recommendation for my daughter’s admission to beauty school…she has helped so many kids in the community…she is well known because she can write grants.” Angie explained that the salon atmosphere allowed the women to network by bringing their experiences, talents, and resources in the salon to share.

Joy concurred by stating she also has provided services for women from different walks of life.

“I’ve had all different kinds of people sit in my chair. I’ve had preachers sit in my chair. They might give me spiritual advice. I had a lady that worked in the apartment system and she helped me get an apartment… My sister-in-law was looking for a job. So I told her I would find one of my clients that I knew was in the medical field and basically I would have them contact her so that they can help her find a job. I had another friend who graduated from UK, who was in the
education field and she couldn’t find a job and I introduced her to a principal who
got her hair done by my co-worker and she helped her get a job.”

These findings suggested that the women bring very different educational
backgrounds, training experiences and life endeavors to the salon. The stylists and
clients capitalized upon these personal assets to ensure gender empowerment and
community profitability. This effort to unite around their differences provides
opportunities to talk about experiences with domestic violence and offer support to
victims.

This data is consistent with Majors’ (2003) work on interactional systems of
activity. She argues that complex interactional activity systems emerge when analyzing
the structure of activity in salons. These systems of activity are constituted by the
orientation of tasks, the norms for talk through which the tasks are communicated and
carried out, the artifacts, the goals and social/cognitive resources of participants, and the
roles assumed by the participants. Majors (2003) considered specifically the shared
activities between women and how they transformed the individual and social
environment. She acknowledged that transformation was due in part to the resources of
knowledge and skills utilized by the participants. She also recognized that the ways in
which women speak, perform, and reason in African American salons were consistent
with their cultural and social resources (Majors, 2003). These resources create
transformations within the salon in the form of taking on roles and identities, which then
invite participants to engage in complex problem solving tasks. Majors (2003) identified
that participants constructed and transmitted their understandings of the world as part of
this process and that participation, collaboration, and negotiation resulted.
Drawing from her data can help support the findings in this current study. The 11 stylists, their participants, and the salons in which they interacted, in fact created a space where cultural and social resources could be shared. They found ways to mobilize their goals, aspirations, and needs based on the various socio-cultural backgrounds that existed among them. If seen as systems of interactional activity, we can better understand how the utilization their social/cognitive resources could result in transformation, collaboration and negotiation among the groups of women. These findings are considerable when deciding which aspects of the salon can facilitate discussions about violence. Ideally, the exchange of knowledge as it relates to this topic would naturally occur based on the ways in which the stylists and clients understood abuse and violence. They would unite around the problem of violence and potentially impact the needs of women in abusive situations.

Understanding how these various social and cognitive resources align with the socioeconomic status of women in the salons can guide discussions about the role and influence of the social location of class. The stylists reported that the interactions in the salon occurred between women from many different professional backgrounds. These women used their experiences to network and collaborate. It becomes important to consider how social class informs access to this setting.

Socio-economic status (SES) is often measured by a combination of education, income, and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2014). Research supports that SES can help determine the quality of life for women (American Psychological Association, 2014). In fact, health, race/ethnicity, and SES have been historically intertwined (Willshire, Person, Kiefe, & Allison, 2009). Research indicates that SES
accounts for a large portion of the health disparities observed between members of racial/ethnic minority groups and members of more advantaged groups (Willshire et al., 2009). Although social class was not emphasized in this study, scholars have found that SES is a determinant in community-based intervention efforts that occur in local African American beauty salons. For example, Forte (1995) noted in her study on early breast cancer screening in low-income older African American women that SES contributed to the use of early screening practices. Among her data, she reported that African American women of lower SES and education levels were more likely to underuse early breast cancer screening options when compared to White women. She found that these factors compounded by referrals from physicians constituted as major barriers (Forte, 1995).

In another study, Kleindorfer et al., (2008), explored the challenges of community-based research in a beauty salon stroke education project. They identified differences between women who kept regular appointments and the general salon population. They documented their concerns that women who kept regular appointments were likely more knowledgeable and had higher levels of education when compared to the general population. The study recognized that poorer women were associated with having lower levels of knowledge and perhaps frequented the salon less often than women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Kleindorfer, 2008 #4). In this current study, class markers for the clients were identified based on the occupational information provided by the stylists. Information about educational level and job stability were only documented in regards to the stylists and not the clients. The cosmetologists reported having different levels of education. More than 45% of them achieved a high school diploma or GED, while 27% reported obtaining graduate level training. It becomes
important to consider how women from different socioeconomic classes share
information. Namely, how cosmetologists with specific levels of training can effectively
disseminate information to clients from lower or higher levels of class. It also becomes
important to recognize that poorer women potentially have less access to the salon space.
Reaching this population of women to share information about violence could prove
difficult. There could be limitations in sharing information about violence with this group
of African American women.

Television as a Salon Physical Resource

In addition to these social resources found in salon #1, salon #2, and salon #3
there were a plethora of existing physical resources to also consider when assessing ways
to encourage open discussions about violence in these settings. Primarily media and
technological resources were part of the physical salon setting. These included the
television, satellite radio, written literature, mobile devices, and computer internet
services.

Different forms of media and pop culture streamed into each of the salons daily.
The television in particular was turned on early and remained visible to most clients
throughout the day. All three salons had at least one television in the waiting area;
however, salon #1 had an additional screen in a private area for pedicures. Although the
television all had connections for DVD players, none of the sites played movies.
Instead, most clients were entertained or informed by daytime talk shows, game shows,
cooking shows, soap operas, or the local news. It was mainly at the discretion of the
stylists to decide which channel would be watched. I documented how the television
topic influenced the shop talk in all three salons. The conversations focused on general,
mainstream, pop-culture type topics, or they progressed to in depth forums about socio-politics such as racism, sexism, and poverty. Nonetheless, the television regularly played a key role in the types of discussions the women had in the salon.

There were several instances in salon #1 and salon #2 when conversations about domestic violence stemmed from the television. On one occasion in salon #1, The Dr. Phil Show could be heard throughout the salon. Typically, salon # 1 was subdued and orderly; however, on this particular day the atmosphere shifted to make way for an extensive conversation about violence. The conversation stemmed as the television programming became the center of attention for the group. That afternoon the focus was on domestic violence and the importance of being safe. The title given to the show was, “Abusive Love: The Good, The Bad, and The Painful.” As Dr. Phil talked with a newlywed couple about abuse and infidelity, the women in the salon responded to his instruction and turned their conversations to the advice he gave the troubled couple. The viewers learned that the husband had been verbally and physically abusive to his wife and slept with a casino worker. As the stylists and clients listened, Nikki blurted out “It’s too late to learn now.” This was in response to Dr. Phil’s instructions on how the husband should treat his wife. Phil went on to explain that physical, mental, and emotional abuse were usually deal breakers when it came to marriage and instructed the wife, “Kick his arrogant ass to the curb.” The women in salon screamed and laughed in delight at these words and began reflecting on their personal relationships. One elderly client began to describe her experience with domestic violence. She stated, “Domestic violence needs to be talked about more. There are lots of Black women who go through it. Back then mothers told their daughters to stay. ‘Just take it.’” She went on to explain that she
watched on CNBC news that a new law was passed regarding domestic violence. She said it made her think back to when she was a child. The client continued to share a story about her mother being abused. She stated she would listen to her cry for hours. She ended by explaining she never told her mother that she knew about the abuse. As she spoke, some clients chimed in to share personal stories about abuse and infidelity, while others sat quietly listening.

**Music as a Salon Physical Resource**

Another media source in the salon that influenced the conversation and atmosphere was music. While all three salons had portable stereos visible, only salon #3 utilized it during the course of the study. Late one Saturday afternoon, while the television remained on in the waiting room, Keisha moved away from her station to plug in her IPod. During the course of 3 hours, music was piped from her personal mp3 player into the ears of salon clients and stylists. The choice genre was soul and R&B. The women could be seen swaying their bodies and snapping their fingers as they sang in unison “Who Can I Run To?” a 1995 remake from the original 1979 Jones Girls’ version. When another R&B icon, Anita Baker, was featured on Pandora, most women in the salon had the same response. They began to sing along together the words of “Sweet Love.” The conversation then took a turn with reminiscing of the artist’s career and her songs in the 1980s and 1990s. There was a common bond through this music shared by the women across the generations.
Written Literature as a Salon Physical Resource

Other physical resources to consider in the salons were written literature. These included novels, self-help books, magazines, newspapers, and hair books. There were similarities between the shops and the literature they provided for clients to read. All three sites provided hair books, the local newspaper, and magazines such as Essence, Ebony and Jet; however, salon #3 offered a bookshelf of novels, and self-help books including books by Danielle Steele, John Grisham, and Mary Higgins Clark. Other book titles included *Home Remedies, Alcohol Anonymous, Sista Souja, and Be Anxious for Nothing*. This salon also had a bulletin board in the waiting room, displaying business cards and pamphlets of Black entrepreneurs and local business. Clients in all three salons also brought in books from their personal libraries and shared information among themselves.

Technology as a Salon Physical Resource

There was also a computer in salon #3 that was not being used at the time of the study. Jackie had received a free personal computer after attending a computer class with Community Ventures. While she had attentions of implementing new technology to conduct salon business, she had not moved forward in setting up the software. She primarily used the computer to browse the internet during slow times in the salon.

Along these same lines was the use of web-based appointment calendars. During this study Keisha was the only stylist who utilized electronic software via the internet to book appointments (see Figure 4.8, p. 188). She explained the process included a $25 monthly fee and allowed her customers to schedule appointments, cancel appointments, view her latest styles, and read through other customer reviews of her work. Vagaro was
one example of the many electronic software application packages available. The intent of online salon management software was to eliminate the “time-consuming and tedious task of scheduling appointments, managing inventory, confirming appointments, sending out reminders, and managing social networks.” This software could be used by individual stylists or entire salons. Keisha explained that she benefited from using the electronic scheduling by freeing up her time at home and in the salon. She described receiving notifications of cancellations early in the morning. This helped her to better plan her day at the salon. For others like Nikki, she explained she could not risk the additional cost or overhead, however thought the services could be beneficial. After reviewing Keisha’s online “profile” provided at the Vagaro website, I found the process to be convenient and easy to navigate. The link offered a personal statement written by Keisha. It stated:

I want to offer a strong commitment by helping you to maintain your healthy tresses with the best of my ability. I am dedicated to my craft, coupled with honesty and realistic views of what I can offer you to strengthen your knowledge on hair care awareness while making you feel great about YOUR hair.

In addition, the page offered facts about her hours of operation and cancellation policy. A section labeled “Specific Instructions about the salon” provided the policy of “no children.” There was also a “Features and Facilities” tab which showed such things as payment method, spoken language, and accepted walk-ins. Perhaps the most unique aspect of the webpage was the review and rating section. There were 15 reviews provided about Keisha. She received 5 out of 5 stars on all four categories including: Overall, Punctuality, Value, and Service. Keisha also included information about
services, styles, and treatments she offers in the salon as well as pictures illustrating her work.

In talking with still other stylists about their accessibility, they explained that while some clients continued to call the salon to schedule appointments, most sent text, or called their personal mobile devices. Angie explained it was very common to receive text messages regarding appointments while in church on Sunday mornings, and on her days off. I inquired further regarding the methods of communicating and assessed how the stylists managed the blurred lines between their availability and time off. Angie explained her method for establishing boundaries with clients.

I leave my book at the shop on purpose, because I don’t want people calling me at home or while I’m in school…or sending me text messages while I’m at church…or even in the middle of the night calling me about an appointment. I’m like I have to separate these. I tell you that I’m available Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 1 until, but they don’t care. I get more calls on my days off.

Thus, while one mechanism to separate their personal lives from work included leaving the appointment book at home, others chose to ignore the texts and calls if they were sent at inopportune times.

**Resources Summary**

Many of the individual and structural resources found in the salons provided insight into areas that could be beneficial to developing anti-violence education programs. The women shared information about their personal training, educational, and work experiences. These resources were utilized in the salon to help empower groups of
women from all different backgrounds. Researchers, educators, and advocates, can tap into this process of sharing information and social capital to help bring about transformation in the individual, as well as in the environment. Understanding how these women networked through applications of collaboration and negotiating offers a viable option for facilitating discussions about abuse and advocacy for victims.

The existing physical structures such as the media sources, personal computer, and reading materials could also be used to share information about domestic violence. During the time of this study, none of these options, except the television, were used in this manner; there is potential to utilize the others when developing anti-violence programs. For example, placing pamphlets, brochures, and other informational packets in the salon space can enhance awareness about the issue of violence. Using the restrooms or bulletin boards to post information about domestic violence hotlines, shelters, and other resources allows for discretion and a greater chance for intervention. The clients and stylists are continually reviewing reading materials in the salon, extending this literature to include information about abuse has the potential to facilitate discussions about this topic.

Additionally, music was a major source of interacting in the salon environment. Using this as a tool to unite women across generations could stem conversations about violence. It seemed apparent that the women bonded and found comfort in the familiarity of the tunes. Recognizing that music was very much an important part of the social and physical resources in the salon is important. Educators continue to look for ways to incorporate pop-culture as part of innovative pedagogy.
Additional findings from this study also suggested that with rapid growth of technology, customers have greater access to their stylists. Newer electronic software, social media networking, and mobile devices create a situation where stylists are finding themselves available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Historically, stylists maintained a 5 day work week, where Sundays and Mondays were scheduled days off. Current technology is making this a thing of the past. Internet software such as Vagaro indicates that clients are accessing their cosmetologists through different sources of media and technology at all times.

**Changing Environment**

Another theme that addressed how the social and physical environments either facilitate or inhibit discussions about domestic violence in salons involves the changing environment that is customary in this setting. This research identified numerous similarities between the three salons studied; however data indicated that there were variations to also consider. These differences included the ways in which the stylists used the salon space and the changing dynamics of the social interactions. This next section will focus on these variations between the salons.

