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## SUMMARY OVERVIEW REPORT



## UNDERSTANDING THE VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG MEN OF COLOR

*Public title: SURVIVE: Suburban, Urban, Rural Violence: Investigating Victim Experiences*



The author(s) shown below used Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice and prepared the following final report:

Document Title: Understanding the Violent Victimization Experiences of Young Men of Color (public title: SURVIVE: Suburban, Urban, Rural Violence: Investigating Victim Experiences) Summary Overview Report

Author(s): McCoy, H., Johnson, T. P., Farrar, I., & Pearson, E.

Date Received: September 2018, Updated March 2019

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# Phase One: Summary Overview Report

JANUARY 1, 2016 – JULY 2, 2017

## UNDERSTANDING THE VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG MEN OF COLOR

*Public title: SURVIVE: Suburban, Urban, Rural Violence: Investigating Victim Experiences*

### Abstract

This study begins to address the gap in our knowledge base about the violent victimization experiences, and related outcomes, of young Black males, ages 18 to 24. This study was a nationwide, mixed-methods, two-phase project which had a goal of creating and pilot testing an instrument that measured those experiences. Phase 1 included: conducting focus groups and key informant meetings, reviewing related instrumentation literature, and completing a draft of the instrument. After thematic analyses, results indicated high levels of polyvictimization. Focus group participants indicated that their most common violent experiences with violence were

physical assault, school violence, gang violence, assault by the police, and hate crimes due to race. Female key informants indicated that for the men in their lives who had been victimized by violence, the most common occurrences included: physical assault, school violence, gang violence, and other violence related to race. The information obtained from the focus groups and key informant meetings, combined with information gathered after reviewing related instruments, were used to create a screening instrument and inform the eventual creation of items used in the final violent victimization instrument (YBM: SURVIVE).

### Purpose

The violent victimization experiences of young Black males is widespread; however, few specifics are known about their experiences and resulting needs. This study was designed to fill that gap. A number of existing instruments focus on identifying victimization experiences; however, none focus specifically on young Black males or even other young people of color. This study focused on creating and pilot testing an instrument

that could be used, in practice and research, to collect descriptive information about such victims, their experiences, and resulting outcomes. The objectives of this study were three-fold:

1. To develop and evaluate an instrument that captures data about the violent victimization experiences of urban, suburban, and rural young Black men between the ages of 18 to 24.

2. To better understand the violent victimization experiences of young Black men by taking knowledge gained from pre-existing data collections and expand upon them by adding information that is not readily available in those sources.
3. To obtain information that will better inform policy and practice regarding the criminal justice system's response to the violent victimization of young Black men.

## Project Subjects

Focus group participants were all individuals who identified as Black males between the ages of 18 to 24 (n=83); demographic data were not collected for 12 of the participants. Key informant meeting participants (n=15) were all individuals who identified as Black females between the ages of 21 and 66. Focus

group participants were from various locations throughout the State of Illinois (i.e. Chicago and the following counties: Champaign, Cook, Lake, Madison, DuPage, St. Clair, Will, and Winnebago. All key informant meeting participants were from the City of Chicago.

## Project Design and Methods

**Sample Recruitment.** Focus group and key informant meeting participants were a convenience sample. Both groups of potential participants were recruited using on-the-street recruiting and advertising via flyers and Craigslist. The screening of potential participants for the focus groups occurred both in-person and by phone and the screening of potential participants for the key informant meetings occurred only by phone. In order to determine the eligibility of potential participants for a focus group, the brief screener focused on whether the individual had a history of violent victimization experiences. Eligibility of potential participants for the key informant meetings was assessed using similar questions but related to whether they had a close relationship (i.e. mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, friend, spouse, girlfriend, or significant other) with a young man who met the eligibility criteria for being a focus group participant (the

young man's own participation in the study was not a requirement). Both focus group and key informant meeting participants received remuneration in the amount of \$50.

**Data Collection.** Collection of focus group screener data began in January of 2017. Using field and phone screeners, potential participants were asked questions about gender, date of birth, and race to determine initial eligibility. If participants did not self identify as Black (more than one race could be selected but Black was required), male, provide a date of birth that made their age between 18 and 24, and reside in the study area, they were immediately determined to be ineligible. If they met those criteria, they were asked questions focused on the various types of victimization of interest to the study including: physical assault, school violence, gang violence, physical assault by the police, sexual assault, jail or prison violence,

violence while engaged in military service, a hate crime or other types of violence due to race, a hate crime or other types of violence due to sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (SOGIE), or other general violence not previously captured.

