Title: Churches Addressing Domestic Violence: The Spaces between Discourse and Identity

Religious communities have historically treated domestic violence as a non-issue, or as a private matter best kept within families. However, research shows that rates of domestic violence within religious groups are reported at similar rates to the general public (Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002). Religious women who are trying to get help are more apt to turn to their religious leaders for assistance and advice than to secular service providers. Additionally, religious leaders report feeling underprepared to respond to survivors but are hesitant to utilize local service providers due to their affiliations with grassroots feminist organizing and movements (Nason-Clark, 1997). This community case study documents the programs and processes of TREE (Teen Relationship Education and Empowerment), a program funded by a two year Missouri Foundation for Health grant that partnered with local religious groups to develop youth programming on domestic and sexual violence and healthy relationships. The results of this two year funding period far exceeded the goals of the grant, educating over 500 youth and 1,000 adult members of local religious communities in Columbia, Missouri. Utilizing qualitative interviewing techniques, document analysis and participant observation, the findings of this research revealed a high need for processual types of intervention strategies that facilitate open dialogue between youth and adults about domestic and sexual violence in faith settings. Additionally, this project addressed the relational successes and challenges between local shelter workers and church leadership. As domestic violence has gained more legitimacy as a social issue and as both shelter workers and church leaders have become more diverse, what possibilities arise for collaboration and dialogue across institutional discourses and identities?