

**Violence as a Health Disparity: Adolescents' Perceptions of Violence Depicted through Photovoice**

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Violence is a public health issue disproportionately affecting adolescents, particularly adolescents of color from vulnerable communities. In response to the growing concern of violence as a significant health concern, the Program in Community Engagement (PCE) at Wake Forest School of Medicine (WFSM) partnered with Authoring Action (A2), a community-based youth empowerment program, to better understand youth perceptions of violence in the community. This study used photovoice, a methodology-aligned with community-based participatory research, to give adolescents a platform to voice their beliefs about violence. In 12 weekly sessions designed to foster an atmosphere of mutual trust and sharing, 10 adolescents from A2 engaged in research as both participants and data collectors. Adolescents received training in basic research methodologies (e.g., human subject protections and qualitative methods), and documented representations of violence through digital photography followed by crafting narratives to correspond with their photos. Facilitated by A2 and PCE staff, youth engaged in empowerment-based photo-discussions focused on causes and consequences of violence, adolescents' experiences with violence, and strategies to address violence. Adolescents and staff conducted a thematic analysis of photographs and narratives from which 18 themes emerged; 3 primary themes were: 1) violence stems from oppression, 2) culture influences violence, and 3) the effects of violence on emotional and behavioral well-being. Health disparity and resilience also were prominent themes. Adolescents participated in a community forum to present their work to community stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, health providers, and school personnel) in order to foster additional community discussions to address violence in the community.