Community Insights on Domestic Violence among African Americans:

Conversations About Domestic Violence And Other Issues Affecting Their Community

San Francisco/Oakland, CA, 2002
Acknowledgements

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Copies of the unabridged versions of the session reports are available on the Institute’s web site at dvinstitute.org.
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Executive Summary

To further the understanding of the impact of violence against African American women, the Office on Violence Against Women commissioned the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (Institute) to write a report on community perceptions of domestic violence in the lives of African Americans living in the San Francisco/Oakland, California area.

The Community Insights on Domestic Violence in African American Communities project is an ongoing, nationally focused endeavor. Included in this endeavor were community assessment interview sessions with representatives from nine cities with high concentrations of African American populations. The first assessment took place in the San Francisco/Oakland, California area in December 1998, and additional assessments have taken place with representatives from Minneapolis, Minnesota; St. Paul, Minnesota; Seattle, Washington; Memphis, Tennessee; Birmingham, Alabama; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Detroit, Michigan. Although assessments are scheduled through spring 2003, the findings reported here solely reflect perceptions of the types, causes, and consequences of, as well as barriers and solutions to domestic violence by African American community representatives in San Francisco/Oakland, California.

Representatives were chosen because of their expertise in and knowledge on domestic violence, and their commitment to eradicating domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area. Since the community representatives assisting with the community assessments represent only a few of the many voices knowledgeable about domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area, it is not assumed that they speak for all members of the various African American communities that exist in the San Francisco/Oakland area, nor is it assumed that they speak for all those who work to eradicate violence. The purpose of this report is to share the insights provided by these representatives. Their voices provide a starting point in an emerging conversation on how the African American community, as a whole, can be a catalyst for change.

The family violence literature contains very little information pertaining to how African Americans view domestic violence. Data focusing primarily on incidence and prevalence rates, treatment completion rates, recidivism, program utilization, and consumer needs tell the story of clinical outcomes, but do little to address the perceptions and cultural needs of African Americans experiencing domestic violence. More importantly, such data has traditionally focused on specific individual’s or specific families’ responses to domestic violence rather than communities perceptions of and behaviors toward domestic violence. Health and criminal justice data provide some relevant indications of patterns, but often have methodological shortcomings in regard to presenting a clear picture of prevalence, completion rates and program utilization (Bent-Goodley, 2001; Hampton, 1991, Joseph, 1997; Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994; West, 1998; Williams & Becker, 1994; Wilson, 1987). In all three bodies of literature, African Americans are often compared to other racial and ethnic groups of varying socioeconomic status without a full appreciation of the complexities in which violence flourishes in their communities. Even more, data does not exist on African Americans’ perceptions of domestic violence in their communities and its affects on their lives.
In an effort to address some of the gaps in the literature and to better understand the perceptions of African Americans in the San Francisco/Oakland area as it pertains to the impact of domestic violence in their communities, the following five groups of informed community representatives were invited to meet in their respective affinity groups as part of the community assessment process: 1) Community Activists, 2) members of the Faith Community, 3) the Human Service Community, 4) the Law Enforcement Community, and 5) advocates for the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender (LBGT) Community. Thirty-eight (38) community representatives participated in focus group interviews, which took place in December 1998 in Oakland. The information provided in this report represents findings across the groups and within the groups. Although the Institute conducted the assessments, this report represents a description and interpretation of community representatives’ voices, rather than any stated or unstated agenda of the Institute.

It is important to note that at many levels in society, African Americans are viewed as a monolithic cultural group possessing a singular heritage and worldview. This report does not seek to perpetuate this misperception in its effort to publicize and amplify the voices of the representatives who have participated in the community assessment process. Therefore, when the issue of cultural sensitivity presents itself in this report, we want to alert the reader to the fact that the concept of “cultural sensitivity” at times serves as a proxy for many characteristics that distinguish African Americans from the broader U.S. society (i.e., race and ethnicity). However at other times, and more importantly, in the context of this report, the concept serves as a proxy for the multiple attributes that mark ever-shifting, but important distinctions within the “African American community.” Hence, references to cultural sensitivity may be punctuating issues of race, ethnicity, social economic status, sexual orientation, religious orientation or political affiliation. All of the aforementioned characteristics (except race) shape and give identity to the multiple sub-communities of African Americans that exist within any one geographical location. References to cultural sensitivity may also be more narrowly focused on the belief that the potential of African American-relevant institutions (such as the spiritual community, faith-based organizations, or community-based organizations) to provide services to the African Americans whom they serve should be maximized.

For practitioners, this report provides insights into three areas: 1) community planning and education activities, 2) perceived gaps in service availability in terms of gender, age, and cultural sensitivity - notably sexual orientation, and 3) developing anti-violence messages and identifying the groups to which those messages should be targeted. Policymakers will find this report helpful with respect to the broad strokes of domestic violence painted by the hands of the community assessment groups as a whole, and the narrower strokes sketched individually by each group. As a result, policy and funding mandates grounded in the perceptions of those living in and committed to the community move into greater focus. In this report, researchers will find the beginnings of questions warranting additional study, using either basic or applied research. For policymakers and researchers this report re-enforces the unquestionable need for their presence in the restorative process and the necessity for all stakeholders’ input in the development of solutions with African American community members.
Summary of Findings

Findings from the community assessment sessions indicated that:

• A high level of domestic violence was but one of many disturbing trends in violence that occur in the African American community. African Americans in the San Francisco/Oakland area were concerned about the prevalence, rather than the type, of violence in their community. Domestic violence spilled into the community and community violence forced its way into residents’ neighborhoods and families’ homes.

• Domestic violence was part of a continuum of violence that links the community to the family. Domestic violence in the home did not occur in isolation, and its prevalence almost mirrored the various forms of community violence. To participants, this parallel evidenced the coexistence of violence inside and outside the home, highlighted linkages between stressors inside and outside the home, and connected violence witnessed to violence committed.

• Many participants noted that the prevalence of domestic violence in the African American community flowed directly from the deficit of leadership, in general, and positive models for non-violence, specifically, in the African American community. Too, the lack of leadership highlighted the absence of credible individuals, families, and African American sub-communities who practiced and exemplified the cultural principles valued by many African Americans, such as those celebrated during Kwanzaa.

• Racism and social oppression were inextricably linked to violence and domestic violence in the African American community. Whether in the form of restricting economic opportunities, marginalizing the unique cultural aspects of African Americans’ lives, or perpetuating negative racial stereotypes, social oppression and racism fueled a hopelessness that contributed to violence in the community.

• Community deterioration and negative intergenerational impacts were the inevitable outcomes of the ongoing, pervasive, and unaddressed violence and domestic violence in the African American community. Violence has eaten away at community life by decimating the ranks of leadership and creating a communal sense of helplessness. Domestic violence has added to this disintegration by isolating those who are directly involved in the violence from those who witness it, ignore it or feel impotent to stop it. The intergenerational impacts of violence and domestic violence alienated the young from the elderly, and African American children from their family members.

• Competitiveness between those entrusted with the task of addressing domestic violence was a major barrier to mounting an effective community response. Overwhelmingly, participants cited the African American community’s inability to mount a collective response to the issues of domestic violence as a major barrier to addressing the issue. In part, competitiveness was based on lack of a common vision and limited funding streams.
• Inadequate resources were also a barrier to mounting an effective community response to domestic violence. Succinctly put, inadequate resources produced inconsistent and haphazard services. An important area where the lack of resources significantly impacted the African American community was in the area of culturally-specific services, for both victims and batterers.

• Solutions to domestic violence in the African American community must be systemic and holistic. Collective community response begins with a community commitment to action. Systemic solutions bring together the major stakeholders important to the issue of addressing domestic violence, offer multiple strategies, as well as integrate a life course perspective.

Introduction

Currently, very little is known about the voices within the African American community and the perspectives they hold about the issue of domestic violence in all its forms. (“African American community” is referred to as a single entity throughout this document for ease of reading, but the reader should note that African Americans are not a monolithic group. As noted in the Executive Summary, any one group of African Americans may be categorized into subgroups based on ethnicity, social economic status, sexual orientation, religious orientation, or political affiliation.) Battered women, domestic violence victim advocates, and other practitioners in the field have shaped much of what the field offers in services to all ethnic groups. Although such efforts have saved the lives of many survivors and held perpetrators accountable for their behavior, many prevailing models for service delivery in reference to domestic violence have been unsuccessful with African Americans.

