



*Plenary Session*

**Bridges between the Field of Violence and  
Other Destructive Behaviors**

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## **Bridges between the Field of Violence and Other Destructive Behaviors**

### **Introduction**

*Dr. Beth E. Richie*

The objectives of the *Bridges between the Field of Violence and Other Destructive Behaviors* session were to:

- Explore the extent to which domestic violence coexists with other forms of destructive behaviors;
- Acquaint participants with the opportunities and obstacles associated with a systematic understanding that attempts to bridge various research and service fields; and
- Develop a more comprehensive, multidisciplinary understanding of the causes of violence and the associated implications for prevention, research, and service delivery.

Links exist between the field of violence and other destructive behaviors that pose a threat to the health, safety, and well being of African American communities in this country. Indeed, violence that occurs in the private lives of individuals is associated with other manifestations of community disorganization. Thus, exploring the correlation between various social problems and violence helps uncover some of the common social, political, and economic dynamics that are at the root of the disproportionate rates of violence in the African American community.

An important step in addressing the link between violence and other problems in the African American community is to expand the conceptual frame through which the issues are examined. A departure from the dominant conceptualizations and analytical understandings of violence in the field, the conceptual frame through which domestic violence in the African American community is viewed must be broad and complexities must be intentionally introduced. That is, instead of viewing violence as a discrete, isolated pattern of behavior that can be problematized as a distinct variable, the ways that violence intersects with the myriad of other problems that affect African Americans must be addressed.

The rationale for this approach is the belief that African Americans are uniquely positioned to understand complexity because the circumstances and conditions surrounding our lives and our communities have been particularly complex. Thus, understanding violence in African American communities requires the recognition of other specific social problems that are correlated with it, as well as the more general impact of systemic discrimination and repressive social forces.

In addition to focusing on the linkages between various social problems, it is important to note the dialectic between individual behavior and community dynamics. There is a range of factors that inhibit or serve as restraints to behavior, and there are a number of individual, interpersonal, and cultural factors that cause violence, complicate it, or camouflage it and can

lead to problems such as community denial. Such factors highlight the questions of skepticism, lack of commitment to the Black community's most vulnerable members, contradictory ideology, and competing priorities. Exploration of such issues also prompt discussions about the capacity of our communities, evidence of resiliency, and creative examples of problemsolving that require fuller attention. In the end, the aggregate picture is one of considerable possibility and strengths and potential that is yet to be fully realized as African American communities struggle to overcome violence and the myriad of other related social problems faced in contemporary society.

## **Bridges between the Field of Domestic Violence and Other Destructive Behavior**

### ***Presenter:***

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### **Introduction**

The objectives of this paper are to explore the extent to which domestic violence coexists with other forms of destructive behavior. Additionally, readers will become acquainted with the opportunities and obstacles associated with a systemic understanding of violence that tries to bridge various research and service fields. Finally, ideas will be presented that will allow the development of a comprehensive, multidisciplinary understanding of violence causation and the associated implications for prevention, research, and service delivery.

### **Domestic Violence and Other Destructive Behavior**

Part of the problem with discussing the bridges between domestic violence and different types of violence is that there is limited information on violence.<sup>1</sup> Existing research does not adequately detail how much gang-related, drug-related, child abuse, domestic, work place, and predatory violence exists. Without this information, there is no measure of how often various types of violence occur. There is even less information on how the various types of violence are interrelated. What is known is that domestic violence is identified as either a cause or by product of such destructive behaviors as: drug abuse<sup>3</sup>; delinquency<sup>3</sup>; youth violence<sup>4,5</sup>; suicide<sup>6</sup>—battered women account for 25 percent of women who attempt suicide<sup>7</sup>; child abuse—the incidence of physical abuse in pregnancy ranges between 4-17 percent<sup>8</sup>; and 45-59 percent of mothers of abused children have been abused<sup>7</sup>; school failure—school drop out rates<sup>3</sup> and poor academic performance<sup>9</sup>; homicide<sup>10</sup>; and elder abuse. Because domestic violence is associated with other destructive behavior and with multiple problem families, the prevention and intervention strategies these families require demand a systemic approach to the problem with innumerable types of service providers being involved in the solution. Such a comprehensive approach can be problematic, as services are often fragmented. However, the need for such a approach offers service providers the opportunity to develop a comprehensive system of services for the family beset with domestic violence. It is imperative that the causes of destructive behavior that promote domestic violence be addressed if there is any hope of ending domestic violence in this country.