**Open versus Private Salon Concepts**

The most obvious difference between the three salons was the physical design. Salon #1 (Figure 4.9, p. 189) was constructed with full, floor to ceiling, partitions between each booth. Salon #2 (Figure 4.10, p. 190) and salon #3 (Figure 4.11, p. 191) both had open concepts. Despite the differences in the salon designs the women were able to interact and talk privately and in larger groups. All of the stylists managed barriers that impeded open discussions or limited options for privacy in their respective
salons. This was managed in both the open concept settings found in salon #2 and salon #3, as well as the closed concept found in salon #1. The stylists were heard adjusting the volume of their voices to accommodate the clients’ needs in that moment. For example in salon #2 and #3 the stylists and clients lowered their voices when sensitive or private conversations warranted discretion; while in salon #1, if a topic desired the opinions and perspectives of the larger group, the women spoke up and projected their voices to ensure they would be heard across the partitions. These methods seemed acceptable to the clients in each salon. On one occasion Keisha was heard shouting across the salon, “What are y’all talking about?” The other stylists welcomed her into the conversation and explained the topic being discussed.

To consider how these different social environments and physical settings can help to develop community education and discussion around the topic of domestic violence, I inquired how the clients and stylists approached sensitive topics and more importantly how likely were the clients to disclose abuse in these settings. According to all 11 stylists, they had clients who preferred to discuss personal information in private, while others preferred a group approach. They explained that every person and every situation was different, thus they accommodated their clients and met them at the points of their needs. An example of the women in the salon working as a group to help one another occurred during an observation period in salon #3. Carol, now back from her 12 year sabbatical, greeted an afternoon client who entered visibly upset. It appeared she had just left work after an altercation with her supervisor. Upon entering the salon, she walked immediately over to the round table where a group of women were already sitting. She exclaimed, “I have had a challenging work week!” Still dressed in her work
uniform, she told about the difficult situation that occurred earlier that day with her manager and co-workers. She described intimate details of feeling belittled, betrayed, and disrespected. The immediate response from the other clients and the stylists in the shop was to offer feedback and advice on how to handle the stressful situation. The women unanimously offered words of encouragement and direction. They shared their personal stories when dealing with similar situations. Most of them encouraged her with the spiritual reference, “This is just a test.” They reminded her not to give up at work and that quitting was not an option.

This illustration was indicative of how the women in the salon utilized “group therapy” in an open space to deal with very personal situations. In fact, it seemed to be the preferred method by the women in the salon on that particular day.

On another day however, during an interview with Joy in salon #2, she described a different scenario involving a client disclosing information about being abused. The conversation took place solely with Joy and only after the client had left the relationship:

I feel like she reached out to me and I didn’t even know it until later. And I feel like I could have been there for her more. You know, but at the same time I don’t feel like I completely neglected her because I let her know…she felt comfortable around us…she felt comfortable talk to us…she knew she could come back and talk to us. It was past tense when I found out…that she was in a bad relationship.

She did get the strength and left him. And that’s how I found out…you know…she came back and was like, ‘Yeah, I left him. He was beating me.’

The stylists perceived that they could help their clients in both open and private designs. They stated that they were able to make adjustments according to the
preferences of their clients. They believed there were times when group therapy was the best option to help clients, while other times warranted private, discrete conversations. Along these same lines, Solomon et al., (2004) found that differences in the design in their observational study of five African American salons and five Caucasian salons. Their data indicated that the less open salons did not allow for the same amount of interaction between cosmetologists and their clients not being served; however, these variations in the physical layout only made a modest difference in the number of conversations observed in the study. Drawing from these previous observations can help support the findings of this current study. While all 11 stylists were able to modify their behavior to interact with one another and their clients, consideration must still be given to the ways open and closed designed spaces facilitate and inhibit conversations.

Salon Features that Inhibit Discussions about Violence

Participants in the Salon

There were other variations in each salon to consider when developing anti-violence education programs in this setting. Namely, the findings indicated that children, men, clients, and even the stylists varied in any given setting on any given day. These changes in the environment have the potential to impact the fluidity of domestic violence conversations. For example, salons #1 and #3 did not allow children to wait in the salon with parent unless they too were receiving services. The rule was enforced and clearly noted with signage stating “No children unless they are receiving services.” Both salons sought to create a relaxing atmosphere, which allowed the women to “get away from it all.” Salon #2 on the other hand welcomed children in the setting and often included them in the conversations about puberty and sex. Angie explained, “I like seeing my
clients with their children. I get to see them grow up.” Angie’s enthusiasm was shared by the other cosmetologists in salon #2; however, the presence of children in the salon must be considered when developing anti-violence educational materials. Ideally, topics and imagery associated with domestic violence would be too complex and sensitive for minors in the salon. Open discussions of this nature would be difficult and potentially limit the dissemination of resources and information.

For the purpose of this study, observations of children were not included due to the IRB protocol. The interactions and conversations with men however, were widely documented in each salon. It was apparent that African American men regularly visited the salons and they had the potential to effect the social environment. During the observation periods in all three salons, there were African American men present and interacting with the stylist and the clients. Only in salon #1 did a male receive services. The other two salons had an “open-door” policy for men and often invited their perspectives about topic discussions in the salon. For example, in salon #2 as a husband and wife awaited her appointment with Tanya, they both engaged in provocative conversations about religion, relationships, and domestic abuse. The discussions were sparked when Ché asked the husband, “Why do men cheat?” The young man stood in the middle of the salon and engaged in a 45-minute conversation about dating, marriage, and being single. He provided the group of seven women a male perspective on these topics. His opinions were welcomed but taunted throughout the discussion.

There were similar instances in salon #1 and #3 where husbands and boyfriends entered the salon and talked with the women. These visits were both short interactions lasting 15-20 minutes, and longer exchanges that lasted for hours. The atmosphere did...
not appear to change despite men entering and leaving the salons. The women seemed to acknowledge that the salon was still their space. Joy referred to the salon as a “woman’s environment” and declared that this helped the women to feel comfortable.

On one occasion as Tanya’s boyfriend sat waiting in the salon, he was scolded by the stylists when he attempted to answer the salon phone. They reminded him that he was not allowed to pick up the phone. They preferred a woman’s voice answer the caller. Another elderly client reminded him that he “better be careful around all these women.” She suggested that he was amongst a large group of women and that he was outnumbered. He jokingly responded that he was comfortable and was good to all the women except Ché.

African American men were welcomed into this social environment that was historically an African American women’s space. Their thoughts and ideas during this study were at times challenged, yet respected by the women in the salon. Their presence did not appear to change the content of the discussions, nor did it alter the intimate exchanges. However, it is important to consider the unpredictable nature of this variable. While the men during this study entered the salon without harmful intent, they did not appear to pose a threat to any of the women in the salon; however, there is still reasonable concern regarding a violent perpetrator entering the shops. Thus, anti-violence education programs in salons would need to consider measures to address this potential threat. Findings in this study suggested that only salon #1 had a precautionary means of locking the salon front door during certain hours to protect the women.

This process of creating barriers and deciding who gains entry into the salon raises a different set of questions that closely relate to factors that inhibit discussions
about violence in this setting. Namely, it is important to inquire how not only gender, but social class are linked to barriers that impede access to African American beauty salons. Moreover, questions should consider how African American women of lower SES respond to barriers that limit their access to salons.

Issues of access to care continue to be a major concern for African American women of lower SES. This topic has received considerable attention in the study of healthcare and health disparities. Interpersonal barriers, in particular have been recognized as primary limiting factors in minority women’s ability to successfully navigate the healthcare system. Researchers have identified factors such as limited knowledge and education, high cost, inaccessible services, lack of transportation, lack of insurance, and inconvenient locations limitations that hinder minority women’s ability to access care (Jackson et al., 2001). In this current study, there was a similar invisible class privilege that offered women of higher SES to access the salon to receive services from the cosmetologists. Women from lower SES were not easily identified, despite the report that the cosmetologists provided services for women from different backgrounds. It became clear in the study that due to the cost of services, poorer women might be unable to afford regular or frequent visits, nor have transportation to the salon location. Historically, these findings of class privilege in the salon setting have been a part of the beauty culture discussion. For example, Willett (2000) documents that throughout the nineteenth century African American women rarely had their hair professionally washed and styled. She states that the services of cosmetologists were restricted to privileged classes and that generally hair care was an informal do-it-yourself task. According to Willett (2000), mothers and daughters shared in the activity and passed the tradition of
caring for hair and scalp down from one generation of women to the next. (Willett, 2000). Willett’s research offers a historical perspective about how women responded to barriers in beauty culture. Namely, there was much concern by national and state figures in the industry about the reputation of the profession. Cosmetologists worked in shops that were located in their kitchens, lavatories, and front rooms. These neighborhood shops provided an answer for access for unprivileged women.

It then becomes important to consider how women of lower SES respond to barriers and limited access to today’s beauty shop. It is reasonable to think that having close relatives or acquaintances care for their hair in the neighborhood salon is still the only option for many women. In talking to the 11 stylists in this salon, it was apparent that many of them had previously cared for the hair of their friends and family members. Most of them reported that this was how their interest grew in the industry as adolescents. For example, when asking Keisha about her decision to become a cosmetologist, she explained how she washed and styled her sister’s and friends’ hair at home as a young girl.

I was in elementary, middle school, and I heard “beauticians.” I was in the kitchen during middle school doing hair, and I just had this gift…I had the ability to look at things and see how I could get it to look like that and uh I used my sister and best friends…That’s where my foundation started…I did everybody in the hood….Halle Berry, the short little stack, ah yeah, I had my barrels…my 3 pair of marcel when I was like 13. Yes, and I mastered them. Because I got the big ones, and in my mind I said, I had the loose, big, medium, and the
small...And I had all them sizes, and I would be able to do each roll perfect. And I was precise back then, it was ridiculous.

Keisha also explained that even in adulthood she continued doing hair in her kitchen. During her interview, she was candid about her work as a “kitchen beautician.” She took pride in her previous 15 years of experience as a stylist who worked out of her home. She shared openly about her repeat “drop-outs” when attempting to complete cosmetology school. She chalked this up to immaturity. My thoughts during this encounter focused on how this woman had preserved through her circumstances of being a single mother of two young children and was determined to make a living using her natural talents. As I listened through her pressured and rapid speech, she told of stories about working from her home and being the “baddest kitchen beautician ever.”

Keisha continued by sharing that many of her clients have been receiving her services since she initially began working in her kitchen. She joked that many of them had the nerve to tell her that she did hair better in the kitchen. Looking at the smile on Keisha’s face as she shared her story, I heard two things in particular about her young career as a stylist: 1) many women continue to use home salons in lieu of shops located in the community; and 2). clients and stylists build the same unique bonds that allow them to nurture and support one another in home-based shops as those in community-based salons.

Thus, in considering barriers that limit access to salons, it is feasible to think that women of lower SES respond by utilizing other means of having their hair styled. Many times their options are to rely on home salons, personal friends and family, or simply to do the task independently. Understanding that social class has the potential to influence
the ways some women are able to navigate to obtain services is important to consider when developing anti-violence education curriculum for the beauty salon. Therefore, it is important to recognize that some African American women may remain difficult to reach in this setting and that additional models of intervention should be considered. Perhaps amending the curriculum and advocacy designs to meet the needs of the different types of salons in the community allows movement toward a more inclusive model. Similarly, tapping into other informal systems of network within Black beauty culture may also afford the opportunity to reach “amateur” and unlicensed cosmetologists.

One final variation to consider when developing domestic violence awareness and prevention programs was the schedule of events for the day. Among the most inconsistent factors in all three salons each day were the stylists’ schedules. This included the time they arrived in the salon, how long they stayed, the number of scheduled appointments, and their outside commitments. During the study it was difficult to know which stylists would be working on a particular day and how long they would be in the salon. While they managed 2-4 clients at a time, they also made adjustments for cancelled appointments and “no shows.” Although Angie explained there were many times when her clients paid her if they did not show for an appointment, most of the other stylists had to contend with the financial burden and uncertainty. Both Denise and Nikki, from salon #1, talked about how difficult it had become to manage their businesses and personal finances because of clients not showing for appointments.

The stylists also had to manage outside commitments such as school and other jobs. In particular, Carol worked at a local hospital; Angie and Keisha were students’ and Lisa taught at a local beauty school. These commitments made their schedules in the
salon unpredictable. The stylists worked extended hours on many days or scheduled Monday as a make-up day.

Both the unpredictable scheduling and outside commitments that all 11 stylists managed were issues of concern when considering the appropriateness of antiviolence education in the salon setting. It is necessary to decide if stylists are able to invest and commit additional time outside of these obligations in order to share messages about domestic abuse with their clients. Maintaining reliable and consistent dissemination of information is vital when developing educational programs to address issues of abuse.

Summary of Changing Environment

Facilitation of Discussions about Violence

These environmental changes are noteworthy when considering how social and physical structures within the salon can effect discussions about violence. The findings suggested that the ways in which the stylists used the salon space could facilitate personal and public topics about abuse. They managed open and private conversations despite the physical layout of the salon. While salon #2 and salon #3 both utilized an open format, the stylists had acquired skills to recognize when to use discretion with a client to optimize privacy and confidentiality. It was obvious; however, that this open concept provided the women the opportunity to collaborate and nurture one another in a group setting. Likewise, salon #1, with its partitioned booths, provided immediate private areas; however, the women found ways to see and hear beyond the presence of the walls. It is important that the stylists be amenable to modifying how they interact, in the event a client needed to disclose openly to the group or privately to an individual in the salon.
Inhibitors of Discussions about Violence

One factor within the social environment that could inhibit discussions about violence was the presence of children and men in the salon. While the intimacy between the women did not seem to be altered by the presence of men, there is still the concern that in the cases of heterosexual relationships that a male perpetrator could enter the salon. Only in the case of salon #1, did the stylists take security measures by locking the front door to limit the entry of patrons and guest. In the case of small children and teens, there is some concern that exposing minors to sensitive and complex topics such as domestic violence would be inappropriate.

Another factor within the social environment that could influence or hinder domestic violence education and discussions was the unpredictable schedules the stylists maintained. Their external obligations, outside of the salon limited their availability and assurance that they would be ready to provide advocacy or discuss domestic violence topics with clients.