Focus group data were collected between January and June of 2017. The focus groups were co-facilitated by 2 to 4 Black men, age 25 and older, who also served as recruiters for the project. The key informant meetings were held in March and May of 2017. They were co-facilitated by two Black women and also included a Black female as notetaker. During the focus groups and key informant meetings, the questions focused predominately on obtaining feedback about the

language being used to categorize victimization experiences, the existing and planned recruiting methods, as well as suggestions for changes and improvements going forward. In addition, participants were asked to respond to questions regarding their own opinions about violence and victimization.

In preparation, to create items for the planned instrument, existing instruments were reviewed. They were narrowed down to those which included items relevant to the violence categories used on the screening tool. The information was used to provide the foundation for types of items that should be created, as well as inform the strategies for formatting items (i.e. open-ended or close-ended).

## **Data Analysis**

All focus group sessions and key informant meetings were digitally recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service. The qualitative data from the focus groups and key informant meetings were analyzed using QDA Miner. The results of the analyses were multiple

themes identified across categories. Quotations were also identified that reflected the created thematic categories. The demographic data was analyzed using SAS 9.4 and resulted in simple descriptive information.

## Findings

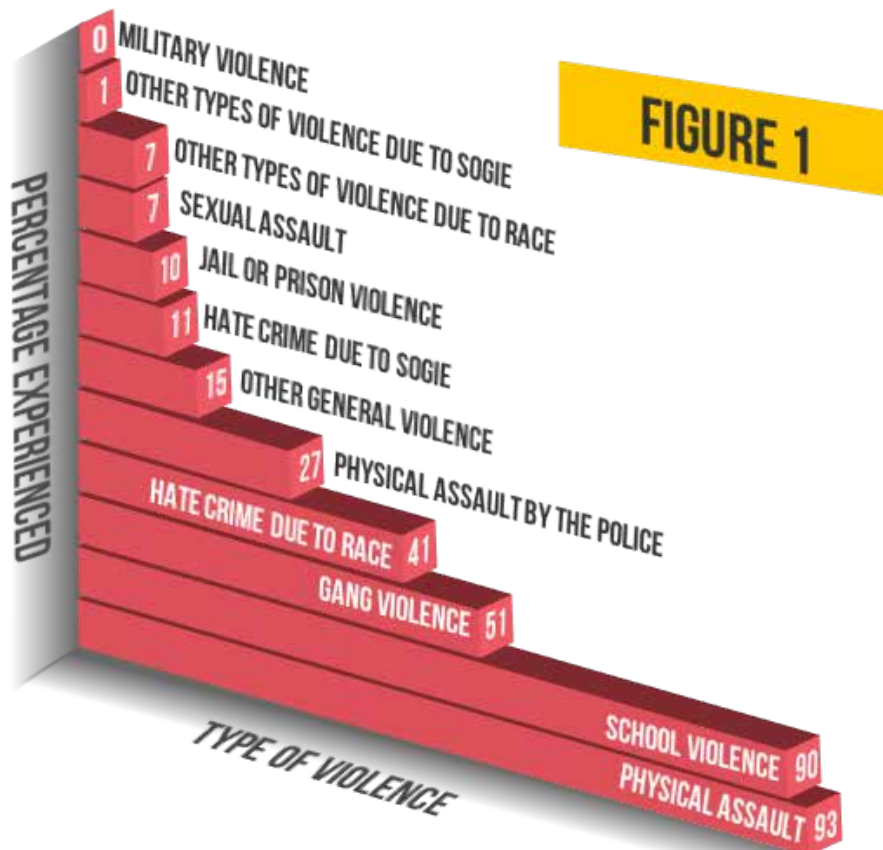
**Focus Groups.** The delineation of the type and frequency of experiences had by focus group participants (n=71) is pictured in Figure 1.