Programs and services, whose constituents are primarily African American, are frequently developed without adequate input or broad representation from African American men and women. The intersection of culture, social context, community, sometimes poverty, and other competing challenges, shapes how men and women from African American communities view the problem of domestic violence, as well as solutions to it. As a result, the *Community Insights on Domestic Violence Among African Americans* project met with key representatives from the African American communities in nine cities in the United States to explore their perceptions on the impact domestic violence has on the lives of their community members. The project examined what they perceived as the causes and consequences, as well as community responses and solutions to domestic violence. In this report, the reader will learn the perspectives of African Americans residing in the San Francisco/Oakland, California area.
As readers move through this report, they will begin to see and hear the problem of domestic violence through different lenses and different voices. There are common themes that emerge from the interviews, but there are also variations on themes across different groups. After reading the report, two things will be clear: 1) the community context of African Americans underscores the complexity involved in identifying the problems of and solutions to domestic violence, and 2) competing issues shaped by poverty challenge those community members who live in low-income, high-stressed neighborhoods to respond to issues of domestic violence. These and other community insights highlighted in this report provide alternate or expanded viewpoints on addressing domestic violence within the African American community and supporting the need to establish non-traditional services and interventions for African Americans.

Community Engagement Methods

Capacity Building and the Assessment Process

The first two of the nine cities chosen for this project were San Francisco and Oakland. The decision to begin the assessments in California was partly due to its location in the Northwestern U.S., in part because of the presence of an identifiable African American community in the area, and because of the active interest expressed by representatives in San Francisco and Oakland in mobilizing the African American community to address the issue of domestic violence.

Although the two cities are geographically close in proximity, they are demographically dissimilar. Thirty-five percent of Oakland’s 399,484 residents are African American, while seven percent of San Francisco’s 776,733 residents are African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In 2000, 16 percent of Oakland’s families lived below the poverty threshold and 25 percent of its adults had not attained a high school education. Oakland’s median family income was $44,384, while San Francisco’s median family income was $63,545. In reference to families’ demographics, 18 percent of San Francisco’s adults were without a high school education and 8 percent of its families lived in poverty. These statistics provide broad strokes framing the lives and realities of African American residents in the Oakland and San Francisco area.

Prior to conducting the community assessment, the Institute was involved in a process of capacity building. Although many definitions of capacity building exist, the one articulated by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) is helpful in understanding the goal of the Institute in entering the San Francisco/Oakland area as part of the community assessment process. The ECDPM (1998) defines capacity building as promoting “the ability of individuals, organisations [sic], and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve their own objectives.” The Institute took a participatory approach toward capacity building that is people-centered, non-hierarchical, and empowering by relying on local experts, grass roots efforts and community strengths (Lusthaus, 1999).
Capacity building took two forms. First, planning sessions were held with a local advisory committee for almost one year. Members of the advisory group were selected through referrals from colleagues, state coalitions, domestic violence prevention advocacy groups and shelter programs. The advisory committee partnered with the Institute in consciousness-raising, community education, and community organization activities, in addition to advising the Institute on plans for an Institute-hosted community forum on domestic violence. The advisory group also assisted the Institute in identifying and contacting the potential pool of participants for the community assessment discussions. In addition, the advisory group identified local African American leaders, who displayed a commitment to and awareness of anti-violence messages, for recognition and award presentation during the community forum. Second, a town hall meeting was convened to provide a venue for community members to publicly voice their opinions and concerns about domestic violence to a panel of community leaders. Both events were publicized in local newspapers, by radio stations, and on television.
Community Assessment Methodology
Participant Selection

Thirty-eight (38) African American men and women, of various ages, occupations, educational levels, and relationship, gender and sexual identities participated in the community assessment discussions (See Tables 1-3). They were initially part of a pool of nominated participants who were divided into the following affinity groups: 1) Community Activists, 2) members of the Faith Community, 3) the Human Service Community, 4) the Law Enforcement Community, and 5) advocates for members of the LGBT Community. Nominated participants within each category were identified by the advisory group and then invited to participate. Though these groups were not exhaustive of those community groups knowledgeable about domestic violence, the Institute decided that valuable insights from individuals in these groups would yield the type of balanced information helpful to understanding issues of domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Group</th>
<th>Females (n=25)</th>
<th>Males (n=12)</th>
<th>Transsexual (n=1)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Community</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Human Service Community</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Community Advocates</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community Assessment Discussions

The community assessment discussions used a focus group format in order to obtain participants’ perceptions about domestic violence in the African American community. The focus group format provided an opportunity to learn what aspects of domestic violence were important to participants as they interacted in a group discussion (Patton, 1990; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). The discussions were audiotaped to collect information about the group interaction as participants responded to open ended questions and to allow for future analysis of the conversations.

A member of the Institute’s Steering Committee facilitated each group and
followed a semi-structured interview schedule to solicit comments and guide discussion. Each facilitator was provided a tape recorder for recording the dialogue and assisted by a scribe, who was responsible for taking notes. Based on the objectives of the project, seven broad categories of questions were covered during the discussions of domestic violence: (1) types, (2) causes, (3) consequences, (4) priority, (5) barriers, (6) community responses, and (7) proposed solutions to violence and domestic violence in the African American community.

For analysis of the conversations, transcripts (developed from the audiotapes) were coded using the seven categories of inquiry (types, causes, consequences, priority, barriers, responses, and solutions). In the reports, some writers collapsed categories (priority was collapsed into types and responses into solutions) because...
Types of violence ranged from community violence, which included stranger-on-stranger and acquaintance assaults initiated within the community; family violence, or violence within the home between relatives and among intimate partners; social violence; and other oppressions. Stranger-on-stranger community violence included youth and gang violence, drive by shootings, drug-related violence, hate/bias crimes, harassment on the street, school violence, and black-on-black crime. Violence committed by acquaintances involved dating violence, statutory rape of juvenile females by adult males, child sexual abuse, violence against the elderly, and emotional degradation of another. Family violence was described as physical, verbal, psychological and emotional abuse, sexual abuse by an intimate partner, child abuse, incest and abuse of elders. Respondents also mentioned social violence as a problem, stating that the African American community has been and continues to be hurt by oppression and racism in the United States.

Moreover, participants noted links between different types of violence pervasive in the community and in the home. Linkages occurred between the
stressors and violence outside the home, and violence in the home (domestic violence); between violence that is witnessed in the media and in the home, and all forms of domestic and youth violence; and between social issues, and violence in the home and community. Groups tended to agree that many types of violence co-existed in the same space and their causes were intertwined.

It is also important to note that when asked, group participants were reluctant to prioritize one form of violence over another for fear that a band-aid approach would be adopted to address a problem that is better understood as a symptom, rather than a cause, of other unredressed issues plaguing the community. In addition, rank ordering the different types of violence seemed to privilege one form of suffering, or one group’s suffering, over another’s.

However, the general consensus in terms of the types of violence was that community or stranger-initiated violence was as important to San Francisco/Oakland area African American residents as violence that occurred within the realm of relationships involving acquaintances or family. The constant presence of community or stranger-initiated violence was frightening because of its randomness and its familiarity. It was also baffling given the reality that the community needed to be shoring up and building on its resources to better itself and to deal with the multiple threats that come from outside the community.

## Across Group Findings - Causes

When the groups addressed the causes of domestic violence in the African American community, four themes emerged. First, the apparent lack of positive role models in the San Francisco/Oakland area African American community resonated throughout the five groups. Respondents expressed concern that there were few African American individuals who could provide leadership and leadership skills, teach and encourage values that exemplify the positive aspects of African American people, such as those taught during Kwanzaa (unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith). For some groups, this theme was closely linked to the sentiment that the lack of positive role models promoting non-violence contributed to community ignorance about domestic violence issues.