Lastly, recognizing that women of lower SES may have limited access to salons relative to their higher SES peers is important. Barriers such as lack of transportation or cost of services have the potential to impede some women from regularly seeking services from cosmetologists. The invisibility of class privilege in the salon setting is noteworthy. Consideration should be given to how discussions about violence in beauty salons have the potential to miss women of lower SES and education levels.
The Role of the Relationships between African American Cosmetologists and their Clients

The third inquiry for this study asked about the kinds of relationships that exist between African American cosmetologists and their clients in terms of social support. The study specifically considered how these relationships and conversations influenced the help-seeking behaviors of women in situations of domestic violence. Two themes emerged from the data that addressed these questions. These included the collaboration between all groups of women in the salon and the commitment the stylists made to their clients and the community. This next section will expound on the relationships between stylists and clients and how these women offered social support to one another. The discussion will also include the importance of the stylists’ relationships with one another in setting the atmosphere of the salon to ensure healthy conversations, as well as the relationships between clients and other clients visiting the salon. It was clear that identifying each of these different relationships was relevant to help understand the ways the women interacted in the salon. Finally, the data also suggested that the stylists made extensive sacrifices for their clients that showed their level of commitment. This was one indication of how close their relationships had become over the years. Often these self-sacrifices were offered at the expense of the stylists’ families and personal finances. Exploring these two themes will give insight into how social support is provided in the salon setting and how existing
relationships between the women influence help-seeking behavior in abusive situations.

**Collaboration**

**Relationships between Stylists and Clients**

The social interactions and conversations between stylists and their clients were the primary focus of this study. These exchanges suggested that stylists and their clients often negotiated and networked in the salon to address one another’s concerns or needs. The findings indicated that the relationships between these women were built over many years and were based on trust, giving, and negotiating. All 11 cosmetologists explained that they had regular clients who visited the salon on average every two weeks and spent 1.5 to 4 hours during the appointment. They explained that they had known many of their clients since attending beauty school. Thus, the stylists had maintained a relationship with many of their clients for as few as 10 years and as many as 20 years.

When asked to describe her relationship with clients, Jackie, owner of salon #3, explained,

“I would say my 10 years and over clients… it’s a relationship that I’m going to say is closer than your best friend. We discuss everything. And some things you can’t talk to your sister or friend about, but you can talk to your hairdresser. For those people, they trust me. It’s a really deep relationship. The trust is just there. Now for my new people, my new clients, it’s very surprising because once they meet me they trust me instantly. It’s a strange thing but I pray about it. I know people have been hurt by hairdressers; their hair has come out, they have been
burned, they have…and I know it’s a hard thing to trust somebody but I just ask them in the beginning to just trust me and we will get your hair in good shape.”

One of Jackie’s clients chimed in during the interview to describe their relationship. She explained that she initially came to the shop leery and not really listening to the advice Jackie offered about her damaged hair. During their early conversations, Jackie continued on about the steps needed to regain a healthy head of hair. The client admitted that she was not listening and was not planning to stay. However, when she heard Jackie say, “trust me” something changed. She stated that after hearing those words, she decided to stay and commit to a now 10-year relationship with Jackie.

The cosmetologists, however, had some difficulty labeling this unique bond. Ten of the 11 stylists recognized that the client-stylist relationship was a type of friendship. They insisted that it was different from their friendships outside the salon and better resembled relationships they had with family members. For example, Jackie insisted, “I still call it hairdresser – client relationship. I don’t call it friendship, because it’s so different. I wouldn’t say it’s a friendship. It may a type of friendship, but I wouldn’t call it a friendship…I don’t know what to call it, but it’s more. We only see each other at the salon. It’s not where we are calling each other.” Lisa, a booth renter in salon #1, echoed these sentiments stating, “...most of my clients I do have a close relationship, but they are not someone that I talk to everyday or hangout with…it’s a different type of friendship…there are boundaries.” Each cosmetologist recognized that the relationships were based on respect, loyalty, the number of years of acquaintance, and had unspoken boundaries.
Carol, however, explained that her clients were just that, “clients.” She adamantly professed that these women were not her friends. The major difference in her views when compared to her peers could be attributed to her 12-year sabbatical from the industry. She had just returned to the salon within the last year and was in the process of rebuilding her clientele. She expressed a less than favorable relationship with her clientele in her early years and described taking food stamps and “hot clothes” as forms of payment. Carol explained that she was more mature now. She planned to be patient, by allowing her career and relationships with her clients to develop slowly this time. She went on to share, “I think I’m getting to know them (her clients) and they are getting to know me. Once you meet someone, they are feeling comfortable...then you start talking and getting personal.”

Thus, collectively the stylists agreed that their relationships with clients were distinct from the friendships they had outside of the salon; however, there were some inconsistencies regarding how they socialized. The data showed that 6 of the 11 stylists did not socialize with their clients when not working, while five of them explained that it was common place to attend a movie, dinner, or a ballgame with clients. Keisha, during her interview in salon #3, explained that she occasionally went to lunch with clients. She described one incident when she was invited by two clients outside of the salon to allow them to “vent.” She stated that the women needed advice and, at times, it may be difficult to go deeper in conversation in a busy salon. Keisha mentioned that while she had met with clients during off hours, this was rare and in no way a regular occurrence. Denise’s preference was quite different from Keisha’s behavior in that she never
socialized with clients after work. She explained that she preferred to keep a close relationship with her clients, however, maintain the bond within the salon.

Despite these findings that indicated 55% of the participants do not socialize outside the salon, other data suggested that it was common for the group of women to attend the same activities or events in the community. In fact, all 11 stylists reported that they attended events such as church, weddings, baby showers, and birthday parties with clients when not working. Ché described an incident when three of the stylists in salon #2 attended a “Children’s Day” service at a local church. She explained, “Yes…if they (clients) invite me, then I’ll go. Like, here recently, a little girl …. asked if me and the owner would go… I was like, ‘Yeah!’…she extended the invitation… we went…stayed for a little while just to show our face.”

While these interactions were primarily positive, the data also showed that there were some strains on these relationships. In fact, 6 of the 11 participants acknowledged that some of their most difficult experiences in the profession directly related to their clients; another 4 of the 11 stylists cited issues indirectly related to clients, such as cancellations, burn-out, and over-booking as a source of anxiety. While a few of the direct issues were related to sharing in their client’s problems, most of the issues pertained to “making clients happy” and dealing with their critique of the services that had been provided. When asked about challenging experiences with her clients, Keisha explained:

When a client has seen all my strengths and still thinks I can do magic, that makes me feel like I can’t meet that standard, because that expectation is so high…they’ve already seen what I can do, but you want to see more…and this is
it right now…I’m already beyond. But it’s like I got to do something I can’t do. That kind of puts pressure on me and that takes the fun out of it…it’s like you expect me to do something I physically can’t do. I just can’t do that…you don’t even have enough hair for me to do that. So why do you put me in a position where I’m challenged and…It’s just pressure.

Not surprising, many of the stylists shared similar stories about the clients they had deemed difficult. After hearing these accounts, I was inclined to push further to uncover the ways in which they faced these challenges. For a few of the stylists such as Angie, “praying them away” was a method of choice; however, for others such as Nikki, “the cold shoulder” was a more reasonable method. Nikki stated that she would work to get these clients “in and out,” and refused to show much enthusiasm by minimizing the conversation. While these measures seemed unconventional, all the stylists typically made the tough decision to refer difficult clients to other cosmetologists. Keisha elaborated on her method of seeking advice from her colleagues and suggesting the client find someone else to provide services. She stated on one account:

The client was very difficult to please. She never smiled and was always depressed. Her behavior pulled me down and made me drag all day. I asked Jackie and Carol how to handle it. They told me to tell her to find another hairdresser. I prayed about it and waited until the next visit to tell her. When she came back, I waited until the right moment. It was at the shampoo bowl. She got upset and was crying. I gave her a few suggestions about where she might be able to go for future services. She was sad, but I couldn’t do it any longer.
Albeit, many of the interactions between these women appeared empowering and uplifting, the stylists repeatedly indicated that there were challenges that occurred in the salon. Nonetheless, the tightly woven relationships lead to connections and exchanges that built systems of networking and negotiations. The women also found the space to address one another’s needs during these times. One thought process shared by the stylists was that they believed their work was about more than just doing hair. They called themselves coaches, mentors, and ministers. They recognized that they were able to talk about everything in this setting. The conversations included intimate exchanges cased with laughter and even tears. This was quite evident by an open afternoon discussion about depression and anxiety. The consensus during the discussion was that members in African American communities fail to utilize therapy in order to heal from traumatic life events. At the time of this conversation, I found myself sitting with Jackie and one of her clients at the round table in the center of the salon. During the exchange, Jackie told about a recent death of a close family member and the effects it had on her life. As she finished, her client began to share the detrimental effects of her ex-husbands’ suicide. Despite my research role, I too shared at this moment about my husband’s traumatic head injury at work and his recovery. This intimate moment not only allowed each of us to cry openly about our personal pains, but it was an occasion to listen to the experiences of others and impart healing and hope for an uplifting.

That afternoon “therapy” was quite exemplary of the everyday occurrences in the salon. It was routine for the women to come in frustrated, discouraged, or simply searching for someone to talk to; and not surprisingly, there always seemed to be someone ready to listen and offer advice. In fact, all 11 participants acknowledged that
they not only provided advice for clients, they also received it in return. I inquired if they attempted to follow-up on the advice given, and indeed 10 of the 11 stated they made some sort of attempt to reach out. This was mostly accomplished by sending a text message, mailing a card, making a phone call, or waiting until the client returned to the salon. Jackie stated that she preferred to let the client check back with her.

It was apparent to the stylists that their relationships with clients were symbiotic. They recognized that their clients made efforts to nurture them in return. These mutual acts were not limited to the emotional support of encouragement and advice-giving; the stylists also received homemade foods, large tips, and other gifts. Angie in particular raved about her anticipation at Christmas time in salon #2.

Ah, yeah. I love Christmas. I love Christmas. I have one client who comes every six weeks….there’s probably just one of them…she gives me nice gifts. I had one client that I hadn’t had for very long but had known for a long time as a friend…this past Christmas she gave me a set from Bath and Body. I get candles. I’ve gotten gift cards from Victoria Secrets, Dillard’s….yeah.

This was but one example of how the clients reciprocated support for the stylists. Repeatedly, the data indicated that these relationships allowed the women to provide social support in the form of sharing advice, giving tangible gifts, and providing emotional support. In fact, the findings indicated that all 11 stylists received advice regularly from their clients. The topics ranged from marriage and relationship problems, to advice about raising their children. Jackie, with her traditional sense, insisted, “I get helped as much as they get helped… Any type of issue that I’m going through, I can ask
one of my clients that I trust.” Denise, although in a different salon than Jackie, reiterated, “I’m thinking that I’m there to lift them, but they lift me up.”

The different types of care that were offered in the salons were consistent with the interpersonal level of the SEF. This level of the framework considers the interactions of cosmetologists with their clients. Researchers indicate that at the interpersonal level, there are four types of social support: emotional – showing empathy, love, trust, or caring; instrumental – tangible aid or service; informational – advice, suggestions, or information; and appraisal – information that assists in self-evaluation (Linnan. & Ferguson, 2007; McLeroy et al., 1988; Solomon et al., 2004). These types of social supports are known predictors of behavior change and are closely associated with the regular interactions between the groups of women (Solomon et al., 2004). Numerous studies that focus on health promotion in salons indicate that employing SEF at the interpersonal level results in successfully delivering health messages to clients as indicated by behavior change. For example, Linnan et al., (2005) considered the feasibility of training licensed cosmetologists and delivering health messages about cancer prevention and healthy eating. They found that after training cosmetologists to disseminate the information confidently, clients in the salon increased their readiness to change lifestyle behaviors. Similarly, the observational study of ten beauty salons by Solomon et al. contextualized SEF to gain insight into the naturally occurring conversations that occur daily. They found that cosmetologists offered and received feedback in the form of empathy, appraisal, or advice during discussions in the salon. According to Solomon et al., customers and cosmetologists seemed willing to accept advice, criticism, and honesty from one another (Solomon et al., 2004).
In this current study, the 11 stylists explained that they also provided support for many of their clients. They acknowledged that the efforts were reciprocal and that they regularly received support from their clients. Data indicated the women in all three salons primarily provided informational support to help one another. This included giving advice and providing information. Often this information was acquired from books, media sources, or personal experiences. The stylists in particular were quick to provide advice or information about health topics, relationship issues, family, careers, or finances. There were even times when I was provided advice or information about my research. Emotional support was also noted in the data. The stylists repeatedly explained that their goal was to provide encouragement and strength to their clients in order to empower them. Encouragement was given in the form of sharing relevant stories, giving hugs, listening, and empathizing with the clients. Instrumental support was less often provided between the groups of women during this study. It was evident in the form of the sharing food, writing letters of recommendation, giving gifts and large tips, and providing transportation. Support in the form of appraisals was also widely provided in all three salons. The women were heard offering positive words of affirmation and encouragement about one another’s efforts or accomplishments.

While each stylist, including Nikki, emphasized their desire to empower their clients by providing money, free services, transportation, and advice, it was Jackie who shared a personal story about supporting a client in an emergency abusive situation. This incident revealed the multiple ways the stylists utilize their “ministry” to be accessible and available to provide safe resources and support for their clients. Jackie, the owner of the salon #3, described a late evening call and her reaction.
“And abuse does come up periodically. I’ve had several cases of abuse. Usually, when I do your hair for a period of time and I notice that you are reserved, I know something is going on. You know…like this past issue which actually just came to a head. She just got a divorce. I had no idea that she was being abused, but I knew there was something wrong. She was very quiet and very reserved. But she wanted something from me. You know. And I usually can recognize she needs something…that’s why she keeps coming. Yeah, so she was being abused. She called me one night at home. She said, ‘Jackie, I need your help. I think I’m going to kill myself.’ And I said, ‘I’m glad you called...because you are not going to do that. Tell me what’s wrong.’ And that’s when she told me that her husband was very abusive, he’s a big man and she didn’t know what to do. Actually first, I got my prayer warriors and then we went practical to refer her to this lady that we know. She is a lawyer, but she is an advocate for women. And we had her call her that morning. It was an emergency call, so she would refer her to a shelter. That just happened a couple of months ago.”