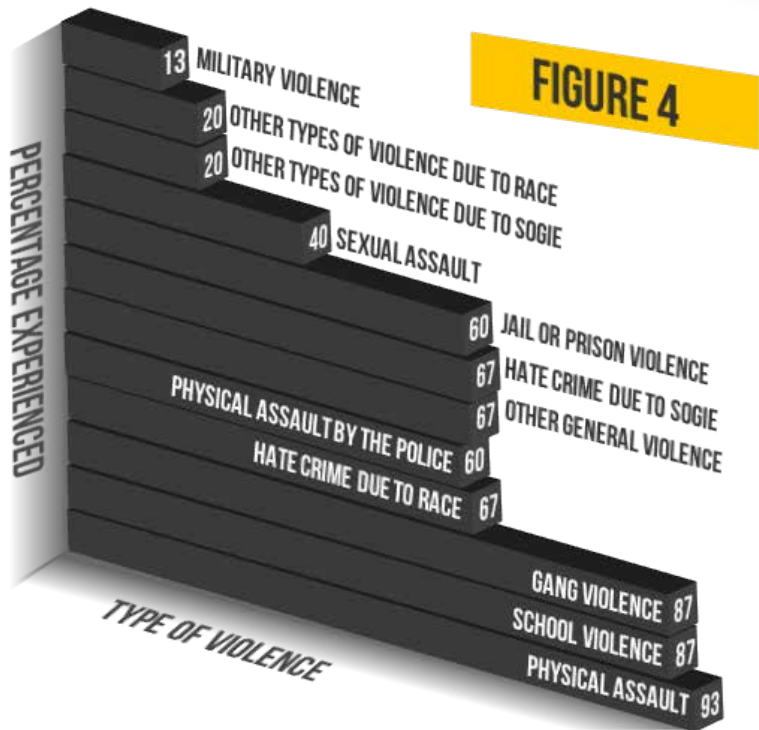
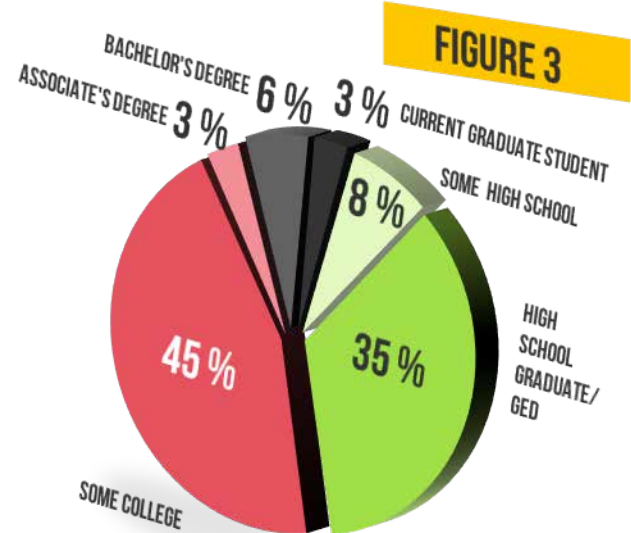
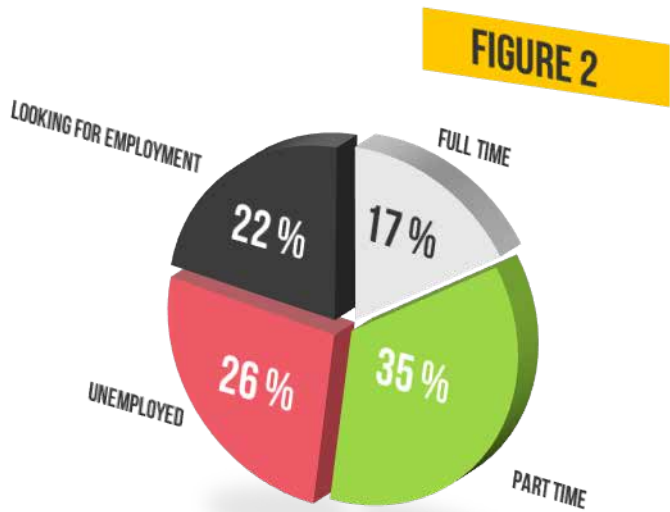
A variety of additional demographic information was also obtained including current employment status (Figure 2) and overall level of education (Figure 3).