Second, social oppression and racism struck chords as fundamental causes of violence in the African American community. Some groups spoke primarily in terms of institutional racism, and its accompanying social oppression. Institutional racism is defined as informal and formal structures created by the dominant culture which subordinates a person or group because of his or their race (Rothenberg, 1988). Others focused more on historical racism toward African Americans. Amos Wilson cites several examples of historical racism that include economic discrimination; Jim Crowism; the near condoning and virtual approval of Black on Black violence; differential arrest; segregation; job, business, professional and
labor discrimination; negative stereotyping; addictive drug importation; inadequate and often absent health care and inadequate family support to name a few (Wilson 1992). Respondents reported that social oppression, whether in the form of restricting economic opportunities, marginalizing the unique cultural aspects of African Americans’ lives, or perpetuating negative racial stereotypes, fueled hopelessness that resulted in violence in the community.

Similarly, a third and closely related theme involved the historically violent relationship between African Americans and the institutions and citizenry of this country. The context of this theme centered on internalized racism as a legacy of slavery (hooks, 1994). Discussion also focused on African Americans’ feelings of self-hatred which are fueled by the negative stereotypes and self-perceptions resulting from this internalized oppression. The violence of racism has led to an erosion of African American values over time. Internalized racism focuses on how members of a subordinated group accept and embed oppression into their own self-perception, feeling that it may in fact be deserved (hooks, 1994).

Finally, participants identified general exposure to violence, especially via the media, as an important cause of violence. Participants generally agreed violence was readily seen and to some degree expected in their community and that constant exposure to violence led to additional acts of violence.

Across Group Findings - Consequences

The consequences of violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area have been profound and grave. The consequences are profound in that almost every aspect of family and community life have been affected by its impact on the community; grave in that the implications continue to span the generations. Two themes, community deterioration and intergenerational impact, underscoring this fact emerged from almost every group. In reference to community deterioration, participants referenced three areas. First, they stated that violence has diminished the ranks of male leadership and potential positive role models in the African American community through homicide, and disrupted family life through the unusually high incarceration rate for African American males. (One in seven black males ages 25-29, or 13.4 percent, was in prison or jail in 2001, versus 4.1 percent of Hispanic males and 1.8 percent white males. Compared to Hispanic males [16 percent chance] and white males [4 percent chance], Black males have a 29 percent chance of serving time in prison over their lifetime) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002). The absence of leaders has crippled the community by sapping it of its strength and its voice. Respondents noted that incarceration not only removed Black men from the community, but it also further stigmatized them, compounded the issues for which they were incarcerated (i.e., violence attributable to unemployment, lack of education, substance abuse, marginalization), and unduly emphasized punishment over rehabilitation (especially since African American men were more likely to receive prison time rather than deferment options). Second, participants reported that community deterioration occurred when its members were plagued...
with a sense of helplessness in the face of ongoing pervasive violence for which it felt ill equipped to address. This sense of helplessness was described by faith representatives as “death of the spirit” and by human services representatives as “self-destruction.” These feelings of helplessness fed upon themselves and produced a sense of social disorganization. Finally, participants noted that the lack of community cohesion (i.e., community deterioration) was attributable to the ways in which violence tended to isolate its primary victims and secondary victims (e.g., children who witness it) because of fear and shame issues. In addition, members of the LGBT community reported that the compounded shame of being in both a violent and a same-sex relationship further marginalized them from the services and support available in the broader African American community.

The second broad consequence of domestic violence was multiple intergenerational impacts. Indeed, children were of greatest concern. However, many groups also expressed a clear regard for the elderly. The substantial number of child physical, sexual, and emotional abuse victims, the disproportionately high numbers of African American children in the foster care system, as well as unsafe living conditions were manifest indications of the ways in which current generations of children were affected by the violence perpetrated against and near them by their family members and adults who use or condone violence. In addition, respondents noted that more and more children seemed to be ignorant of, or lack teaching on the values and mores that would guide appropriate behavior toward others; thereby fostering another generation of African Americans who were potentially prone to violent behavior (especially if the media and popular culture become their surrogate teachers of values). The intergenerational cycle closed when these children and the adults who neglected them used violence against those more vulnerable than themselves, such as their elderly family members and parents.

**Across Group Findings - Barriers**

Looking across groups, three themes emerged from the discussions on the barriers to addressing domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area. Overwhelmingly, participants cited the African American community’s inability to mount a collective response to the issues of domestic violence as a major barrier. Some groups identified classism by more socially advantaged African Americans against less socially advantaged African Americans as a reason. Others suggested that it was a lack of intrinsic or extrinsic incentives (such as, failing to be concerned about the impact on one’s children of witnessing violence, or to understand the public health implications of domestic violence). Still other groups noted that barriers came in the form of more pressing social concerns or the lack of knowledge on how to address domestic violence issues with youth. Regardless of the reason, respondents suggested that there were limited opportunities for collaboration when the African American community attempted to resolve issues of violence and domestic violence.
Inadequate resources were mentioned as a second important barrier to dealing with issues of domestic violence, producing inconsistent and haphazard services. Once more, inadequate resources fueled the competitiveness between groups seeking to put forth a concerted effort. One area where the lack of resources significantly impacted the African American community was in the area of culturally-specific services, for both victims and batterers. Either no funding was available for the services, or existing service providers did not possess the expertise to implement services which met the specific cultural needs of African Americans (such as, personal care/hygiene kits, psychoeducational materials targeting African Americans, or a shelter milieu where battered women do not feel a need to be vigilant about monitoring the environment for racism aimed at their children). Two groups stated that denial and shame inadvertently fuel the ongoing lack of services because the failure of African Americans to seek services indicated that no service demands existed. Although not stated explicitly, the lack of culturally specific services was also reflected in the law enforcement group's comments on the emphasis on and overuse of incarceration as an option for African American men in comparison to their European American counterparts.

A third barrier to the African American community's efforts to confront domestic violence was its racial dynamic with the broader San Francisco/Oakland area community. As one group indicated, domestic violence has been viewed as a “white feminist” issue where the needs of European Americans were (and are) elevated above those of African Americans, and women's issues eclipsed those of men. Another group held up the O. J. Simpson domestic violence case and trial as a prime example of this inequity. They noted the covert racism and classism which elevated the death of one wealthy, European American woman battered by her African American husband over the hundreds of deaths of African American women victimized by their African American partners.

Across Group Findings - Solutions

A p p r o p r i a t e l y, solutions to domestic violence were linked to the barriers to addressing domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area African American community. When looking across the five groups, it was apparent that solutions fell into three categories. Consistent with the groups’ statements about disunity being the primary barrier to their work, the groups o v e r w h e l m i n g l y endorsed the notion of a collective community response as an important solution. Collective community response begins with individual actions, then family actions and finally a community commitment to action. Once volition has been stirred up within the community, then the groups suggested that the energy be channeled into various types of community education geared toward promoting healthy families and community through parenting education, family management education, and educating leaders in various key institutions in the African American community (i.e., the church, schools).

In addition to encouraging a collective community response, solutions should be holistic and systemic. Holistic solutions respect and strengthen the African American identity by encouraging African
Americans adults to mentor and educate children about their heritage and community values. Systemic solutions would include all those who would be impacted, either positively or negatively, by the proposed solutions. Systemically-oriented solutions would also include multiple strategies, provide incentives for interagency collaborations, as well as incorporate a life course perspective (that is, aspects that are important at each developmental phase in life) into their conception and implementation.

Finally, the groups encouraged proactive, versus a reactive, attitude toward domestic violence. Not only should communities commit to act to prevent domestic violence, but also to intervene early. This prevention and intervention work would take the form of ongoing community education and market available services, and highlight positive, non-violent male role models.

Session Summaries

Within Group Findings

The following section provides summaries of the five community assessment sessions convened in the San Francisco/Oakland area. Full reports for each community assessment session are available from the Institute at www.dvinstitute.org.

The reader will notice that some variability exists between the structure of each group report. The distinct structure and presentation of material reflect both the group process and each writer’s insights based on his or her disciplinary perspective and expertise. Therefore, each report varies in length and order of presentation from group to group, based on the writer’s (facilitator’s) experiences with the group in the community assessment process, and the voices in the group. Some writers decided to cite other bodies of literature in sharing their groups’ voice, while others found no need to do so. The writers chose not to compromise the unique quality of each group in attempting to conform to a reporting template. Notwithstanding, the reports share unique themes, as well as areas of overlap.
Community Activists Session—
Esther J. Jenkins

Most of the six community activists from the San Francisco/Oakland, California area hold various positions in higher education. Three individuals self-identified as college professors or lecturers, and one as an adult educator. Of the remaining members of the group, one worked as a community organizer and the other as a coordinator of male services at a domestic violence agency.