The other stylists shared similar experiences when they utilized their faith and networking to provide support for clients needing help. Although much of the support offered between the women included sharing personal stories and giving advice, all 11 of the participants believed the support and advice they offered influenced the decisions their clients made. Whether the advice was about relationships, children, careers, school, or finances, the stylists recognized their work was about much more than doing hair.

The data also identified acts of negotiating between the women as another dimension to their relationships. While the women primarily debated issues of hair, they
were not limited to these topics. Entertainment, “what to eat,” and “what to wear” were among the simple matters negotiated; while issues of time, availability, and dating choices were among the more complicated topics. On one occasion, however, Tanya could be heard making her argument about a new styling technique. Despite her efforts, the client was adamant and rebutted that she needed to continue with the traditional technique. They argued back and forth about styling her hair in a roller-wrap fashion or using the newer technique of flat-ironing. The client insisted that the style would last much longer if Tanya used her preferred technique of rolling her hair. The result of this encounter was that the client was appeased despite Tanya’s expertise and training. Even during my personal appointment with Nikki to have my hair dyed, there was obvious negotiating between the two of us. Although she went through numerous choices of hair color and offered her expertise on technique, we worked as a team as I handed her the foils to place in my color treated hair.

**Relationships between Stylists**

The relationships among the stylists in each salon were based on teamwork. This collaborative atmosphere ensured the women could network, negotiate, and address needs that surfaced in the shop. These relationships often had been established over many years, typically by previous work or training experiences. Most of the stylists identified that their professional and personal relationships with one another set the tone of the environment in the salon. They seemed to share a sense of responsibility not only for the salon and their clients, but also for one another. For example, the women would often provide grooming services and give beauty technique instructions to one another. Waxing eyebrows, shampooing, and styling hair were common services they rendered for.
one another. On one occasion, I observed the stylists trading favors as they cleaned the salon. On this particular day in salon #2, Joy cleaned Tanya’s station, in exchange for a haircut. I inquired about the interaction and was told that they were as close as “sisters.” They also shared other common work in the salon such as answering the phone and laundering towels.

The stylists could also be seen talking among themselves while in the salon. They discussed beauty products and techniques, such as hair coloring, weave placement, and styling. They collectively supported clients by attending events such as baby showers, weddings, and church services together outside of the salon. This support extended to their own personal lives and celebrations. In salon #3, Keisha explained that they often celebrated birthdays, anniversaries, and graduations at the salon by bringing balloons, cakes, and other foods to share. During the study, Jackie celebrated her 17th year wedding anniversary. After receiving a florist delivery from her husband, she was given a card filled with money as a gift from her colleagues, Keisha and Carol.

Although the stylists shared many memorable moments inside and outside the salon, they each recognized the difficulties in sorting between professional and personal lines. Jackie in particular noted that one of her major challenges as a salon owner was keeping the stylists motivated. She mentioned that it was difficult to ensure the other stylists stayed comfortable and satisfied over the years. I pushed deeper to uncover and understand the strains of these relationships. My discovery would become more evident in talking with stylists in the other salons.
While in salon #2, I discovered that Angie, Ché, and Tanya had worked together for over 10 years. Both Angie and Ché explained that the stylists one chooses to work with makes a difference in the salon and the atmosphere. They insisted that the relationships they had with other stylists were “important” and that lots of “problems could occur when they do not get along.” I continued along this inquiry to sort through ways employed by the stylists to assure a cohesive work environment. While several of them stated that finding the right working environment involved choosing stylists who could help grow your business or enhance your skills and techniques, most agreed that the leadership or owner was the primary source to contentment.

In a conversation with Tanya, the owner of salon #1, she shared the differences between owning her own salon and renting a booth. She determined that more stress was involved in being the owner and that you had to be concerned with paying the salon bills. She explained that she had to learn to be disciplined with her money and often found that she would take care of the salon bills before she would pay her personal home bills. Tanya recognized that she was the “boss” and as such, she established the mood of the salon. She found that she had to be more assertive and that the other stylists in her salon actually preferred that rules and policies be established. Salon #1, at the time of the study, had a dress code in place, which mandated the stylists to wear all black attire to work. Tanya stated that she had never asked a stylist to leave the salon and that if a problem or disagreement occurred, most often by the next day, all of them had reconciled and “made-up.”

In a conversation with Nikki, a booth renter in salon #1, she also recognized that the leadership of the salon set the work atmosphere; however, Nikki admitted that
accepting rules and policies organized by “other people” were sometimes difficult. She stated salon #1 was much more business-oriented than other salons she had previously worked, but thought it was a chance to re-establish her clientele and business. Nikki explained that part of the challenge in getting close to the other stylists was in understanding the line between friendship and business. She insisted that it was best not to cross the line.

Despite the different reasons why stylists choose the salons in which they work or the ways in which they conduct their business, the participants in all three salons indicated there was a close personal and professional relationship between the stylists. These relationships, along with the leadership of the individual salons, played a key role in the working environment and the salon atmosphere. These two aspects were essential in considering how the collaborative efforts between stylists in salons might be utilized to effectively aid in community education and advocacy.

**Relationships between Clients and Clients**

The client-to-client relationships were another dynamic of social support observed in each salon. These exchanges existed between old and new acquaintances and many times occurred while the women waited for services. They would either use this time to reminisce about previously shared events or to provide updates on new occurrences in their lives. In salon #1 and #2, these conversations primarily took place in the waiting areas; however, in salon #3, these conversations could be heard not only in the waiting area, but also at the large round wooden table sitting in the middle of the salon. If the women had not met before, they were encouraged to get acquainted either by a topic being discussed in the room, or by other clients sitting in the waiting area. There were
many instances where I, as the researcher, experienced firsthand networking and investing time in another woman’s needs. On one occasion in salon #3, I had the opportunity to share with an old friend from high school while waiting at the table in the center of the salon. After spending about 20 minutes talking about career options and how I might be able to help her, she explained that she had been laid off from her job. She talked openly about how she was dealing with the loss and her failed attempts to enter other professions. We updated our contact information and shared a hug as she was leaving. I would later look at the business card she shared and connect her with educational opportunities at a local university.

One other instance illustrating the interactions between clients occurred in salon #2. Two mothers, who had just met while waiting for services, began discussing similarities of their young daughters. One mother was in the salon with her child and was approached by the other mother about how much their daughters looked and behaved alike. The mothers began to talk openly and share candid stories about their children. After the first mother became visibly frustrated and explained her daughter’s colicky behavior, her new acquaintance provided reassurance. She explained that her daughter also had been diagnosed with colic and GERD (gastro esophageal reflux disorder) and that the symptoms should resolve in about 6 months. Despite the fact that these two women were strangers who were waiting for beauty services in salon #3, it did not limit their exchange. The two African American women were able to share their life experiences and provide relevant information.

At the time of another observation encounter in salon #3, two older women who were sisters, gathered with about five other women at the round table. They both talked
openly about how they loved Jackie and the atmosphere of salon #3. One of the sisters began to discuss her homemade cinnamon candy. She talked to the women in the shop about the medicinal benefits of eating the sweet she made in her personal kitchen. She went on to explain that she was selling the candy for $5. Shortly after the informal presentation, she passed around an open bag for the women in the salon to taste her concoction. Once she began to take orders, she demonstrated the complete packaging of the candy if purchased. From what I could tell, the tiny red-hot candy was packaged in a small clear baggie that zipped at the top. This was then placed in a small clear jar that sealed at the top and was adored with a red-checkered ribbon. The women in the salon were slow to warm up to the idea of buying the candy; however, after Jackie strongly endorsed the product, things began to turn around. Jackie explained she regularly ate the candy specifically to help her voice when she sang. The sister began to build on Jackie’s testimony and explained that many women find it good for their health. She described the benefits of helping respiratory problems such as the common cold, congestive heart problems, sinus issues, and Sarcoidosis. By the end of that Saturday morning, the one sister had successfully sold her reserved stock and had multiple pre-sells to fill.

It was interesting to witness this relay of health information related to home remedies between the women. As a healthcare provider, I thought to ask specifically about her ingredients in an effort to, perhaps, research how complementary an alternative medicine literature might be helpful in this conversation. My personal research of herbal supplements used to treat common colds yielded only Echinacea. I resolved that perhaps this was the primary ingredient used in her cinnamon candy. Unsure of the true benefits,
I tasted the candy for myself. It provided a delightful sweet and hot flavor that tingled in the back of my throat and reminded me of a breath freshener. The women in the shop seemed sold on the product before long and made a “big fuss” about how much they enjoyed it. This observation indicated how the salon space continued to provide economic enhancements and opportunities for African American women as they shared their resources. Furthermore, this encounter suggested that some of the knowledge shared in this setting may not be based on factual scientific or literary data; however, cultural similarities between the women allow them to share based on their personal values, beliefs, and experiences.

**Summary of Collaboration**

It was apparent, therefore, that the different groups of women in the three salons interacted in a cohesive manner. Their actions typically focused on giving to and empowering those around them. This was accomplished by negotiating and networking while in the salon. Returning to Majors’ (Majors, 2004) work on interactional systems of activity can help better understand how these acts of collaboration and negotiation lead to individual empowerment. According to Majors (2004), culturally shared and situated activity in the salon allowed both individual and social environment transformations. She argued that individuals who participate in activity within the salon through speaking, performing, reasoning, argumentation, and engaged problem solving take on roles, identities, and participant status. This method of transformation supports the goals and findings of this current research. The groups of women in the salons collaborated, networked, and negotiated to uplift and empower one another. The stylists understood
that their relationships with clients were unique and based on trust and loyalty. They also recognized that their bond with one another was important in setting a good working environment for their clients. The basis of these different relationships liberated the women to interact and engage in problem-solving. These activities, if centered on the topic of domestic abuse, have the potential to lead to individual and social environment transformation that can impact the lives of victim/survivors.

**Commitment**

The second theme, which emerged to answer the questions about the kinds of relationships that exit between stylists and clients in terms of social support, was commitment. The dedication made by each stylist to this profession could be seen in all three salons. It was obvious that they worked collectively to empower the women they serviced and the community in which they lived. Their devotion was evident by the daily sacrifices they made. Understanding the nature of this loyalty could aid in developing community education programs that enlists the help of cosmetologists as advocates for victims of violence.

According to the data, 11 participants spent anywhere from 15 hours to 70 hours a week at work. On average, they provided beauty services for 40 clients weekly. During this time, they continually managed hectic schedules that included “no-shows,” cancellations, and “walk-ins.” They sacrificed their families and finances to meet the expectations and demands of their clientele. As they shared the burdens of the women they saw week after week, they realized their role in the community. Without official sick leave, scheduled lunches, or breaks, they risked burnout, and many times, struggled to find their way back to the salon each week.
Despite these challenging work hours and demands, many of the stylists in the study recognized their role as leaders in the community and understood how this related to helping their clients. Joy explained, “I think women in the African American community look up to hair stylists. I think we set good examples. I think….we take this seriously…you know….African American hair is a big market right now and you know we’ve always been there…but we are just really getting the attention right now. I think we make a difference in the community.” She went on to express a desire to work longer in the salon to provide services and meet her clients’ needs. Keisha expressed a similar desire. Through tears, she explained that while she tried to always follow-up with clients to make sure their lives were going well, she simply did not have the time. Still others like Lisa, in salon #1, explained that one of the most difficult aspects of her work was taking home the problems and concerns of her clients. She shared that it was difficult to stop thinking about their issues and leave it at work.

These messages conveyed by Keisha, Lisa, and Joy demonstrated their commitment to their clientele. Their natural ability to offer leadership and support to the community aligns closely with Lieberman & Harris’ (2007, p. 206) use of “old heads.” Lieberman and Harris recognized that beauty salon owners were a type of “old head,” (Lieberman & Harris, 2007, p. 206) in that they were influential in the Black community and could function as lay health educators. The 11 stylists in this study modeled this behavior and despite their busy schedules, they were committed to supporting, teaching, and encouraging their clients.

Perhaps Angie’s schedule offered the most profound example of how the stylists juggled multiple careers and clients on any given day. While she managed time between
her goal to become a dental technician and her career as a stylist, Angie shifted between 3 days of course work on a local campus, and 3 days in the salon. During one observation period, I documented her servicing up to 5 clients at a time. That particular Friday evening, she had 2 clients under the dryer, 1 at the shampoo bowl, 1 in the chair and 1 in the waiting room. Angie explained how she managed the shuffle between clients:

   If I’m overbooked and the clients start getting a little restless, you can see it. It’s almost like the tension gets a little thick…. trying to make sure you service everybody in a timely fashion and get everybody out…because everybody has something to do. I mean, time is important, not just for me but also for them. So I have to respect that.

   Although Nikki did not currently manage a similar schedule, she reflected on previous years that led her to “burnout” in the field. She explained the physical and emotional effects of overworking:

   Just when I got really, really burned out and I didn’t know I was burned out until I started crying. I was like…It was more emotional because I had not taken a vacation in months. So, it was like constant. When I left the other salon I just went into straight mode because…it’s just like you want to make sure your clients are ok and that’s the way I’ve been taught…if your clients are ok, then you are ok. You want them to follow you wherever you go….so stay in the vicinity so they won’t have to travel far. So I wanted to make sure everybody was ok. And of course to revamp myself and my business. That has been hard for me. But it’s coming.
Nikki continued by describing her feelings about the sacrifices she had made for clients over the years. She remarked with some resentment that she often listened to clients tell her about their vacation plans, or upcoming travel. It was during this time she felt she had given so much to her clients that she failed to take care of her own home. As a single mother, Nikki recalled times when she could not attend important school or sporting events with her child.

Tanya also expressed similar regret in her efforts to juggle her roles as a salon owner and mother of two young girls. She explained that often she had to make the difficult decision to pay the salon bills before paying her personal house bills. She felt that she could not ignore the needs of the other stylists and the clients, but could manage the limited finances at home.