Current student status included: full time (38%), part-time (4%), and not a student (58%). Of the participants, 97% had never served in the military; of the 4% who had, their branches of service were Army and Air Force. Marital status was as follows: married (2%), never married (88%), has a partner

(8%), and divorced (3%). Regarding number of children: no children (74%), one child (18%), two children (5%), and four children (3%).

The analyses of the qualitative data focused on participant experiences with violence. The result is six overall themes; also noted are the number of mentions across the total number of focus groups. 1) Disclosure: Participants chose to disclose their own experiences with violence (n=52). 2) Black males: The sharing of experiences had by Black men in general with violence (n=44). 3) Friends or family: Participants shared experiences had by their friends or family members (n=32). 4) Coping: Participants discussed how they coped

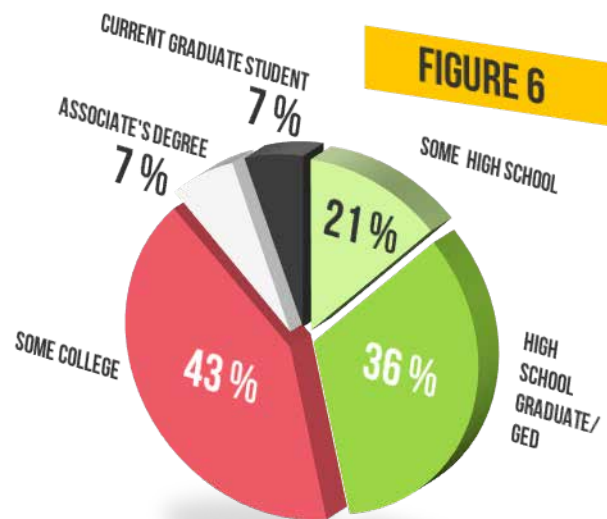
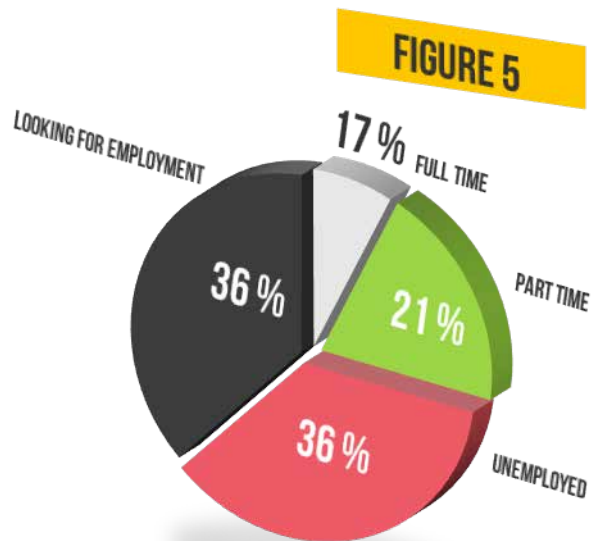




with their violent victimization experiences (n=8). 5) Defense mechanisms: Participants discussed the types of defense mechanisms used when experiencing violence (n=4). 6) Re-victimization: Participants discussed being re-victimized or the re-victimization of others (n=2).

**Key Informants.** The delineation of the type and frequency of experiences had by relatives of key informants (n=15) is pictured in Figure 4.





Demographic information was also obtained including current employment status (Figure 5) and overall level of education (Figure 6). Current student status included: part-time (7%) and not a student (93%). None of the participants had ever served in the military. Marital status was as follows: married (7%), never married (67%), separated (7%), and divorced (7%), and widowed (13%). Regarding number of children: no children (27%), one child (13%), two children (33%), four children (7%), and eight children (7%).

The analyses of the qualitative data focused on the experiences with violence had by the young men in the women's lives. The result of the analyses was seven overall themes (number of mentions across the total number of key informant meetings is indicated), including three about their own

experiences 1) Black males: They shared general experiences had by Black men with violence (n=7). 2) Family: Participants shared experiences had by their family members (n=7). 3) Impact: The impact of violence on the young men in their lives (n=5). 4) Imagining life without: Participants discussed imagining how the lives of the males who were victimized would be different had they not been victimized by violence (n=1). 5) Police: Violent experiences when interacting with the police (n=1). 7) Disclosure: Participants chose to disclose their own experiences with violence (n=6). 6) Coping: Participants discussed how they coped with their violent victimization experiences (n=2).