Several themes emerged from the Community Activists session. Some of the themes represented a departure from the way in which these topics are addressed in the mainstream literature. Participants in the group defined violence broadly, including any behaviors that hurt or caused mental or physical pain to others or the self. This included verbal abuse and insults, as well as physical acts and self-destructive behaviors not typically included in definitions of violence such as: overeating, lack of self respect, and lack of motivation.

Likely reflecting the political (and in the Black community, nationalistic) nature of community organizing in which most of the group was involved, the discussion almost immediately focused on issues of oppression and the legacy of slavery. Participants viewed black people as both recipients and instruments of oppression and violence, but at its core, violence was seen as a consequence of self-hate and group hate that came from slavery and a continued history of oppression. The inter-relationship between slavery/oppression, acceptance of group and self, and violence, as perpetrator or victim, were major themes in the discussion. Participants also saw other types of violence as being related through generational and societal transmissions of violence. A history of family violence was noted as a contributing factor to an individual’s current violent behavior. The discussion of media as a subtle shaper of negative images and values supporting violence added a dimension to understanding the role of media in violence that is not found in most discussions on this topic, which still focus primarily on the imitation of televised acts.
Barriers to addressing the issues of violence in general and domestic violence in particular in the Black community were seen as existing at the individual level as well as the community/group level. It was noted that females often remain in abusive relationships not only because they are afraid of being stalked and/or killed if they leave their abuser, but also because of their economic dependency on their mates. Group-level barriers referred to Black people’s difficulties in working together towards some common goal or good. Several participants mentioned teen parenting and poor parenting as problems in the Black community. In more explicit connections to violence, the lack of education was seen as caused, at least in part, by the incarceration of youth in institutions where little or no schooling occurs. And a leadership deficit in the Black community was attributed to potential leaders being neutralized by their fear of youth in the community.

In discussing the consequences of violence for the African American community, the group spent a considerable amount of time talking about the impact of incarceration of male perpetrators on the community. This discussion seemed to show a concern for the welfare of the Black community as a whole, rather than a more traditional focus on victims. Consequences of violence for Black children were also noted. Black youth model the aggressive behaviors they see, thereby contributing to the violence in the community, and the number of Black children in foster care and out of home placement increases due to parental incarceration and child abuse. Even though the group recognized the systemic causes of violence in the Black community, there was a strong feeling that the solution to violence rested with the individual.

Low self-esteem on the part of both men and women was seen as a contributor to violence. For men, issues of self-esteem were intertwined with oppression and rage. Violence was seen as resulting from Black men’s marginalized status, particularly their unemployment. The group stated that lack of status leads to low self-esteem and anger, which increases the risk for both child and spouse abuse. The lack of status and control outside of the home was seen as contributing to Black men’s need to display power and dominance within/over their families. For women, self-esteem was more closely tied to issues of appearance, but at its core, was also related to Blacks’ subordinate status and resulting self-hate.

While self-esteem was linked to overt acts of violence for Black men, for women it played a significant role in what was previously referred to as “internal violence.” It was suggested that women with low self-esteem would be more likely to lack self-respect, engage in self-destructive behaviors, be a victim and make poorer decisions regarding mates.

The group indicated that while there were isolated anti-violence efforts, in general, the Black community as a whole had not addressed the violence problem. Later in the discussion, it was noted that a tolerance for violence existed in the Black community.

While it was noted that the Black community should form groups to address issues of violence by taking responsibility and being “proactive rather than reactive,” many of the solutions offered to the problem of violence and domestic violence focused on individual/family level actions. Education was seen as a tool for empowering individuals that would lead to both decreases in the occurrence of violence as well as a more effective response to violence.
Religious leaders should educate their congregations about intimate partner and domestic violence, as well as the abuse of power.

Faith Community Session—Carolyn Y. Tubbs

Faith or spirituality has been an indispensable aspect of African American heritage (Scott, 1989; Hines, 1996; Benson, 1989). Providing a refuge from the ravages of slavery, racism, and oppression, the church has been the bedrock supporting the quintessential and undeniable aspects of African American culture and life, which often found no legitimacy in racially polarized America (Essed, 1991; Meyers, 1993). Hence, in the past, African Americans identified and defined themselves by their faith affiliations and roles in their churches rather than other sociodemographic characteristics, such as occupation or education (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). Historically, Christianity has been the prevalent religious identity of African Americans and continues to define the spiritual beliefs of the majority of African Americans. However, for a growing number of African Americans, approximately one million, the mosque is the site of weekly worship and Islamic precepts shape their beliefs (Chandler, 1992; Occhiogrosso, 1996). In the midst of economic and societal upheaval, the church and mosque have proven to be critical to cultural health in the African American community.

Since the church has served, and continues to serve as the primary institutional anchor in the African American community, it is often the option of first resort when family problems arise (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Ellison, 1993). As in most theistic cultures, individuals unwilling to respond to behavioral prescriptions of their family, peers, or social community may be more receptive to the mandates of religious leaders. For many faith-based communities and cultures, the authority of spiritual leaders is viewed as inspired and surpassing that of the State. It would therefore be remiss to fail to include the voices of church leaders in understanding the perspectives of African Americans on domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area community.

Six females and two males were interviewed as part of the faith community session. One person worked in dual roles, one of which was as a physician and the other as a member of the clergy. The other members of the group identified themselves as being employed in one of the following positions: minister (3), safety outreach worker, legal secretary, nurse, and office worker in a domestic violence program.

Respondents specifically identified physical violence (i.e., slapping, punching, kicking, spitting, shaking and sexual assault), and emotional and psychological abuse (i.e., name-calling, pervasive disrespect, threats, and financial control) between adults and children in the home as the type of interaction that motivates the majority of violent interactions outside the home. Although intimate partner violence often spills outside the private domain of the home when law enforcement becomes involved, community violence (i.e., gang-violence, drug-related violence, and shootings) is a better indicator of violent behavior that has already transpired in the home than law enforcement reports. Unacknowledged linkages exist between intimate partner violence, youth violence, school violence, and abuse of the elderly. Ignoring these linkages minimizes the ways that intimate partner, school, youth, family and community violence can be nested within one another. This ecological understanding of the interplay
between various forms of violence seemed obvious to respondents, but is only recently informing academic discussions of some forms of domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence (Heise, 1998).

Institutional racism topped the faith respondents' list of causes of domestic violence in the African American community. Although institutionalized racism manifests itself in various ways, participants were most keenly aware of its role in the internalization of negative racial images that can mix with and fuel other factors that lead to violent interactions inside and outside the home. The quantity and nature of respondents' comments reflected their belief that the ever present and unrelenting nature of institutional racism negatively shapes the lives of African Americans by limiting their options in life, reinforcing negative and false stereotypes, and legitimating a hierarchy of oppression.

Specific to the church and the issue of anger management, respondents felt that faith communities had failed to adequately address anger's effect on relationships in the home and to provide adequate teaching to help those who might be struggling with anger control. The group felt that failing to educate individual congregants and the church community about spiritual teachings on anger leads to guilt, shame, and spiritual ignorance. Similarly, grief and loss issues were another sub-theme related to the church's silence on anger and anger management. Respondents identified the grief and loss experienced by adults and children as antecedents to violence.

Denial of the presence of domestic violence in the congregation by either the church members or the pastor was mentioned as the most frequent barrier to families seeking help. Denial could be overt, manifesting itself in the refusal to explore the possibility that domestic violence might be occurring. When perpetrators minimize their responsibility for their actions, this too is a type of overt denial. Overt denial also takes the form of the clergy discounting the importance and gravity of domestic violence in the congregation and abuse of power by the clergy.

In its covert form, denial manifests itself as a spiritualizing of the conflicts and battering incidents in partner relationships. Suggestions that battered victims “pray about” the violence in their relationship or accept God's testing are examples of spiritualizing intimate partner violence.

Shame was also mentioned as a barrier to church and mosque members seeking help from their spiritual leaders and extended family members. Respondents indicated that victims of domestic violence feared being dismissed, blamed, re-victimized or having their private lives made public. Shame is also an invisible barrier that hindered family members of multiple generations from talking to one another about the impact of domestic violence on the family's life.