Research has shown that children witnessing violence can be harmed cognitively, emotionally, and developmentally.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is logical to conclude that children who are exposed to domestic violence are at risk for developing various problems that will cause them to need a variety of social services from various disciplines. This perspective has led some practitioners to

assert that witnessing domestic violence is a form of child abuse. Consequently, addressing issues of how domestic violence is associated with other forms of violence is a very important area of research.

Yet progress in developing a comprehensive system of services has been impaired by a concept known as the “double-edged sword.” If someone identifies a problem, it can be used against that person to stigmatize and disenfranchise him/her. But, if the person does not identify the problem and pretends it does not exist, then he/she does not get any help for the problem. So there is always a messy middle ground. The solution is to stop being reductionistic and simpleminded, as it causes people to take a unitary view of things. Services providers must break issues up into complexities and begin to treat each aspect of the problem. Behavior is multidetermined, and providers must seize every opportunity to heal all the multifactorial causes that are generating problems in families and communities. Simultaneously, providers must be mindful not to break people up in little pieces because people are more than the problems they experience. Thus, a holistic approach to treatment is necessary. This requires recognizing risk factors for family violence—such as poverty, social dislocation, addiction, and mental health problems—that can be catalysts for destructive behavior. Holistic treatment also requires the provision of appropriate wraparound services to address all these issues.

### **Different Types of Violence**

There are several different types of violence.<sup>11</sup> Among the most prevalent are group, predatory, gang-related, drug-related, and interpersonal altercation violence. See Table 1 for a proposed approach to categorizing prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies for some of the various types of violence.

#### *Group Violence*

Group violence entails destructive behavior exhibited by a group of people, e.g., rioting. A major obstacle to diminishing this type of violence has to do with public policy. When a riot occurs, there is a huge public response, followed by a public policy response. The public policy generated should be intended to be responsive to group violence issues. However, there is usually conceptual unclarity about the different types of violence and the need to address various types of violence differently. Thus, when policy to address mob violence is developed, it addresses individual violence, rather than group issues. For example, following the 1994 riots in Los Angeles, legislators enacted a “3 strikes and you’re out” rule. This legislation, which requires mandatory jail time with a third felony criminal offense after two previous violent or serious felony offenses, clearly addresses the violent acts of individuals, not groups. A more appropriate response to this type of violence would be addressing the social ills of the disenfranchised persons committing the violence. The focus should be on rebuilding the community and providing relief and crisis intervention for the victims of group violence. Additionally, law enforcement agencies should devise intervention strategies with contingency plans that address group violence.

### *Predatory Violence*

Predatory violence usually exists when attempts to harm people are secondary to obtaining some gain—primarily economic gain by committing such violent acts as robbery. Strategies for preventing this type of violence should include bonding all children with caregivers and providing parenting classes for high-risk families. Such measures are imperative because it has been shown that children who are bonded to parents, family, and school are less likely to be violent.<sup>12</sup> Retrospective studies show that psychopaths were children who experienced traumatic stress as children.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, parenting training may help to prevent parents from imposing this level of stress on their children.<sup>14</sup> Predatory violence can be further diminished if the basic needs of everyone in the community—adequate education, health care, housing, and job opportunities—are met. Criminal justice tactics to reduce predatory violence should include community policing, restricted gun access, and incarceration of perpetrators until after they reach age 35.