## Products, Reports, and Data Archiving:

The qualitative data (i.e. transcripts), in the form of Microsoft Word documents, and quantitative data (i.e. eligibility screener and demographics), in the form of Excel spreadsheets, were submitted for archiving. The screening tools used for recruiting participants for the focus groups and key informant meetings and a pre-press version of the final instrument, Young

Black Men: Suburban, Urban, Rural Victims, Identifying Violent Experiences (YBM:SURVIVE) were also submitted.

In preparation for Phase Two, and by using the information obtained from the focus groups, key informant meetings, and existing instrument review, a draft of the instrument was

created. The draft included updated categories and the inclusion of a life history calendar at the beginning of the instrument. The new violence categories included: physical violence, institutional violence, community violence, situational violence, familial child maltreatment or sibling victimization, intimate partner violence, sexual victimization (not by a romantic partner or family member), bias crime victimization, and general victimization. Included with each category were specific examples and definitions. Also added to the demographics section were items that focus on whether the participant had any history of involvement in the child welfare, juvenile justice, or criminal justice systems, and if so the nature of those experiences.

## Presentations

McCoy, H., Johnson, T. P., Farrar, I., and Pearson, E. (2017, September). *Reports of the violent victimization experiences had by young Black, men*. Oral presentation at the Midwestern Criminal Justice Association 40th Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

McCoy, H., Johnson, T. P., Farrar, I., and Pearson, E. (2017, October). *Patterns of violent victimization for young Black men in a Midwestern state*. Oral presentation at the Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture at Boston College 18th Annual Diversity Challenge Conference: Race, Culture, and Criminal Justice throughout the Lifespan, Boston, MA.

Farrar, I., McCoy, H., Johnson, T. P., McCoy, H., and Pearson, E. (2017, November). *Recruitment of young Black men for a study of patterns of violent victimization*. Oral presentation at the 42nd Annual Conference of the Midwest Association of Public Opinion Research, Chicago, IL.

McCoy, H., Johnson, T. P., Farrar, I., and Pearson, E. (2018, January). *Patterns of violent victimization for young Black men in a Midwestern State*. Paper presentation at the Society of Social Work and Research, Washington, DC.

McCoy, H., Johnson, T. P., Farrar, I., and Pearson, E. (2018, April). *SURVIVE: Creating an instrument that tells the stories of the “chosen” ones*. Oral presentation at The Health & Well-Being of African American Men: Emerging Issues & Research Best Practices Workshop, UIC Center for Clinical and Translational Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

McCoy, H., Johnson, T. P., Farrar, I., and Pearson, E. (2018, July). *SURVIVE: Joining forces to create an instrument that illuminates the nuanced experiences of the “chosen” ones*. Oral presentation at the Racial, Democracy Crime and Justice Network 16th Annual Workshop, Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice, Newark, NJ. of Criminal Justice, Newark, NJ.

## Media

Chicago Defender. “*Violence! Justice Department Studies its Effects on Black Men.*” January 27, 2016. Accessible via: [https://issuu.com/chidefender/docs/cd\\_01-27-16](https://issuu.com/chidefender/docs/cd_01-27-16)

Chicago Sun Times. “*In the aftermath of violence, UIC study seeking ways to understand, assist the survivors of violence.*” September 16, 2016. Accessible via:

<http://chicago.homicidewatch.org/2016/09/16/in-the-aftermath-of-violence-uic-study-seeking-ways-to-understand-assist-the-survivors-of-violence/index.html>

Fox News 32 Chicago. “*UIC study works to understand survivors of violence.*” May 22, 2016. Accessible via: <http://www.fox32chicago.com/news/local/143990597-story>

## Implications for Criminal Justice Policy and Practice in the United States

The high likelihood that young Black men ages 18 to 24, who have contact with the criminal justice system, have been victimized by some form, if not multiple forms, of violence should be acknowledged. Once that acknowledgement has been made, policy guidelines should be enshrined, and moved towards the legislation of sentencing guidelines, that require such experiences to be

considered during adjudication and disposition as extenuating and influential circumstances. This increased knowledge should also influence how funding dollars are allocated for the provision of mental health and health care services made available and accessible for this vulnerable population.