Respondents agreed that the consequences of domestic violence in the African American community go far beyond the most obvious negative effects such as loud verbal altercations, emotional upset and physical wounds. The consequences are spiritual, intergenerational and cultural. Education was most often identified as an important solution to dealing with domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area African American community. Beyond community education in general, specialized teaching and education must be given to religious and spiritual leaders about the pervasiveness of domestic violence in families, in addition to the sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and the abuse of power that exists in the church. In turn, religious leaders should educate their congregations about intimate partner and domestic violence, as well as the abuse of power. Respondents also indicated that solutions must be systemic and holistic in nature. Addressing victims' issues, while ignoring those of batterers, leaves the battering behavior unaddressed.
Human Services Session—
Linner Ward Griffin

The human services group consisted of 10 persons who held various positions in human service agencies in the San Francisco/Oakland, California area. Examples of jobs held by group members included: social workers in public social service programs, group home administrators and care personnel, private adult services program administrators, batterers’ treatment staff, youth workers in community social programs, a performance arts director, psychiatric social workers, and a battered women’s program director.

The group generated a list of nineteen different responses to the question on types of violence affecting the African American community, which were combined under three major headings: physical abuse, emotional/verbal abuse, and community violence. Examples of physical violence included same sex crimes, sexual violence, violence against the disabled, teen or dating violence, hazing incidents, child abuse, and violence against elders. Emotional or verbal abuse examples included emotional degradation of women and verbal violence including lack of respect. The group also indicated other forms of violence such as spiritual violence, denial of elders’ civil rights, and “internalized violence,” which was defined as self hate and drug and alcohol abuse. Police brutality, hate crimes, gang and street violence and economic violence as demonstrated by social conditions were cited as examples of community violence. When asked, “How much of a problem is each of these types of violence, in terms of frequency and priority?” participants’ responses presented a clear recognition that violence was extensive and often calculated in the San Francisco/Oakland area. Several persons commented about “normalcy” of violence, stating that it was not atypical.

A number of respondents recognized connections or links between different social issues and violence found in the home and in the larger community. Respondents also expressed a desire to clarify what violence means for their community.

Participants’ responses to the question on the causes of violence exhibited some recognition of the traditions and heritage of Africa among Blacks in the United States. The group proposed a strong belief that African American cultural traditions and much of the historical Black heritage have been destroyed or not transmitted to youth and others in the Oakland area. Concern was raised that African Americans seem to have lost many of the traditions (personal investment in community, respect for all Black men, women and children, and respect for the human body) that were culturally characteristic of them as a people during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Respondents also repeated social oppression themes cited by other groups.
Respondents identified that individuals’ problems fueled larger social problems. Participants felt that social institutions react quicker to male violence than to female violence and that clear issues of male privilege and entitlement (i.e., power and control) exist. “Some men are taught to demean women; they are socialized to see women as less.” Other comments acknowledged the victimization of men and of women, but suggested that women who use violence do so to protect themselves against assault by their partner.

The group also widened the scope of its conversation to acknowledge concerns about older persons, noting that elders, especially women, are not valued and that elder abuse has serious consequences.

Participant responses stressed the importance of education that provides one-on-one instruction in the areas of parenting skills, coping skills, and family management as solutions to violence. Still other respondents pondered solutions from a larger social system perspective.

Responses to probes on barriers to domestic violence solutions tended to be global in that they focused on recognizing and building upon the innocence and creativity of Black youth, systems’ responses, and communities needing to change.

The links between the modeling behaviors (especially for the sake of African American youth), collaboration (with other agencies and development of a structure to facilitate collaboration), and education (staff development and education in the African American community), emerged as themes when discussing solutions to violence.

One potentially important method of educating the community, the Internet, was not viewed as practical at this time. The inability to envision the potential of Internet use for community education may be a reflection of the ages of this focus group’s participants.
The eight members of the law enforcement community group represented a variety of areas/professions including probation, domestic violence intervention advocacy, health education, social work, domestic violence education, policing, and the judiciary.

The primary goal of the law enforcement component of the community assessment was to gain insight about the occurrence of domestic violence among African Americans by facilitating a dialogue on the issue with a sample of African American criminal justice practitioners. In designing the community assessment project, the Institute hypothesized that a major step toward the prevention of domestic violence among African Americans must include the perspectives of a broad-range of African American intervention practitioners, insiders, and stakeholders who maintain a commitment toward reducing the occurrence of domestic violence among African Americans. Moreover, we believe that it was important to conduct a focus group with African American criminal justice practitioners given their specific occupational roles and professional experiences in the field.

The law enforcement group listed a number of types of violence affecting the African American community including: physical assault, homicide, drive-by shootings, child sexual abuse, juvenile sexual abuse, consensual sexual relations between adult males (30-35 years of age) and teenage girls ages 14-15 (statutory rape) as a form of child abuse, domestic violence, emotional and verbal abuse, marital rape, economic oppression, and social/structural violence. The respondents’ listing of types of violence that occur within the African American community is consistent with the various types of violence that have been found to plague other racial and ethnic groups to some degree (Reidel & Welsh, 2001). It was the consensus of the respondents that emotional abuse was the type of violence that occurred most often. Moreover, it was their view that many acts of emotional abuse are hidden and less likely to be reported to official agencies that are required to report acts of violence.

When the respondents were asked to explain the causes of violence in the African American community, they listed and discussed several causes, including: racism and economic oppression, exposure to violence in the community, family drug use, popular culture, and the destruction of cultural traditions.

The persistent concentration and omnipresence of various forms of interpersonal violence in low income African American neighborhoods across generations has led some violence researchers to use the phrase “chronic community violence” to characterize those communities experiencing disproportionately high rates of interpersonal violence (Jenkins & Bell, 1997). There was a general consensus among the law enforcement group participants that the occurrence of interpersonal violence was an omnipresent and normative feature of everyday life in some African American communities.
In response to a series of questions and probes constructed to uncover the participants’ perceptions of the consequences of the disproportionate rates of violence in the African American community, four major themes emerged. These themes included: 1) community deterioration, 2) breakup of the family, 3) a cycle of violence, and 4) differential patterns of criminal justice response (expressing the view that there were differential consequences for Black men and women in terms of how the criminal justice system responds to both their violent offending and victimization. The enhanced punishment of males by the criminal justice system was not simply because they were males, but because they were Black males).

The respondents also suggested that racial stereotypes about African American men sometimes led police officers to dismiss their allegations of being victimized by their wives or girlfriends.

Consequently, the respondents who participated in the law enforcement group expressed some very definitive views regarding what needs to be done to prevent domestic violence in the African American community. Their views on what should be done to reduce violence fell into five distinct categories: (1) multiple strategies, (2) early intervention, (3) pregnancy prevention, (4) healthy communities (including values, morality, education, spirituality), and (5) collective responsibility.

What emerged from the group’s rich discussion of violence prevention solutions is that these groups were firm in their collective belief that domestic violence is the result of multiple causes and its prevention must include a multi-strategy agenda. The primary themes that emerged during this portion of the session focused on barriers such as inadequate resources, lack of collective responsibility, and classism within the African American community.

The respondents’ responses to a series of probes about obstacles and barriers resulted in robust discussion of two themes: (1) lack of victim cooperation and (2) the criminal justice system’s response to all types of violence in the African American community as being inadequate. The most significant manifestation of this inadequacy was the criminal justice system’s reliance on incarceration as the primary strategy to reduce violence in the African American community.
Domestic violence has been recognized as a serious social problem in contemporary society, one that has commanded attention from local activists, human service programs, social institutions, academicians, and national leaders. This attention has resulted in a growing network of crisis intervention services, a proliferation of research reports, policy changes, and significant shifts in public awareness regarding the problem of domestic violence. Without overstating the success of these various efforts, it is fair to say that many survivors of domestic violence are in a much better position than they would have been 20 years ago, before it was recognized as an issue that warrants such serious attention.

The success of the anti-violence movement to bring about these changes is mitigated by the absence of attention to specific populations and groups whose experience of domestic violence is overlooked by mainstream organizations and institutions that protect the interest of dominant groups in society. Those whose experiences are marginalized in society overall are marginalized in any analysis of domestic violence as well; they are invisible or referred to in stereotypical and stigmatizing ways.