Day after day, I observed the close interactions between the women in the salon and listened to their intimate conversations; yet amidst these relationships bound by respect, trust, and love, I documented the unyielding devotion displayed by the stylists. Their breakfasts and lunches often grew cold and sat untouched. Yet, despite the financial strain, they kept smiling after repeated cancellations and “no-shows.” They even went out of their way to tend to their clients’ needs outside of the salon. On one occasion, Ché talked about a client’s request for her to come to the hospital following a surgical procedure. She was initially unsure about the request and struggled with understanding the boundaries between a stylist and a client. Eventually, she made the decision to go and found that the client wanted her to wash and style her hair.

Denise also recalled helping clients following medical treatment. She explained that she participated in the “Look Good Feel Better Program” at a local cancer hospital.
The program provided beauty services to cancer survivors by inviting cosmetologists to teach them how to put their wigs on and do their make-up. Denise explained, “It’s just the small things you don’t think about….Like I went in and drew eyebrows on this lady because she didn’t have them. And she just cried and I cried…and I thought ah Lord.” Similarly, Jackie had previously helped breast cancer survivors who needed instructions on wearing their hairpieces and tying scarves over their thinned hair to feel more stylish. She acknowledged that these requests were just another part of her job as a cosmetologist.

Assisting clients through difficult times was a real part of all 11 participants’ lives. They devoted themselves wholeheartedly to their clients in an effort to empower the women and help restore their dignity. In this study, it was unclear if the stylists understood their limitations when helping; or whether they differentiated their personal lives from their careers. I found it interesting that in salon #3, Jackie took the time to purchase 2 dozen roses at a local store. She explained that she purchased one dozen for her home and the other dozen was for the salon. As I sat looking at the long-stemmed red roses in the center of the round table in the middle of the salon, I inquired of Jackie why she felt the need to purchase flowers for the shop. She insisted, “Flowers just light up a room. They make people feel good; it does something for the soul.” She explained that she always kept fresh flowers in the salon and when they are missing, the clients noticed.

Jackie, along with the other 11 participants, made it clear that despite the challenges of the strenuous schedules, difficult requests, and uncertain finances, they would continue to provide unrelenting support for the women they serviced. They
viewed this sacrifice as their responsibility for their clients and their obligation to the African American community.

Recognizing the extent of the commitment and sacrifice demonstrated by the 11 stylists, this study uncovered another concern. Researchers must begin to inquire about the potential for the stylists to overcommit themselves. Consideration must then be given to the risks of excessive professional and personal stress, along with fatigue and burnout. These are real issues that must be tackled when developing health-intervention campaigns that employ the help of cosmetologists.

The tendency for the stylists to juggle multiple tasks, manage hectic schedules, and strive for additional career goals closely resembles characteristics associated with the Strong Black Woman Phenomenon. Understanding the limitations and negative aspects of this ideology would then necessitate a closer look at the stylists. Such scrutiny exposes internal barriers that could hinder the process of effectively disseminating resource information about domestic violence. Recalling that the attribute of strength is a defining quality of Black womanhood (Beaupoeuf-Lafontant, 2009), it is important to consider ways in which African American cosmetologists have adopted the ideology of the Strong Black Woman Phenomenon.

The discourse of strength suggests that African American women tend to the needs of others at the expense of their own emotional, mental, and physical health. Beaupoeuf-Lafontant (2009), used the term “internalization” (2009, p. 108) to explain the ways in which African American women strive to meet expectations. This process encourages the suppression of any negative perceptions about the social demands and injustices they encounter. According to Beaupoeuf-Lafontant (2009), women who rely
on internalization techniques are bound by the belief that any response outside of strength is representative of a flaw rather than a problematic social condition.

Considering the ways in which the 11 stylists in this study responded to the demands from their clients and community, it is reasonable to think that they have internalized the concept of strength. As they managed the demands and uncertainty in their personal and professional lives, they also had high expectations of women in abusive situations. They believed that victims of violence were in abusive relationships because they had low self-esteem and were weak. This was also the primary reason they believed women did not leave abusive situations. Their response to this problem was to improve their clients’ self-esteem and somehow make them stronger.

**Summary of Commitment**

The findings indicated that the relationships between stylists and their clients were unique and often limited to the salon setting. Despite these unspoken boundaries, the women offered support primarily in the form of advice-giving, emotional support, and words of affirmation. The stylists believed that the support they offered influenced the ways their clients behaved, even in cases of domestic abuse. They also committed their time and resources to these women and often sacrificed their homes and finances. The clients also found ways to reciprocate this support by providing advice and tangible items.

**Results Summary**

The thematic analysis of the observational, interview, and survey data indicate that there are key characteristics found within the physical environment of African American beauty salons that show great promise in utilizing them as portals for
disseminating information about domestic violence. Likewise, the findings in the social environment of the African American beauty salon suggest that the close relationships between stylists and clients allow them to interact and share intimate details about sensitive topics.

The physical environment specifically offered a plethora of existing resources that could be employed in developing an anti-violence advocacy program. Namely, social media, music, written literature, and television in the salons were found as potential technologies that could provide a means for disseminating health promotion messages. Information to increase awareness, prevention, and intervention could be intertwined with these modalities. This display of materials could potentially enhance knowledge about issues of violence and improve access to community resources.

The physical layout of the salon was also an important feature to consider in preparing to share information about domestic violence. This study included two salons that offered an open concept design and one salon that was arranged with separate cubicle areas. Both designs lent themselves to the potential of sharing intimate information in the salon. At times, stylists and clients engaged openly, which allowed for greater sense of empowerment and the sharing of ideas. At other times, privacy and discretion were needed, and the dividers between the work stations were quite useful. Nevertheless, the utility of both layouts was apparent for the goals of this study. The stylists and clients hurdled the need for both privacy and group support by making accommodations in the moment.

In addition to the physical features found in the salon, there were also key aspects in the social environment to consider in developing community health promotion
programs. The findings suggest that the relationship between the women in the salon was knitted by many years of acquaintance, loyalty, and trust. Their “friendships” were unique and varied somewhat from those relationships outside the salon. These ties, however, allowed them to network and collaborate in an effort to uplift one another above life’s challenges. They had existing systems of advocacy that encouraged different levels of support such as sharing advice, providing emotional and tangible support and giving pertinent information.

While both the social and physical settings offered individual means for implementing a domestic violence advocacy program, together they constituted a network of systems that provided a space for knowledge to be created and shared. This space, as indicated by the women, their interactions, the physical features, and salon atmospheres, promoted growth and empowerment among the groups. It was also important to consider aspects in the salon that could potentially inhibit implementing an anti-violence program. The pace and workload maintained by many of the stylists day after day were among the issues to consider. The primary concern was that they would burnout or not have time to share information about domestic violence with clients. Overall, all three salons provided a place that cultivated unity, collective work, cooperative purpose, creativity, and faith.
Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusions

Caged Birds

This chapter summarizes the findings and implications, proposes further research into the inquiry, and presents conclusions. The findings provide an overview of the results of the thematic analyses. The implications suggest what and how the existing approaches in the social and physical salon environment should be used to help develop salon-based advocacy and anti-violence education. This study also proposes additional research that can contribute to building health promotion programs that focus on domestic violence. Finally, the conclusions summarize the interpretations and implications of the study. Returning to Maya Angelou’s poetic repertoire provides a framework for these discussions.

Well after her prolific work “Phenomenal Woman” was embraced, Angelou continued her outpour of prose. By 1981, she had written four of her seven autobiographical books in the form of literary novels and received a Pulitzer Prize nomination for her book of 38 poems, “Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ‘Fore I Diiie.” In 1983, she released another book of poems, this time under the title, “Shaker, Why Don’t You Sing?” Embedded among these 28 poems, she penned “Caged Bird” (Harriett Monroe Poetry Institute, 2014).

The caged bird in Angelou’s poem was a reoccurring image throughout her work representative of the struggle to be liberated from oppressive systems of violence and racism (Angelou, 1986). The metaphorical poem unravels two dissimilar experiences, both allegorical to freedom. The image of the “free bird” shows him leaping in the wind and dipping his wings in sunrays. He is free to claim the sky and name it his own. While
the contrasted picture of the “caged bird” depicts his wings clipped and feet tied. He can be seen standing in the cage, peering through the narrow bars. Angelou suggest his primary resistance to this state of captivity is to open his throat to sing.

In an interview with a representative from the National Visionary Leadership Project, Angelou described how she used the imagined sounds of a caged bird to find her own voice. She had stopped talking as a child for five years after feeling responsible for the death of her mother’s boyfriend. He was murdered by her uncles after they learned he had raped young Maya. Angelou shared,

“If I’m really shaken, I stop speaking. I then bring myself out…I sing, I speak, I speak loudly, and firmly, and recite Poe, Shakespeare, and James Weldon Johnson…because mutism is like a drug…it’s so addictive. You don’t have to do anything.” (National Visionary Leadership Project, 2014)

During this study, I was able to compare Angelou’s caged bird and his apparent response to confinement with the behaviors and interactions of the women in the salon. I also recognized how they, just as Maya Angelou, fought to find their voices after situations of pain. I could hear their resistance to social injustice in the form of song. Their hymnals were sung a cappella, through their laughter, tears, grimaces, sighs, and cheers. It was the harmonized tune of a refined choir, full with sopranos, altos, tenors, and even bass tones. The acceptance of the high shrills and low timbres ensured that every woman could be heard in unison, yet gave way to the occasional solo. The safety of the space and the camaraderie among the women offered a security, which allowed them to find their individual and collective voices.
Drawing from the fictitious imagery in the poem and the reality of Angelou’s experience, offers an allegorical explanation to the responses observed and documented for this study. First, it is important to recognize that historically, salon space represented a “woman’s space” and a “Black space” simultaneously. By its very existence, the Black salon contradicted and resisted the institutionalized systems of racism and sexism. Its purpose and design were to uplift a race of women and the community in which they lived. Black salons provide a space of escape where power and control are possessed by African American women. It is a place where Black hands attempt to create a bold new standard of beauty. As the stylists meet their customers’ beauty requests by adding quick weaves, colorful “bobs,” and locks of curls, they empower them to resist mainstream beauty standards and situations of violent control.

The women in the salon demonstrated individual and collective resistance in response to different forms of oppression. Their reactions were to collaborate, network, and advocate on behalf of one another. These resistive responses begin to identify ways that groups of women in African American salons struggle to find their voice in oppressive situations.

**Interpretations of the Findings**

This study argued that African American beauty salons offer a viable opportunity to reach victims of violence. The goal was to explore how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based advocacy and education for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention. The thematic analysis for the salon observations, cosmetologists’ interviews, and survey responses led to the findings. Three primary research questions guided this study and are
the basis for understanding how Beauty culture within African American salons offer opportunities for providing anti-violence education, ways in which the salon setting/culture facilitates or inhibits a discussion of domestic violence, and the kinds of relationships that exist between African American cosmetologists and their clients.

*Beauty culture within African American salons offer opportunities for providing anti-violence education*

Research depicts the use of beauty salons as an important setting which offers opportunities to reach African American women. Scholars report that training cosmetologists can be a feasible option for sharing messages about health (Kleindorfer et al., 2008; Lieberman & Harris, 2007; L.A. Linnan et al., 2005; Sadler et al., 2007). The first research question in this study asked if beauty culture within African American salons offer opportunities for providing anti-violence education. Findings from the salon observations, cosmetologists’ interviews, and survey indicate there are several factors that increase the likelihood for disseminating information about domestic violence in salons. Namely, the way the cosmetologists’ understood, perceived, and responded to domestic violence was important in identifying the appropriateness of sharing messages about domestic violence in salons.

Advocacy and training emerged as two themes that addressed how anti-violence messages could potentially be introduced into the African American salon setting. In particular, the stylists in the salons had existing methods for advocating and supporting their clients. Moreover, they adhered to models of training embedded in the culture of the beauty industry. Each of these processes offered opportunities to establish health promotion campaigns in a culturally sensitive setting. There were countless examples
that indicated that cosmetologists were leaders in the community and could be trained to share messages about domestic violence resources. The data also indicated that their motivation to seek additional training following cosmetology school could offer occasions for specific training on domestic violence.

The ways in which the cosmetologists understood, perceived, and responded to domestic violence was a central part of this study. In order to gain insight regarding their role as lay health leaders who could disseminate anti-violence education materials, it was necessary to access their knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors when managing domestic violence situations. The stylists were familiar with salons being used for health promotion campaigns and understood the benefits. They perceived domestic violence as an important topic that could also be discussed in the salon. In fact, the majority felt prepared and confident to share messages about violence with clients. They reported currently talking to clients about domestic violence and found the opportunity to have these discussions as a way to empower their clients. Although all of them were willing to help educate their clients and community about the seriousness of this public health issue, there was some concern about permitting time in their schedules to address violence.

The findings suggest additional concerns about how the cosmetologists misunderstood foundational information about domestic violence. For example, most of them identified that domestic violence was the act of physical violence between heterosexual partners; however, only three of them recognized that emotional and psychological abuse were prevalent among victims. Furthermore, only one stylist included sexual abuse as a form of domestic violence and none of the 11 were familiar with the term economic abuse. Similarly, their understanding about the etiology of
violence was skewed. While all of them identified the perpetrator as the problem in situations of abuse, there was limited knowledge about the elements of power and control. They believed the source of the problem was due to drugs, stress, and anger issues. This proved to be a gap in their knowledge base, given that theorists, practitioners, researchers, and educators recognize that the source of the issue stems from an intimate partner enforcing power and control over a victim. The cosmetologists did not indicate full understanding of the Duluth Model’s Power and Control Wheel. This model is used across fields of study to recognize and educate individuals about situations of violence. The wheel indicates behavior patterns expressed by a potential abuser such as using isolation, the children, male privilege, coercion and threats, intimidation, blame, and emotional abuse to exert power and control over a victim.

Another area of concern was victim blaming. Many of the stylists stated that women in abusive situations had issues with low self-esteem and were too weak to leave. I recognized that this thought process aligned with both the Strong Black Woman Phenomenon and other myths regarding victims of violence. The stylists perceived that strength was the source of success and health. They inferred that taking care of family and community were indicative of strength and preceded self-care. The cosmetologists did not recognize that their abused clients offered any resistance to the abuse.