The few studies that have addressed the issue suggest that the rate of violence in same sex relationships might parallel the rate in heterosexual relationships. Even with this tentative quantitative conclusion, there is only limited reference to the ways that sexual identity might complicate issues like disclosure, access to services, law enforcement responses and funding for intervention programs. That is, even if the rates are the same, there may be complicating issues that make abuse from a same sex partner particularly serious.

Further exacerbating the issue is the relative invisibility of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in marginalized communities of color, where issues of difference and stigma related to sexuality are often seen as competing with attention to racism and ethnic oppression. Again, there is almost no national data or qualitative research that has explored how gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people of color experience violence from their same sex partners. The community assessment described in this report is one of the first attempts to explore the extent of and meaning associated with these multiple identities and experiences.
The participants in the group were recruited from the various organizations and agencies that work in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community in the San Francisco/Oakland area. While not a random sample, the participants did represent a significant diversity; the participants expressed a rich range of experiences, ideas, opinions and perspectives during the interview. Both African American men and women were present, representing a considerable age range. They represented various occupations and educational levels and had different family compositions. While all of the participants identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, there was a noteworthy variance in how central that identity was.

It should be noted that social stigma and institutional marginalization pose particular barriers to recruiting and facilitating community assessment interviews. In the most general sense, the issue of domestic violence can be difficult to talk about publicly. In the case of the simultaneous pressures of racial stigma, risk associated with disclosure of one’s sexual identity, and the vulnerability survivors face in group settings, the difficulty is significantly enhanced. Despite this, the participants of this focus group courageously responded to the questions and were generous in sharing their opinions and experiences.

The group identified a range of forms that violence took in the LGBT community. The initial discussion focused on violence towards an intimate partner, typically described as "domestic violence," physical assaults, emotional degradation, control of economic resources and opportunities, and threats of various forms. On this theme, the participants in the LGBT group did not vary much from other focus group interview respondents.

There were two important distinctions that stood out on this theme. First, it is noteworthy that the participants included sexual assault by an intimate partner in the discussion of partner violence. This stood out as a formidable source of abuse that resulted in fear, degradation and powerlessness. (In other research on domestic violence, sexual assault or marital rape is not mentioned as prominently). A second unique finding on this point is that unlike in other data on violence, the respondents were quick to link domestic violence with other forms of abuse. So, while one respondent was describing a situation that they knew of where a partner was being physically threatening, other group members would turn the discussion to the aggressive and threatening street harassment by strangers, mistreatment from authority figures like police officers, and physical assaults that are typically thought of as bias or hate crimes. Within each category of violence (intimate abuse and violence from non-intimate sources), both physical and psychological abuse were noted, as was the interaction between them.

The participants in the LGBT focus group described very serious consequences when discussing the various forms of violence described previously. The interview clearly revealed both overt negative impacts (such as injury) and more subtle damage caused to individuals and the community as a result of violence (issues like fear and isolation). In terms of overt negative consequences, the group responses centered on descriptions of individual cases they were aware of where members of the community had been very seriously hurt by domestic violence. They elaborated on such cases by describing serious assaults that resulted in severe trauma, focusing mostly on physical injury.
The less overt, subtler consequences were discussed in greater detail. Here, the findings included consequences such as shame, isolation, and fear that result from physical, emotional and sexual abuse in the African American LGBT community. A closer analysis of these results indicated that in many instances what the participants were describing was the marginalization of the LGBT community because of the violence. That is, violence between members of the LGBT community and violence towards the LGBT community resulted in some of the same consequences—most notably that the community becomes more isolated and more "closeted" about itself and its problems. The extent to which the group felt that this results in social disorganization, lack of leadership, and internal struggle, rather than organizing to expand opportunities, is significant.

The findings were less clear on the issue of priority of violence among members of the African American LGBT community. On the one hand, members of the group described devastating consequences of violence, and just how significant the negative consequences were. On the other hand, some members of the focus group expressed unwillingness (inability) to engage in a process of prioritizing community issues. It was significant that there was more consensus in the group regarding the high priority they would assign to hate or bias crime than to domestic violence, where there was little consensus of how important it is. This discrepancy is important to note, and may suggest some ambivalence about the community's acceptance of the issue of violence among its members as opposed to violence towards the community.

On the related issue of larger priorities, the group had a revealing discussion regarding where to "rank" violence in and towards the LGBT community with "other problems facing the more general African American community." Here it was noted that there is a tendency to think of the broader community concerns as being given more importance than those specifically facing the LGBT community. This finding was reflected in many instances during the discussion, confirming the sense that within the African American community, LGBT community members feel very marginalized and isolated from it, and that this is a serious concern in relation to ending domestic and other forms of violence. This discussion had an interesting link to a sentiment that African American communities are not prepared to deal with the issue of sexuality (including heterosexuality) and this seriously limits our response to violence in all sectors of the Black community.

More direct responses regarding these priorities are as follows. Hate crime is the most serious threat regarding the safety of LGBT community members. Verbal assaults are very serious and have particularly negative consequences for
LGBT members when they are linked to homophobia and related insults. HIV (and other stigmatized/stereotypical images associated with the LGBT community) is linked to some instances of domestic violence.

The focus group participants were in consensus that the responses to the problem of violence in the LGBT community were inconsistent and haphazard if they existed at all. There was a clear sense of a lack of organized response either from human services or from the community itself. The one exception was the notion that there was some media--driven, law enforcement responses to instances where there was a very public bias incident and the larger (white) community service system felt "forced" to respond. These responses were not considered effective, they were crisis driven, and they did not address the problem of violence in the African American LGBT community in a serious manner.

Two specific programs were identified as having some minimal impact on violence in the LGBT community. Both are seriously under-funded and faced other barriers that compromise their ability to effectively respond to domestic violence. Among the most significant barriers identified by the group is the lack of accessible culturally specific services. This discussion included how issues of being assaulted are particular to various cultural groups, and how limited resources in the African American community leave those who have experienced trauma particularly vulnerable. Another barrier included "being closeted," such that if a person is not "out" as a member of the LGBT community then he/she will not likely access services related to an assault (either public or in their intimate relationship). With an undocumented demand for services (because people do not request them) comes an unjustifiable need and few resources available for program development. This pattern was noted as significant.

Another barrier to effective responses to violence in the LGBT community was that there was "too much else to do." The participants linked this finding to the discussion of priority. A general sense was that of all of the concerns facing the African American LGBT community, responses to intimate violence were given less attention.

The final barrier identified by the focus group concerned the analytical framework used to discuss intimate violence. The participants discussed the ways that the issue of violence has been conceptualized as a "white feminist" issue and therefore did not resonate with the African American community in general, in particular, the LGBT community.

With regard to solutions, the participants in the interview did not have many concrete suggestions to offer, even after several questions from the facilitator. There were references to the need for community education, better funding for resources, more leadership from national African American LGBT groups, and the need to organize. When probed about specific activities, programs or individuals who might be involved and strategies to respond, the group did not have much to say. The feeling here was that the problem was so complex, and the issue of violence was being defined (and experienced) so broadly, that it was very difficult to attach a concrete strategy to the problem.

The LGBT group explored additional areas of discussion including the role of culture, the notion of family, and other issues of particular interest to the LGBT community. These discussions, as well as more detailed responses of each of the four other affinity groups, will be made available in a larger report.
Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Conclusions

This report differs from existing current literature because it offers African American community perspectives about the problem of domestic violence. It highlights the voices of the respondents selected from the African American community in the Bay area and examines their perceptions about the causes and solutions to domestic violence. Hearing the community voices and reporting on their perspectives was the primary goal, which was achieved in this report. As a result, we have learned much from those interviewed, including that intimate partner violence results from many factors. African American male sexism is a critical contributor to intimate partner violence. However other issues specific to the African American community, including poverty, racism and violence inside and outside the home, also increase the potential for domestic violence to occur. When we speak of domestic violence, social context is important. Some respondents viewed these high stressed environments as producing violence, while others believed that it did not cause the violence but rather it fuels the oppression and hopelessness which result in domestic violence. They did not see this as a justification for violence or devaluation of personal choices and responsibility concerning the use of violence in families or the community. Respondents did believe however that in order to reduce violence these associated challenges must be named and addressed.