On the other hand, they were able to identify clients in the salon who were in abusive situations. They recognized both physical and emotional signs of abuse and often times felt obligated to ask screening type questions. They reported however, that they did not have readily available resource materials for advocacy agencies, nor did they
have access to hotline or community agency phone numbers. Consequently, they did not make formal referrals on behalf of their clients.

It is apparent that the stylists advocated for clients in many ways. Not only were they adept in recognizing many of the signs of violence as indicated by the literature, they also discussed the topic of violence with clients and had existing methods for screening those who they perceived were being abused. There were of course, obvious gaps in these approaches to advocating. This was largely due to limited knowledge of domestic violence theory. It is feasible to connect theory with practice in these settings. Praxis that builds on community-based participatory approaches has the potential to link research, practice, and communities (Ford and Airhihenbuwa, 2010). Employing this model could benefit individuals and communities by exposing the sociopolitical roots and institutionalized barriers associated with domestic violence.

In addition to advocating for victims, the stylists also participated in training processes, which could potentially offer opportunities to discuss topics of domestic violence. There was a process of continued education in the beauty industry, which included both basic training and advance technique training. Both of these periods of instruction were critical to the success of the stylists. It was at these times, however, that the stylists received only practical training. By their own account, they reported the lack of theory-based pedagogy during their initial training, which focused on their role in the community. This time was primarily used to impart simple techniques such as basic cutting, curling, and perming skills. The exception to this experience was the Cut it Out curriculum used in the initial training at one local beauty school. This proved valuable in better preparing at least two stylists in the study to understand their role as advocates. All
of the stylists, however, continued with formal advance instructions throughout their careers. They attended both local/regional CME courses and accredited beauty schools, such as Dudley’s Beauty School. At this level of training, the cosmetologists obtained lessons in beauty industry theory that offered some indication of their role as community leaders. This included maintaining a successful business, professionalism, planning for retirement, grasping their role in the lives of their clients, and leading by example in the community. Given the extent of their leadership role in the community, it seems feasible to enhance cosmetologists’ training both at the initial and advance stages. Adding formal domestic violence training to the existing theoretical topics offered in the advanced curriculum has great potential in better preparing the stylists to understand their role as advocates. Likewise, enhancing the initial instruction throughout the Black beauty industry, as exemplified by one local beauty school, shows promise in helping stylists understand the prevalence and theories associated with domestic violence.

*In what ways does the salon setting/culture facilitate or inhibit a discussion of domestic violence?*

Three themes emerged which addressed the second research question. The salon resources, religion, and changes in each salon provided insight about the social and physical aspects in the environment that could facilitate or inhibit discussions about domestic violence. Researchers have documented that several features in the physical environment of the salon may be utilized to support health promotion campaigns (Solomon et al., 2004). Likewise, studies support that cosmetologists have a unique bond with their clients that encourages close social interactions and open conversations about various health topics (L. A. Linnan et al., 2001).
This study recognized the sensitive nature of domestic violence. The objective was to understand if, in fact, findings from previous salon health promotion studies could be applied to a socially stigmatized topic. There were several aspects in both the social and physical salon environments that showed promise in facilitating discussions about violence. Religion in particular provided opportunities for the women to encourage one another. This discourse is understood to inform the interpersonal exchanges in salons (Jacobs-Huey, 2006). In this study, it represented a shared culture between the stylists and the clients. The women were motivated by principles of faith and embraced it as a source of strength and hope. Tapping into this discourse to share information about domestic violence in salons is feasible. Both the Black church and Black salons have historically supported activism and social movements in pursuit of equal rights. Historians report that in fact religion in the African American community has always been used as a means to deal with social oppression (Hughes et al., 1983). Given the institutionalized barriers victims of violence face when seeking help, it is appropriate to return to cosmetologists and salons as a voice in the community and build on their principles of faith in disseminating anti-violence education materials.

In addition to the social environmental factors found in the Black beauty salons, there are physical factors to also consider that have the potential to facilitate conversations about domestic violence. All three beauty salons in this study provided clients access to media resources such as television, radio, and printed literature. The televisions in particular facilitated discussions about abuse throughout the study. Although customers and stylists had access to a variety of programming, they were stimulated by topics related to violence that appeared on talk shows and the local news.
The groups of women were inclined to share personal stories about family and friend after hearing discussions on the television. Solomon et al., reported that most African American salons, when compared to White salons, had televisions present likely due to the fact that the women spend increased amounts of times waiting (Solomon et al., 2004). Studies suggest that making videotapes an intervention method might prove viable for health promotion ventures as customers wait to have services completed (L.A. Linnan et al., 2005). This same approach to facilitate discussion seems feasible for sensitive topics such as domestic violence; however, more inquiry in needed to assess for appropriateness.

Written materials were seen in all three salons. The literature included popular African American magazines (Jet, Ebony, and Essence) as well as hair-styling and self-help books. Customers were seen reading electronic and hard copy materials throughout the observation encounters. Many times they were observed reading materials as they waited for services. They also made reading recommendations to other women in the salon. Building on these established behaviors by providing printed domestic violence resource materials in the salon may help to facilitate discussions about abuse in the salon.

Results in this study also suggested that internet technology and mobile devices have changed the ways in which clients and stylists interact. Vagaro, a web-based software scheduling tool, allowed customers to schedule and cancel appointments, verify service fees, and read stylists’ reviews. The utility of this service meant that clients had access to the cosmetologists beyond Tuesday thru Saturday. The stylists also complained that the use of cell phones and texting had blurred the boundaries between their scheduled workdays and time off. It was common for them to receive text throughout the week and
late evenings from clients requesting an appointment. Although the stylists in this study continued to grasp for ways to separate their personal lives from work, the growth in technology suggested that new lines of communication are opening up for clients to potentially disclose information about abuse. Most recently, the support from the Institute of Medicine, Avon, The Robert Woodson Foundation, The Foundation for Women, and The Motorola Mobility Foundation partnered with technology developers to create a mobile application device known as “Circle of Six” (Tech 4 Good Inc., 2012). This mobile software was the winner of the White House HHS/Apps Against Abuse Technology Challenge. It was designed to encourage a culture of connectivity and accountability. The application can be downloaded onto a mobile device and instantly create a system of support of six close friends. Through the use of instant icons, a victim can notify her six close friends of an emergency. This process allows her to indicate to the group the type of support she needs. For example, the three central buttons illustrating “come and get me,” “call me,” and “I need some advice,” offer victims quick support from her most trusted friends. These types of advances in technology that focus on reducing domestic violence may prove to be useful in the salon setting. Ideally, the groups of women in the salons could extend their use of technology through applications such as the “Circle of Six.”

Another factor in the salon physical environment that has the potential to facilitate discussion about violence is the change or variation in physical layout. The salons in this study provided both open and partitioned designs. Stylists and clients were overheard adjusting their volume and tone during different types of conversations. For example, salons with an open design required the women to lower their voices and talk in near
whispers to obtain privacy. Salons with partitions that separated the booths and the waiting area allowed privacy, but limited interactions between the cosmetologists and clients. The group of women managed this physical barrier by speaking loudly in order to be heard. Although the stylists and customers modified their conversations as needed, the women were comfortable talking in all three salons. It may be feasible to consider more closely the best use of space that will facilitate discussions about violence.

Scholars have noted the variations in salon layouts and report there being only a modest difference in the number of conversations about health (Solomon et al., 2004).

Factors in the salon environment that have the potential to inhibit discussions about violence included the presence of men and children in the salon and the availability of the stylists to participate in advocacy opportunities. Only one salon allowed children to visit the salon without an appointment. The other two displayed signage indicating children were not allowed. Consideration must be given to conducting serious discussions about violence and abuse in the presence of young children and adolescents. The topic is likely to be too mature and sensitive for minors to overhear. Thus, policies allowing children access to the salon without an appointment may hinder the process of domestic violence education.

All three salons permitted men to visit the salon. On a couple of occasions, they received services while visiting; however, most often they came to interact with the women. Since victims of violence are more commonly abused by an intimate partner, rather than a stranger, it may be worth considering how men in the salon could potentially affect a victim’s ability to disclose. This becomes less of an issue in same-sex relationships. Salons, however, have been thought of as a safe place for victims to escape
their abusers, as well as an opportunity for disclosure. Beauty visits have the potential to empower victims and offer them a method of resistance, which can defy the psychological attacks on her self-esteem. It may prove difficult to talk about domestic violence in the presence of non-supportive men. Focus may need to be given to the men who visit African American beauty salons and their role in a “woman’s space.”

Both the unpredictable scheduling and outside commitments maintained by the stylists may prove to be a hindrance to discussions about violence in the salon. The stylists arrived at different times throughout the day. This was largely due to the change in the number of scheduled appointments each day. They were also obligated to additional career goals outside of the salon. It is necessary to decide if stylists are able to invest and commit additional time outside of these obligations in order to share messages about domestic abuse with their clients. It is imperative that reliable and consistent dissemination of information be available to clients whenever the salon is open.

*What kinds of relationships exist between African American cosmetologists and their clients in terms of social support such as information sharing, advice giving, etc.? Do these relationships and conversations influence help-seeking behaviors in situations of domestic violence?*

Two themes emerged to address the third research question. The collaboration between the women in the salon and the stylists’ commitment to their leadership role provided information about the kinds of relationships that exist between African American cosmetologists and their clients in terms of social support. Research suggests that conducting health-related interventions within salons is both feasible and desirable (L.A. Linnan et al., 2005). The fact that they are accessible in all communities and
frequented regularly by African Americans makes salons a viable option for disseminating health information. Additionally, scholars have documented that there are unique personal relationships that exist between cosmetologists and their clients (L.A. Linnan et al., 2005). Findings in this current study indicate that these relationships are built on loyalty, trust, support, and years of acquaintance. The stylists complained of the occasional challenge or demand from a difficult client; however, they recognized these relationships were empowering and uplifting.

These unique bonds encouraged collaboration, networking, and negotiating among the women. They provided different types of social support for their clients primarily in the form of advice-giving and emotional support. Employing the interpersonal level of SEF can help interpret the specific interactions between cosmetologists and their clients. Researchers indicate that at this level of the framework, there are four types of social support: emotional – showing empathy, love, trust, or caring; instrumental – tangible aid or service; informational – advice, suggestions, or information; and appraisal – information that assists in self-evaluation (Linnan. & Ferguson, 2007; McLeroy et al., 1988; Solomon et al., 2004). This provides some understanding about intimate relationships that exist. The stylists in this study described this unique bond as being different from their typical friendships outside the salons. Thus, interpreting these relationships can only be done within the context of the salon social environment. The cosmetologists address the needs of their clients outside the scope of their formal training. They have been characterized in the literature as natural helpers, and informal caregivers (Linnan. & Ferguson, 2007). The 11 stylists in this study agreed with these labels and suggested they were like therapists and their work was a ministry.
They believed that their support impacted the help-seeking behaviors of their clients in abusive situations. The literature supports that different types of social support are known predictors of behavior change and are closely associated with the regular interactions between the groups of women (Solomon et al., 2004). The cosmetologists reported strengthening their clients with words of encouragement, which reinforced their self-esteem. They recognized that the women would return to the salon empowered and visibly changed.

The cosmetologists’ commitment to their clients was another theme, which addressed the question regarding existing relationships between stylists and their clients. The stylists demonstrated their commitment by giving their time and resources. Often they worked strenuous schedules and sacrificed their homes and finances to meet the needs of their customers. Their commitment can be interpreted as part of the tangible social support found in the interpersonal level of SEF. This attribute was likely the most subtle, yet profound form of support offered. It became more obvious through their service to clients that many of the cosmetologists had internalized principles of the Strong Black Woman Phenomenon. It seemed they had equated strength and success with overcommitting. Unbeknownst to many of them, the bitter end leads to apathy and professional burnout.

**Relating the Results to the Theoretical Frameworks**

The social ecological framework posits that behavior is influenced at multiple levels, including the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels (Solomon et al., 2004). Scholars have utilized this model to explore the utility of African American beauty salons in health-intervention programs. Existing literature
primarily focuses on the intrapersonal (the motivations and behaviors of the cosmetologists and/or clients), the interpersonal level (the interactions between cosmetologists and clients), the organizational level (the physical/social environment), and the community level (population or community assessment). Scholars report a gap in the literature in understanding how best to incorporate objectives at the policy levels. Employing SEF in studies related to domestic violence provides an opportunity to explore how women in abusive situations respond, resist, and survive at the multiple levels.

Intersectionality was the second framework employed in this study. This model suggests that social locations such as race, gender, class, religion, language, and sexual orientation all impact the ways in which women experience abuse. This body of literature also recognizes that structural inequalities such as racism, sexism, and classism shape the different ways these women respond, resist, and survive violence. Thus, this framework also employs the same multi-axis system as SEF, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels.

The Intersectionality and SEF frameworks were paired in this study to combine theory and practice as a means of evaluating how marginalized women experience domestic abuse. By employing SEF, researchers can begin to develop culturally appropriate responses by using the same multi-level factors that inform the concept of intersectionality. The purpose of this current study was to focus on how interpersonal relationships and community/organizations can offer support and influence behavior.

It is important to consider how clients in abusive situations experience abuse relative to the cosmetologists. The Intersectionality framework indicates that the clients
are influenced by these interpersonal relationships. The data indicated that the cosmetologists labeled many of their clients in abusive situations with low self-esteem and characterized them as weak. Thus, the clients visiting the salons had to first hurdle myths about why they were in abusive situations and why they stayed.

The SEF model provides a response to these negative experiences. The data suggests that the cosmetologists, as well as the other women in the salon, offer social support. The social environment provided a means for the emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal supports to be exchanged among the women. The stylists reported that these different ways of caring for their clients influenced behavior. They recognized changes in their demeanor, conversation, and body language. In many cases, they reported that a client had left the abusive situation.

The other focus of this research was to assess situations of abuse at the community and organizational levels. It was important to understand how clients in abusive situations experienced violence relative to the African American community. Victims of violence in the African American community are typically urged to support their abuser by not reporting abuse to legal authorities. Women usually feel obligated to sacrifice their personal safety by hiding family and community secrets. Moreover, if they were to seek help from the three salons in this study, they would not have immediate access to information about local advocacy agencies and shelters. Employing the SEF model indicates that community and organizational levels can provide a response to these intersections of race and gender and influence help-seeking experiences. Although religion was not an initial consideration in this study about abused African American women, it inevitably became a central theme in understanding how the theory of social
locations can be influenced by the application of interpersonal and community support. The data indicate that there is potential in the social and physical environments found in these three salons. They each represented an opportunity to minimize barriers to access and provide a safe place where women could disclose information about their abuse. Equipping these three salons with domestic violence literature and resources would mean victims could have immediate access to hotlines, advocacy agencies and local shelters.

**Research Implications**

This study reveals several implications for health promotion campaigns in salons related to anti-violence education. First, the results indicate that cosmetologists currently discuss domestic violence in the salon with their clients. I observed on several occasions the ways in which topics of abuse were brought up in each salon. Primarily, the women were prompted by media sources, such as the television. They typically talked openly as a group about the abuse experiences of family members and friends. This suggests that the women are comfortable discussing sensitive topics in this setting. More research is needed to understand what additional prompts could be used to encourage open and private conversations about this violence. The study also noted differences in the social and physical environments between the salons. Thus, consideration must also be given to developing intervention opportunities that align with the beauty culture of a specific salon and with the comfort level of the cosmetologists and clients.

Secondly, the results indicated that cosmetologists have existing approaches when advocating for their clients, including those who are in abusive situations. I documented that the stylists are motivated to support their clients and have some knowledge about the detrimental effects of domestic violence. There is a gap between how they understand
abuse and their ability to disseminate resource information or make referrals. They continue to provide care for their clients in the salon primarily by offering advice and emotional support. This demonstrates the unique bond between the women and the depth of trust in their relationship. Expanding the training opportunities for cosmetologists should be a priority when developing health promotions that focus on violence. Combining domestic violence theory with practice or advocacy will be important in increasing their knowledge about victims’ experiences and community resources. This training will provide information general facts about domestic violence, how to recognize signs and symptoms, explanations for why victims stay, and the Duluth Model Power and Control Wheel. This will better prepare cosmetologists to advocate on behalf of their clients and community.

Finally, the results indicated that the beauty salon setting is a portal for social interactions and the exchange of information between large groups of women. I observed social support between cosmetologists and their clients, clients with other clients, and cosmetologists with other cosmetologists. These relationships created a network of support and resources that were beneficial in empowering the women and the communities in which they lived. Traditional exchange between these women occurred within the setting of the salon. Technology however, is modifying how we begin to think about accessing systems of support. The cosmetologists explained that their clients now have access to their schedules 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Mobile devices and internet services have blurred the lines between personal living space and salon space. Exploring how the salon setting and growing technology intersect is an innovative method for enhancing intervention and hurdling issues of privacy and time in the salon.
This opportunity to develop advocacy programs in salons and extend that support using social media or other applications would stem from the unique bonds formed in the salon setting. Models such as Circle of Six can be modified to meet the cultural preferences and needs of African American women.

**Limitations**

This study had limitations that impact the utility of the salon setting in domestic violence advocacy. Understanding how my presence in the salons altered the natural flow of events and conversations is uncertain. Since a major part of the data retrieval was obtained through direct observation there was no clear path around this issue of intrusiveness. IRB protocol required me to introduce the study to each client and provide a consent form. This was due to the sensitive nature of the topic. This meant my presence as a researcher created an unnatural context to the salon setting. It is unclear if all of the conversations about domestic violence in salon occurred naturally or were influenced by my presence. I helped with minor tasks in the salon to minimize the distraction and remained somewhere between the role of an observer and a participant.

Another limitation noted in this study was that the clients in the salons were only observed. The IRB protocol limited data collection to recording the observations of clients’ interactions in the setting and documenting their naturally occurring conversations. Neither face to face interviews, nor survey data were collected from the clients. Although the cosmetologists were the focus of this study, clients are considered a central part of the social environment. Capturing their perspectives, needs, and experiences could strengthen the findings. A study designed to include this information could also potentially enhance collaborative efforts between researchers, educators, and
the community. Ideally, incorporating a greater role for clients in future studies can be accomplished by including surveys that inquire about how they perceive their relationships with the cosmetologists, how the African American community is effected by domestic violence, and how they obtain resources and advocacy related to domestic violence. Likewise, scheduling face-to-face interviews with selected clients can offer a comprehensive narration of intimate experiences and perspectives that would not otherwise be collected through observations or a survey. I recognize the next step in data collection to begin health interventions that focus on domestic violence in the salon setting is to integrate the experiences of clients with the findings from this initial study.

One final limitation noted in this study occurred during two of the interview encounters. At the time of both Keisha’s and Tanya’s interviews, they continued providing services to clients in their chairs. This adjustment to the previous protocol could have potentially altered the information they provided when answering the study interview questions. This accommodation was made at the request of each stylist. Keisha stated that conducting the encounter as she worked would be the best option given her busy schedule. Similarly, Tanya explained her preference was to continue working and not arrive at the salon early or stay later in the evening. Although this adjustment was made, the data collected during each encounter might have been different if each stylist’s client was not able to hear. Keisha, in particular, referred to her client when answering a few questions and specifically asked for her input on the topic. Given this modification to these two interviews, it is unclear how the self-reported data may have been different without the clients being present.
Future Research

I contend that this research adds substance to the existing body of literature that focuses on the feasibility of using beauty salons and cosmetologists in health promotion programs. This research recognized that the topic of domestic violence varied from the focus of prior studies which considered health issues consistent with the leading causes of death among women, specifically African American women. I identified that domestic abuse, although quite prevalent, was a socially stigmatized topic and difficult to discuss publicly. Despite the sensitive nature of this topic it was important to explore the utility of the salon environment to address the help-seeking behaviors of abuse African American women. Understanding the historical relevance of Black salons and recognizing that these women frequently seek beauty services and spend extended amounts of time waiting, I sought to find a culturally sensitive approach that could contest institutionalized barriers.

It is important to note that there continues to be a great need to explore the effectiveness of implementing anti-violence education in the salon setting. Specifically, as mentioned above, there is a need to take an additional step and directly consider the experiences and perspectives of the clients in these settings. After identifying that clients play a greater role in supporting one another while in the salon, it is imperative that they also be given general information about domestic violence and have access to community resource materials. Thus, understanding how they define abuse, seek help, or provide support is critical to future implementation.

Similarly, the role of men in the salon should be explored. While Black beauty salons have traditionally been a place for African American women, the dynamics of this
space have evolved over time. The data indicated that the cosmetologists provided services for women of other races and ethnicity, as well as for men. Although the numbers were small, this requires rethinking how we define this space. Exploring the shifting role of race and gender in traditionally African American institutions could provide insight into what extent anti-violence pedagogy can reach in the salon setting. It would be of interest to ask how African American women create systems of support with men and women of different races and ethnicities in the salon social environment. What roles do men play in advocating for women in the salon setting? What kinds of relationships exist between African American cosmetologists and women of other races and ethnicities in the salon setting? How do stylists understand race and ethnicity?

These suggested studies emerged from the findings of this current project, as well as what this study did not learn. They represent an extension of this research and areas that need continued exploration. Domestic violence has reached epidemic proportions in the U.S., yet it remains a sensitive topic. This project recognizes that abuse detrimentally affects society as a whole; the reality that violence invades the African American community at particularly alarming rates and takes the lives of African American women at disproportionate rates is a wake-up call for researchers and educators. Domestic violence has been labeled by the public health industry, a health disparity. This current research acknowledges these challenges and recognizes the need for an immediate and innovative response.

**Conclusions**

Although numerous mirrors hung intact on the walls in each salon, their true purpose remained undisclosed. I gathered they had seen and heard it all over the years:
the women laughing and cheering in times of joy; and crying and grimacing in moments of distress. Perhaps their role as silent witnesses was to safely tuck away the salon secrets until the appointed time of unmasking the truth. Indeed, in its very simplistic existence, each mirror served as a reflective surface, likely made with glass that was coated with a metal amalgam. Their most obvious function was to reflect light through processes of filtration and preservation. This coordination of balancing light and truth allowed the final feminine image to be formed.

Perhaps it is feasible to think of the roles of cosmetologists and salons in domestic violence advocacy in terms of filtration and preservation. In many cases, the stylists patiently watched for physical or emotional cues that indicated someone was in need. By listening to the stories, they learned to filter warning signs, and preserve the wounded self-esteem of their clients. When necessary, they advocated for these women by providing support, affirmation, and encouragement.

Similarly, the salon environment was essential in preserving the sense of worth typically absent among victims of violence. This space provided the women a place to enter and begin the healing process beyond their brokenness. It offered resistance to systems of oppression that demoralized and dehumanized African American women. Systems such as sexism and racism that deject women as valuable; and, deny Blacks as equal. Since its inception, the Black beauty salon has retorted such notions and replied by enhancing Black beauty and empowering women. Several themes emerged in all three salons that indicated the space functioned to preserve the dignity of the women. These included unity, faith, purpose, responsibility, commitment, and creativity. These
foundational principles ensured the potential of using salons as portals for knowledge and education in the African American community.

Thus, in this study using African American cosmetologists and salons to share domestic violence resources with women in abusive situations showed promise. This promise was founded upon the existing interactions and conversations that occurred daily between groups of women. While the attitudes and behaviors of these women were vital when considering how to develop anti-violence education programs, the salon space was also instrumental. The space provided comfort and security that allowed women to become transparent and share the intimate details of their lives. Just as Madame CJ Walker had intended, the women encountered a respite and gained access to numerous resources as they entered the salon space. Thus, the economic, social, and political history embedded within African American salons continued to play an important role in transforming the lives of women. The space permitted the intimate exchange of personal experiences between clients and cosmetologists. Their conversations provided opportunities for knowledge to be shared and created.

The purpose of this study was to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based advocacy and education for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention. The study was framed using both the Intersectionality and SEF frameworks. These models were combined to gain insight into how marginalized women experience domestic abuse. By employing the multi-level axis model of SEF, this study considered culturally appropriate responses to inform the concept of intersectionality. The primary
focus was to understand how interpersonal relationships and community/organizations could offer support to abused women and influence their help-seeking behavior.

The eleven cosmetologists in this study provided a means of exploring the relationships between women in salons as they shared their personal and professional experiences with clients. They sang songs of resistance in unison indicating they were capable of supporting their comrades on the other side of this unique bond. The cosmetologists showed support for their clients by offering advice, emotional security, constructive feedback, and timeless commitment. Their efforts were indicative of how the interpersonal level of SEF could be used to disseminate resource information and influence help-seeking behavior. Moreover, the salon spaces in which they worked provided yet another opportunity to build on framework. The environment of each space fashioned distinct communities where the women navigated through transformative processes. It is at this community level of the framework that the women interacted in group discussions. Their efforts to network and collaborate while in the salon suggested that community is a major determinant of the social environment, as well as how women react and respond to experiences in their lives.

Thus, both the social and physical environments in the salons were evaluated to determine the opportunities for discussing violence in the salons. The social environment in all three salons indicated that cosmetologists and clients have a unique bond that encouraged intimate interactions and conversations. The groups of women were able to collaborate, network, and negotiate in the salons. The cosmetologists had existing ways of advocating for their clients in abusive situations. Although they were accustomed to
recognizing signs of abuse, there was some concern that formal training should be integrated into their initial cosmetology training.

The physical environment in the salons also provided information about developing anti-violence education programs. This setting had multiple resources available to help facilitate discussions about violence. The television and written literature were viable options to help disseminate information about domestic violence in the salon. Current recommendations include expanding the use of the salon social environment to develop advance technological resources. This builds from the existing relationships in the salons and ensures that methods of reaching women in abusive situations remain progressive and innovative.

This study also recognized that the three salons had some cultural similarities; however, they were vastly different in some ways. Likewise, the cosmetologists shared some basic backgrounds; however, they also had unique attributes that set them apart. It is important to access these differences between salons to ensure dissemination of community resource information. The recommendation is to develop pedagogy that is appropriate for an individual salon.

Finally, this study highlighted the potential for African American salons and cosmetologists to become portals that deliver information about domestic violence. Ideally, providing clients access to resource materials can impact the ways they resist and respond to violence. Namely, barriers can be minimized to ensure victims of violence seek the necessary help they need.

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Fig 4.4 Photo of receptionist desk in salon #1 displaying Biblical Scripture and salon name.
Fig 4.5 Artwork of African women wearing kangas with babies displayed in salon # 3. Indicates traditional African heritage throughout the salon.
Fig 4.6 Photo of artifact from salon #3 displaying shadow box with original signage, certificate of occupancy, photos, and pressing comb from Jackie’s grandmother’s salon.
Keisha, Salon #3

SALON 511 601 West Main Street
LEXINGTON, Kentucky 40511

8593121876

Send Email

Overall  ★★★★★ Excellent  15 Reviews
Punctuality  ★★★★★ Excellent
Value  ★★★★★ Excellent
Service  ★★★★★ Excellent

I want to offer you a strong commitment by helping you to maintain your healthy tresses with the best of my ability. I am dedicated to my craft, coupled with honesty & realistic views of what I can offer you to strengthen your knowledge on hair care awareness while making you feel great about YOUR hair.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

No children or extra people allowed unless they are receiving services.

FEATURES & FACILITIES

Kid Friendly  No Kids
Business Type  Hair Salon
              Waxing
Accepts Walk-in  Yes
Payment methods  Cash

Fig 4.7 Keisha’s Vagaro web-based appointment calendar.
Figure 4.8 Map of Salon #1
Figure 4.9 Map of Salon #2
Figure 4.10  Map of Salon #3
Appendix A

Cover Letter

January 11, 2013

Dear Licensed Cosmetologist:

I am a graduate student, under the direction of Dr. Karen Tice, in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at The University of Kentucky. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled “Behind the Mirrors: Examining the Role of African American Cosmetologists and Salons in Domestic Violence Advocacy and Education.” The purpose of this study is to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based advocacy and education for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention.