The environmental challenges influenced intergenerational rules for relating to or interacting with one another both from a familial and community perspective. In some segments of the community these environments and rules have been changed from what existed 10 to 15 years ago; assaults on community
such as drug infestations, increased poverty, and resource depletion are contributing factors to this change. Although there is support and healing that still exist in the community, there is also denial of the problem of violence and a lack of attention and leadership to address the issue within the Bay area community as a whole. Violence, whether in the home or outside the home, decimates community leadership and the community’s capacity to care for itself (Williams, 1993). Respondents encouraged community members to develop a common vision about the problem and solutions, but were also aware that it may be due not only to the lack of will, but also a lack of money. Without these resources, a holistic, coordinated community response is difficult to mount. But in the face of little or no resources, it is important for the community to consider what it can do in spite of the lack of resources. This change begins with community commitment to change and identification of what it must do.

At the conclusion of the Institute’s work in the Oakland area, community leaders and the Steering Committee agreed that a landscape for information sharing among scholars, practitioners, the Institute, and members of the San Francisco/Oakland community had be laid. Furthermore, the Oakland community gained exposure and knowledge of various community and national resources designed to assist members of the African American community. Finally, the Institute helped the advisory group begin to develop a strategy for its next steps and how they could collaborate with and utilize community representatives who were interested in doing follow-up work. The Institute viewed this discussion on next steps as a critical one because we wanted to share not only the knowledge we gained through our work with them, but to share what we believe is a model of collaboration.
Policy Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the comments by members of the San Francisco/Oakland area community assessment groups, the Institute extends the following recommendations to the African American community in the San Francisco/Oakland, California area:

• Community leaders should move toward developing or supporting an existing African American-led coalition against domestic violence. The primary mission of the coalition should be to educate African Americans about the individual, familial, intergenerational and community impacts of violence in the home; mobilize the community towards prevention and intervention; and help develop and shape community norms. The coalition should also educate African Americans about the psychological, physical, interpersonal, and public health aspects of witnessing and experiencing domestic violence, as well as living in a community terrorized by violence. Information about the characteristics, dynamics, and prevalence of domestic violence should also be included.

• An African American-led coalition against domestic violence should make it its goal to annually support two or three agencies or facilities that provide culturally-specific services to African American families involved in battering situations. Support should not only be verbal, political, and financial, but also involve volunteer (wo)manpower.

• Community capacity building goals should shift toward systemic- and life course-oriented, prevention and intervention models that deal with families rather than dealing with only individuals (the victim or the batterer) and only child-bearing adults.

• Community leaders should find ways to invite marginalized sub-communities within the broader African American community to bring their voices to and participate in community efforts to deal with domestic violence and violence in general.

• Community leaders should make more efforts to recognize and encourage leaders and families who attempt to exemplify and transmit values important to African Americans, and who emphasize non-violent strategies, to deal with interpersonal and family conflicts.

• Community leaders should make more efforts to de-emphasize negative images of African Americans by boycotting or complaining about the media and companies that promote these images. Conversely, leaders should publicly encourage and patronize media and businesses that promote positive images, and suggest products that encourage African Americans to respect themselves and others.
• The African American community, as a whole, should find ways to keep African American children affected by violence in African American families, instead of allowing them to languish or grow up in foster care. Part of this process would involve finding ways to partner with state and local foster care and adoption agencies.

• The African American community, as a whole, should make a commitment to its children to teach them the moral and cultural values underlying the unique aspects of the African American culture, and indicate a sense of self-respect. The community should also commit to its children to teach them respect and responsibility for the elders who are their physical and spiritual connection to their heritage, who are leading them into their futures, and with whom they live.
References


Domestic Violence Resources for Victims, Offenders and Youth

In San Francisco and Alameda Counties

While most communities today develop strategies to keep victims safe, hold offenders accountable for their behavior and provide collateral services for children and families affected by domestic violence, few if any provide broad-based, comprehensive, culturally specific services to address domestic violence. Not surprisingly, programs providing culturally specific services and programs often see an increase in the number of families seeking their assistance. Unfortunately, when such services are not available, those who need help the most may never request it.

While progress has clearly been made in the growth and sensitivity of domestic violence services, a pressing need remains for an increase in culturally specific and culturally competent services. To effectively address domestic violence among African Americans, communities must invest in social action, change the community norms that make violence acceptable, and support the development of culturally specific services.

Like many cities, the San Francisco/Bay Area has a limited number of culturally specific programs and services for African Americans. However, it does provide a wide range of domestic violence-related services, many of which have had a significant impact on the lives of area residents.

Purpose of the Directory

The purpose of this directory is to provide a list of domestic violence resources for victims, offenders, youth, families and communities. The organizations listed in the directory are located primarily in San Francisco and Alameda Counties. While we have attempted to provide a comprehensive inventory of resources, we recognize that this directory may not include all organizations suited to address issues of domestic violence. To this end, the Institute encourages individuals and organizations in the San Francisco/Oakland area to supplement the entries that are provided here and to disseminate the additions throughout the community.

Methodology

Data was collected through telephone interviews with service providers and site visits to agencies in the San Francisco/Oakland area. Many organizations had resource lists of their own, which were incorporated into the directory as appropriate. Because community-based programs and services often change to meet new demands, users of this guide should verify all contact information before attempting to access the services described.

Organization of Material

Resources are listed by service target (victims, offenders, youth, families and communities) and subdivided by location (San Francisco and Alameda Counties). Where there is service overlap or programs exist in multiple locations, entries will repeat.
SAN FRANCISCO
Bay Area Legal Aid (San Francisco County)
Formerly S. F. Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation
30 Fell Street, 1st Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 982-1300
Email: Info@baylegal.org
Website: www.baylegal.org

Center For Special Problems
1700 Jackson Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Tel: (415) 292-1500

Community United Against Violence (CUAV)
160 14th Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 777-3500 (Office)
Tel: (415) 333-HELP (Crisis Line)
Website: www.cuav.org

Family Violence Project of the DA’s Office
850 Bryant, 3rd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 551-9543
Tel: (415) 552-7550 (Advocates)
Website: www.cci.sf.ca.us/da/fvprjc.htm

Glide Memorial United Methodist Church
Glide Family Services - Women’s Programs
330 and 434 Ellis Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 674-6240
Email: womens_services@glide.org
Website: www.glide.org/home.asp

Raphael House
Residential Program – Family Shelter
1065 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Tel: (415) 474-4621
Email: info@raphaelhouse.org
Website: www.raphaelhouse.org

Riley Center of St. Vincent de Paul
Rosalie House Emergency Shelter and Brennan House
3543 18th Street #4
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 552-2943 (Office)
Tel: (415) 255-0165 or (415) 831-3535 (Crisis Line)
Website: www.rileycenter.org

San Francisco Women Against Rape Organization
The Women of African Descent Task Force
3543 18th Street #7, 3rd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 861-2024
Tel: (415) 647-RAPE (Crisis Line)
Email: info@sfwar.org
Website: www.sfwar.org/about.htm

Volunteer Legal Services Program/BASF
465 California Street, 7th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: (415) 982-1600
Tel: (415) 989-1616 (Intake)
Website: www.sfbar.org/vlsp

W.O.M.A.N. (Women Organized to Make Abuse Non-existent), INC.
Cooperative Restraining Order Clinic
333 Valencia Street, Suite 251
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 864-4535 (Office)
Tel: (415) 864-4722 (Crisis Line)
Email: info@womanic.org
Website: www.womaninc.org

ALAMEDA COUNTY
Alameda County Medical Center Highland Hospital
Sexual Assault Response Center
1411 East 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94602
Tel: (510) 534-9290 or (510) 534-9291
Website: www.acmedctr.org

Bay Area Legal Aid
Formerly S. F. Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation
405 14th Street, 11th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel: (510) 663-4744
Email: Info@baylegal.org
Website: www.baylegal.org

East Bay Community Recovery Project
Project Pride
2551 San Pablo Ave.
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel: (510) 446-7150
Website: www.ebcrp.org

A Safe Place Community Counseling, Education, and Outreach Program
P.O. Box 1073
Oakland, CA 94604
Tel: (510) 986-8600 (Office)
Tel: (510) 536-7233 (Crisis Line)
Email: dvnomore@pacbell.net
Website: www.asafplacedvs.org