Your participation will involve being observed while at work with clients in the salon, as well as participating in an individual interview. You will also be asked to answer a brief survey that should only take about 15 minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The results of your participation will be anonymous and your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

The findings from this study will provide information about which aspects of African American beauty culture may help to facilitate community education and social support. These findings may provide a better understanding of culturally sensitive options that are available to help women access care and resources. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me by phone or email at (859) 948-6051; pddaws2@uky.edu or Dr. Tice at (859) 257-7976; karen.tice@uky.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at (859) 257-9428 or toll free at (866) 400-9428.

By completing and returning the attached consent form in the envelope provided, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Pangela H. Dawson, MSPAS, PA-C
Appendix B

Cosmetologists Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Behind the Mirrors: Examining the Role of African American Cosmetologists and Salons in Domestic Violence Advocacy and Education

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research project about the historical relationship between cosmetologists and their clients. You are being asked to take part in this research study because of your training and experience as a cosmetologist.

If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of 11 women to do so in the State of Kentucky.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in conducting this study is Pangela Dawson, a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Education. She is being guided in this research by a faculty advisor, Dr. Karen Tice. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this research is to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be used to inform the development of salon-based advocacy and education for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you do not wish to be audio recorded, please do not participate.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

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Observations of you at work with customers will be conducted at your place of business. These observations will occur over the course of one week and only require that you be working in the salon as usual. Following observations you will be asked to take part in an individual interview that will take an extra 90 minutes of your time.

**WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?**

You will be asked to allow the investigator to sit in the salon and observe as you work with your daily clients. You will also be asked to introduce Pangela Dawson as a researcher to your clients. Pangela Dawson will watch and listen to interactions between you and your clients. She will write notes about the interactions during the observation time.

You will be asked to complete a survey about your career as a beautician and any experience you may have with domestic violence training. Once the questionnaire is complete, you will be asked to sit for an interview. This interview will be audio taped.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

There are no known harmful side effects. There may be risks that are not expected. You may feel uncomfortable answering some questions. You do not have to answer questions that make you uncomfortable. If you find any question upsetting or stressful, I can provide contact information for counseling services at The Center for Women and Families. They will be available to help you with these feelings.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?**

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, you will have the opportunity to learn more about domestic violence in the community and express your views about this topic. Similarly, you will have the opportunity to share experiences you have had with clients over the years. Some people find fulfillment in talking about their personal achievements and experiences.

**WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY?**

We appreciate your time and consideration for participating in this study. We also respect your right to privacy. No individually identifiable information provided during the research will be shared with others without your written permission unless it is required by law. Your identity will be disguised by a coded name during the research process and in all final research products including publications. The code key will be kept apart from research data and destroyed after the completion of the project, as soon as it is no longer needed for analysis. All personal identifying information entered when completing the survey will be encrypted as the data is uploaded. All audiotapes will also
be destroyed once the study is completed, however transcripts will be kept for 6 years after the end of the IRB approval period.

**DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate you will not lose any benefits and rights you would normally have as a volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep all the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

**WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

There is no financial cost associated with taking part in the study.

**WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You will receive a $10 Target card once you have finished participating the study.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?**

The information you provide for this study will be combined with information given by other people taking part in the study. Your identity and personal information will be kept private. If this research is published, your name and other identifying information will not be used.

All information provide for this study will be kept private unless required by law to be reported. For example, the law may require that we share your information with legal authorities if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. We may also be required to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused. Additionally, we may need to share your information with people who verify that the research is done correctly. These would be people from organizations such as the University of Kentucky.

Since this study includes taking an online survey, please be aware, while we make every effort to safeguard your data once received from the online survey/data gathering company, given the nature of online surveys, as with anything involving the Internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still on the survey/data gathering company’s servers, or while en route to either them or us. It is also possible the raw data collected for research purposes may be used for marketing or reporting purposes by the survey/data gathering company after the research is concluded, depending on the company’s Terms of Service and Privacy policies.

**CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?**
If you decide to take part in this study, you will maintain the right to discontinue your participation at any time. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

If you have any questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact the primary investigator, Pangela Dawson. Ms. Dawson can be reached at pddaws2@uky.edu or by phone at (859) 948-6051. If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer in this study, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at (859) 257-9428 or toll free at (866) 400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study                         Date

________________________________________________________________________
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study                    Date

________________________________________________________________________
Name of (authorized) person obtaining informed consent                     Date
Appendix C

Customer Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Behind the Mirrors: Examining the Role of African American Cosmetologists and Salons in Domestic Violence Advocacy and Education

You are being invited to take part in a research project about the historical relationship between cosmetologists and their clients. You are being asked to take part in this research study because of your visit to the salon today as a customer. You must be 18 years of age to participate.

The person in conducting this study is Pangela Dawson, a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Education. She is being guided in this research by a faculty advisor, Dr. Karen Tice. There may be other people on her doctoral advisory committee assisting at different times during the study.

The purpose of this research is to understand how African American cosmetologists and salons might be a part of education programs for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention.

You are asked to allow the researcher to include you in her salon observations during your visit today. Pangela Dawson will watch and listen to the natural interactions between women in the salon, including customers and hair stylists. She will write notes about the interactions during the observation time.

If you do not wish to be observed while interacting and talking in salon, please do not participate. Ms. Dawson will not include your interactions in her notes. She will focus on other women in the salon. There are no known risks to you for participating in this study. And there is no known benefit to you for taking part in this study.

Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no cost or rewards for participating. You may decide at any time not to participate. So if you decide to take part in this study, you can change your mind at any time. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The researcher respects your right to privacy. No information that can identify you as an individual will be documented. You are not asked to give your name or any other personal information.

The information collected for this study will be combined with information gathered from other people taking part in the study. If this research is shared with other people, your name and other identifying information will not be used.
All information provided for this study will be kept private unless required by law to be reported. For example, the law may require that we share your information with legal authorities if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. We may also be required to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused. Additionally, we may need to share your information with people who verify that the research is done correctly. These would be people from organizations such as the University of Kentucky.

If you have any questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact the primary investigator, Pangela Dawson. Ms. Dawson can be reached at pddaws2@uky.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer in this study, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at (859) 257-9428 or toll free at (866) 400-9428.
Appendix D

Researcher Introduction of Study

(Script)

Hello!

My name is Pangela Dawson. I am a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Education. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Karen Tice to collect data for my dissertation which focuses on how African American cosmetologists and salons might be a part of education programs for domestic violence awareness, prevention, and intervention. This study has received IRB approval. If you are 18 years or older, I would like to invite you to participate in this study today while you are in the salon.

Your agreement to participate would include allowing me to observe you during your visit today. I will watch and listen to the natural interactions between you and your hair stylist. I will also make notes about the interactions during the observation time.

If you do not wish to be observed while interacting and talking in salon, you are not required to participate. I will not include your interactions in my notes, instead I will focus on other women in the salon. There are no known risks to you for participating in this study, nor are there any known benefits.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide at any time during this study that you do not want to participate, I will stop observing your interactions and not write any notes that include you. If you change your mind at any time, I will not treat you any differently.

To respect your right to privacy, I will not ask for your name or include any personal information about you in my notes. The information I collect for this study will be combined with information gathered from other people taking part in the study.

I will keep all the information provided for this study private unless required by law to be reported. For example, the law may require that I share your information with legal authorities if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

To provide a detailed explanation of the study and this process, I have a customer consent form that you may read. You can take your time to read this information. You are not required to consent immediately. You have the opportunity to consent to participate in the study at anytime during your salon visit. If you have any questions, I can answer those.
At anytime during the observation, if you have concerns, questions, or problems you may direct these to your stylist or to me personally. If you need to make a confidential complaint, you will provided with the contact information for the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity.
Appendix E

Interview Questions

Relationship Questions

1. Tell me about the history of this salon, the neighborhood, and its customers.

2. How long have you worked here?

3. What are some of the most enjoyable things about your work as a cosmetologist?

4. What are some of the difficulties you have experienced in your career as a cosmetologist?

5. Describe a day at the beauty salon and the “shop talk” that occurs?

6. Do you have regular clients?

7. How many years have you known some of your regular clients?

8. How frequently do you see some of your regular clients?

9. Describe your relationships with your clients?

10. Do you consider your clients as friends? If yes, explain your friendship.

11. Do you socialize outside of the salon with clients?

12. Do you attend some of the same events or organizations as your clients?
13. What kinds of conversations do you have with your clients?

14. Have you talked with clients about gender issues, relationship problems, health issues, or domestic violence? Why or why not?

15. Do you give advice to clients? If so, do you think it makes an impact? What kind of advice or support do you offer?

16. Do you follow-up with clients after giving them support or advice? Does your advice influence their choices?

17. Do you ever receive advice or support from your clients? Can you give an example?

Training Questions

18. What was included in your initial training to become a cosmetologist?

19. What additional training have you completed since your initial training to become a cosmetologist?

20. Have you heard of salons being used to help women with health and relationship issues? Describe this scenario.

21. Have you ever completed training specific for domestic violence awareness and prevention? If yes, discuss how the training was or was not effective.
22. Are you motivated to participate in a domestic violence awareness and prevention training program? Why or Why not?

23. Are you willing to participate in a domestic violence awareness and prevention training program? Why or Why not?

**Domestic Violence Questions**

24. Are there any conversations about domestic violence that occur in the salon? If yes, what are these conversations about?

25. Is the topic of domestic violence too sensitive to discuss in the beauty salon with clients? Why or why not?

26. What is domestic violence? What causes domestic violence to occur in relationships?

27. How do you think domestic violence effects African American women? How do you think they get help?

28. Why do you think that some African American women do not leave abusive relationships?

29. What are some ways African American women in abusive relationships receive support from friends, family, and community organizations? What are some barriers these women face when getting help from these same sources?
30. What do you look for when you suspect someone is being abused?

31. How often do you think one of your clients has been or is in an abusive relationship?

32. If you have a client that you suspected was being abused, what would you do or what have you done? Have you ever offered support/advice/information for anyone you thought was being abused? Did you feel prepared? What happened if/when you offered this information? Did the person take your advice?

33. Do you know of services offered for victims of abuse?

34. Do you make referrals for your clients you suspect are in abusive relationships? If no, why not?

35. Do you know phone numbers for local agencies dedicated to help victims of abuse? What do you think of these services?

36. Are there informal resources in the community, neighborhood, or through churches for helping African American women who are experiencing domestic violence?
Appendix F
Cosmetologist Survey

Demographic Characteristics

1. Gender
   A. Female
   B. Male
   C. Transgender

2. What category below includes your age?
   A. 17 or younger
   B. 18-20
   C. 21-29
   D. 30-39
   E. 40-49
   F. 50-59
   G. 60 or older

3. What is your race or ethnicity?
   A. White
   B. Black or African American
   C. American Indian
   D. Alaskan Native
   E. Asian
   F. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander
   G. From multiple races
   H. Some other race (please specify)_____________

4. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
   A. Less than high school degree
   B. High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
   C. Some college but no degree
   D. Associate degree
   E. Bachelor degree
   F. Graduate degree

Cosmetology Career

5. How many hours a week do you work? __________
6. How many clients do you see weekly? __________

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7. What is the average length of time a client may visit the salon? 

8. How are you best described?
   A. Salon owner
   B. Booth renter
   C. Franchise employee
   D. Commissioned based
   E. Cosmetology educator
   F. Student

9. Choose all that apply
   What health topics are discussed in your salon?
   A. Healthy eating
   B. Dieting/weight control
   C. Illness (High blood pressure, Diabetes, Cancer)
   D. Sun exposure
   E. Exercise/physical activity
   F. Stress
   G. Mammography
   H. Smoking
   I. Substance use
   J. Relationship issues
   K. Domestic violence

10. How interested are you in delivering domestic violence information to clients?
    A. Very interested
    B. Interested
    C. Somewhat interested
    D. Not interested at all

11. How often do you currently talk about domestic violence with your clients?
    A. Always
    B. Frequently
    C. Sometimes
    D. Never
12. Have you referred suspected victims of abuse to police authorities or for legal assistance? How often?________
   A. Always
   B. Frequently
   C. Sometimes
   D. Never

13. Have you referred suspected victims of abuse to social service and/or health care providers? How often?________
   A. Always
   B. Frequently
   C. Sometimes
   D. Never

14. Have you referred suspected victims of abuse to domestic violence shelters or advocacy programs? How often?________
   A. Always
   B. Frequently
   C. Sometimes
   D. Never

15. Are there specific people or places (churches, etc) that you have referred your clients to?
   ________________________________

16. How serious do you think domestic violence is in the African American community?
   A. Very serious
   B. Serious
   C. Somewhat serious
   D. Not serious at all

17. How serious do you think domestic violence is in the White community?
   A. Very serious
   B. Serious
   C. Somewhat serious
   D. Not serious at all
18. How confident are you in delivering information regarding domestic violence facts?
   A. Very confident
   B. Confident
   C. Somewhat confident
   D. Not confident

19. How confident are you in delivering information regarding domestic violence resources?
   A. Very confident
   B. Confident
   C. Somewhat confident
   D. Not confident

20. How confident are you in recognizing clients that may be victims of abuse?
   A. Very confident
   B. Confident
   C. Somewhat confident
   D. Not confident

21. How willing are you to deliver information about domestic violence to your clients?
   A. Very willing
   B. Willing
   C. Somewhat willing
   D. Not willing at all

22. Answer the following questions regarding domestic abuse
   What is domestic abuse?_________________________________________
   What causes domestic abuse?_____________________________________
   How do you ask a client if she is being abused?_____________________
   What warning signs do you look for that could possibly indicate your client is being
   abused?__________________________________________________________

23. What is your personal experience with domestic abuse?________________________
# Appendix G

## Typologies/Pre-selected Codes for Analysis

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REFERENCES


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VITA
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EDUCATION
2003 MSPAS, University of Kentucky, KY, College of Health Sciences
   Major: Physician Assistant Studies
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CERTIFICATES:
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   2006 -2008 Physician Assistant at Central Kentucky Pain Management, Lexington,
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