West Oakland Mental Health Center
Adult and Children’s Mental Health Services
2722 – 2730 Adeline Street
Oakland, CA 94607
Tel: (510) 465-1800
Email: wohc@wohc.org
Website: www.wohc.org/WOMH%20Page.htm
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR OFFENDERS

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

Before The After
4938 Third Street
S.F. Black Firefighters Assoc. Bldg.
San Francisco, CA 94124
Tel: (650) 738-0045

Center For Special Problems
1700 Jackson Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Tel: (415) 292-1500

Glide Memorial United Methodist Church
Recovery Program
330 Ellis Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 674-6020
Email: recovery@glide.org
Website: www.glide.org/home.asp

Inter-City Family Support and Resource Network Inc.
StarTac
3801 3rd Street, Suite 610
San Francisco, CA 94124
Tel: (415) 920-2850

Jelani House Inc.
Outpatient Residential Services
1598 Quesada Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94124
Tel: (415) 822-5944

manalive Violence Prevention Programs
3338 17th Street, Suite #202
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 861-8614 (Office)
Tel: (866) man-alive (Toll Free)
Tel: (415) 249-9121 (Client Info. Line)
Email: manalive@sbcglobal.net
Website: www.manaliveinternational.org

M.O.V.E. (Men Overcoming Violence)
Anger Management Group
1385 Mission Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 626-MOVE
Email: move@menovercomingviolence.org
Website: www.menovercomingviolence.org

San Francisco Bay Counseling and Education Center
Domestic Violence and Anger Management Programs
1700 Irving Street
San Francisco, CA 94122
Tel: (415) 759-9500

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Allen Temple Baptist Church Social Services Ministry
Anger Management Program
8715 International Blvd.
Oakland, CA 94621
Tel: (510) 567-1495
Website: www.allen-temple.org

Second Chance
Domestic Violence Support Program
P.O. Box 643
Newark, CA 94560
Tel: (510) 886-8696 (Hayward)
Tel: (510) 792-4357 (General)
Website: www.secondchanceinc.com

Terra Firma Diversion/Educational Services
Domestic Violence Program
30030 Mission Blvd., Suite 112
Hayward, CA 94544
Tel: (510) 675-9362
Email: tfd@earthlink.net

West Oakland Mental Health Center
Adult and Children's Mental Health Services
2722 – 2730 Adeline Street
Oakland, CA 94607
Tel: (510) 465-1800
Email: wohc@wohc.org
Website: www.wohc.org/WOMH%20Page.htm

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR YOUTH

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

Alameda County Medical Center Highland Hospital
Sexual Assault Response Center
1411 East 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94602
Tel: (510) 534-9290 or (510) 534-9291
Website: www.acmedctr.org

Bay Area Legal Aid (San Francisco County)
Formerly S. F. Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation
50 Fell Street, 1st Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 982-1300
Email: Info@baylegal.org
Website: www.baylegal.org

Family Service Agency of San Francisco
Family Developmental Center (FDC)
2730 Bryant Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 282-1090
Email: cyf@fsasf.org
Website: www.fsasf.org

Family Service Agency of San Francisco
Teen Male Services: Together Taking Care of Business (TTCB) and Lil Bros
2730 Bryant Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 695-8300
Email: cyf@fsasf.org
Website: www.fsasf.org
PROGRMS AND SERVICES FOR YOUTH

M.O.V.E. (Men Overcoming Violence)
Anger Management Group
1385 Mission Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 626-MOVE
Email: move@menovercomingviolence.org
Website: www.menovercomingviolence.org

Raphael House
Children's Program
1065 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Tel: (415) 474-4621
Email: info@raphaelhouse.org
Website: www.raphaelhouse.org

Riley Center of St. Vincent de Paul
Rosalie House Emergency Shelter and Brennan House
3543 18th Street #4
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 552-2943 (Office)
Tel: (415) 235-0165 or (415) 831-3535 (Crisis Line)
Website: www.rileycenter.org

A Safe Place
Community Counseling, Education, and Outreach Program
P.O. Box 1075
Oakland, CA 94604
Tel: (510) 986-8600 (Office)
Tel: (510) 536-7233 (Crisis Line)
Email: dvnomore@pacbell.net
Website: www.asafeplacedsvs.org

ALAMEDA COUNTY

A Safe Place
Teen Violence Prevention Project
P.O. Box 1075
Oakland, CA 94604
Tel: (510) 986-8600 (Office)
Tel: (510) 536-7233 (Crisis Line)
Email: dvnomore@pacbell.net
Website: www.asafeplacedsvs.org
Second Chance
At Risk Teen Group
P.O. Box 643
Newark, CA 94560
Tel: (510) 792-4357
Website: www.secondchanceinc.com

Second Chance
Status Offenders
P.O. Box 643
Newark, CA 94560
Tel: (510) 792-4357
Website: www.secondchanceinc.com

West Oakland Mental Health Center
Adult and Children's Mental Health Services
2722 – 2730 Adeline Street
Oakland, CA 94607
Tel: (510) 463-1800
Email: wohc@wohc.org
Website: www.wohc.org/WOMHPage.htm

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

Cease for Peace
728 McAllister
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 292-0650
Email: mattie728@aol.com

Family Service Agency of San Francisco
Family Violence Prevention
2730 Bryant Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 695-8300
Email: cy@fsasf.org
Website: www.fsasf.org

The Family Violence Prevention Fund
It's Your Business Campaign
383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 252-8900 (FVPF)
Tel: (415) 292-1381 (It's Your Business Campaign)
Email: fund@endabuse.org
Website: www.endabuse.org

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
City Hall, Room 160
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 534-7111
Website: www.sfgov.org

Neighborhood Safety Partnership (NSP)
850 Bryant Street, Suite 135
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 553-1962
Email: nspsf@sfsafe.org
Website: www.sfsafe.org/NSP.html

Positive Directions Equals Change, Inc.
2111 Jennings Street
San Francisco, CA 94124
Tel: (415) 401-0199
Email: bigcregg@yahoo.com

Safety Network Programs
Safety Network Central Office
2012 Pine Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94115
Tel: (415) 202-7940
Email: snet@safetynetwork.org
Website: www.safetynetwork.org

Salvation Army
San Francisco Lighthouse Corps Community Center
445 9th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 503-3000
Email: info@tsagoldenstate.org
Website: www.tsagoldenstate.org
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

San Francisco Night Ministry
1031 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Tel: (415) 986-1464
Email: revfox@nightministry.com
Website: www.nightministry.com

San Francisco Sheriff's Department
RSVP/Victim Services (Resolve to Stop the Violence Project)
City Hall 456
One Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 575-6450
Website: www.cs.sfgov/sheriff/home.htm

San Francisco Sheriff's Department
SWAP/PREP (Sheriff's Work Alternative Program/Post Release Educational Program)
930 Bryant Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 575-6450
Website: www.cs.sfgov/sheriff/home.htm

San Francisco Sheriff's Department
The VINE Service
(Victim Information & Notification)
City Hall 436
One Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 575-6450
Website: www.cs.sfgov/sheriff/home.htm

Westside Crisis Clinic
Crisis Services
888 Turk Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
Tel: (415) 353-5050

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Center For Violence Resolution
1727 M.L. King Way, Suite 227
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel: (510) 836-3991

Second Chance
Couples Group Counseling
P.O. Box 643
Newark, CA 94560
Tel: (510) 792-4357
Website: www.secondchanceinc.com

Second Chance
Family Counseling
P.O. Box 643
Newark, CA 94560
Tel: (510) 792-4357
Website: www.secondchanceinc.com

OUTLYING COUNTY

The LeDoursey Gone But Not Forgotten Foundation
4416 Overend Ave.
Richmond, CA 94804
Tel: (510) 232-3158
Tel: (415) 310-1735

IDVAC Steering Committee. Back row, left to right: Oliver J. Williams, Ph.D.; Kelly Mitchell-Clark; William Oliver, Ph.D.; Linner Ward Griffin, Ed.D., MSW; Robert Hampton, Ph.D. Front row, left to right: Joyce N. Thomas, MPH, RN; Sheila Hankins; Esther J. Jenkins, Ph.D.; Antonia Vann, CDVC; Beth E. Richie, Ph.D.
Community Insights on Domestic Violence among African Americans:

Conversations About Domestic Violence and Other Issues Affecting Their Community

University of Minnesota
Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community

San Francisco/Oakland, CA, 2002

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Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
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St. Paul, MN 55108-6142
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