### *Gang-related Violence*

Gang-related violence and drug-related violence are intertwined, as many gang-related crimes have to do with drug activity. Many gang disputes are territorial; they fight over who gets to sell drugs or engage in other criminal activities in certain areas. If there is no organized crime, the ownership of various territories is disputed. The result is anarchy crime that is more violent than organized crime. Thus, there is a benefit to organized crime. Gang-related violence is also borne of poverty. In communities where the basic needs of residents are not being met, engaging in criminal activity—particularly that which generates income—becomes more enticing. So economic-based solutions, such as Job Corps, vocational training, and employment opportunities are necessary.<sup>14</sup> Other solutions include reducing class sizes, implementing classroom behavioral management and cooperative learning, and providing youth with alternate activities to engage in.<sup>14</sup> Gang-related violence can further be curbed with mandatory sentencing for felonies involving firearms.

### *Drug-related Violence*

Outside its relationship with gang-related violence, drug-related violence is quite complex. There are four different types of drug-related violence: systemic, pharmacologic, economic-compulsive, and negligence.<sup>15</sup> The category of systemic drug-related violence occurs when drug dealers kill one another over who is entitled to sell drugs in particular locations. Again, such violence exists because of the absence of organized crime. Systemic drug-related crime has been particularly prevalent in the District of Columbia, which is notorious for its extremely high drug-related murder rate. Strategies for preventing systemic drug-related crime include legalizing drugs and organized crime, community policing, and incarceration of drug offenders.

Pharmacologic drug-related violence happens when persons high on drugs injure others because they are intoxicated. The primary prevention strategy for this type of violence is drug abuse prevention. Other solutions include training in managing violence so as not to be injured by an intoxicated person, and a combination of incarceration and treatment. Economic-

compulsive drug-related violence occurs when a drug user engages in criminal activity to get money for drugs. Again, legalizing drugs is a possible strategy for preventing this type of violence, as are drug addiction prevention, incarceration, treatment for drug users, and treatment for victims. Negligence violence happens when a person intoxicated from drugs accidentally kills another person, e.g., a drunk driving homicide. Because these different types of drug-related violence have different motivations, prevention and intervention strategies will differ. See Table 1 for prevention and intervention strategies.

### *Interpersonal Altercation Violence*

Interpersonal altercation violence is the type of violence that occurs between family and friends as the result of an argument. One key issue surrounding this type of violence is identifying the victim and perpetrator. In domestic violence situations, for example, the woman is clearly a victim at one point. If she retaliates against her abuser, she then becomes the perpetrator. Another example is children who are sexually assaulted. When previously sexually assaulted children reach a certain age, they may begin to do unto others what was done unto them. So how do we categorize this formerly abused child? Is this child a victim or a perpetrator? Because various social agencies answer this question differently, they fail to collaborate on finding a solution regarding what to do with the child victim who becomes a perpetrator.

Interpersonal altercation violence also demonstrates various linkages between such destructive behavior as domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, family sexual violence, and/or drug addiction. For example, the work of Fullilove and Fullilove<sup>16</sup> clearly reveals a bridge between child sexual abuse and drug addiction—an affliction that puts women at greater risk for experiencing various forms of violence. They studied women who were crack addicts and found that 85 percent of these women had been sexually and physically abused multiple times. With such alarming rates of abuse, it is not difficult to understand why these women use drugs to deal with the problems they encounter in their social, emotional, physical, and spiritual lives.

### **Suggestions for High-leverage Violence Prevention Efforts**

Part of the solution to curtailing violence involves marketing, which African Americans must pursue aggressively. Take, for example, television appearances. Many do not care to be involved in television, but part of the reason they subject themselves to the scrutiny of the media is because it is a vehicle through which critical issues are brought to light. People are more receptive to what you have to say if you're on television. Unfortunately, many unscrupulous people are aware of this reality and misuse television at every opportunity. Still, it is important to use the media to market an African American perspective on violence prevention.

Another high-leverage strategy that must be employed is management of human resources. For most, the only way to deal with people is through reward and punishment. There exists a mentality of “if you're good to me, I'll treat you better. If you're bad to me, I'll treat you worse.” That is what this country is based on. Everybody goes around bullying everybody instead of having conversations around what people want to do with themselves to develop their personal mastery. There is a concept known as personal mission. The premise of this concept is

that people respond well when you help them establish a personal value and belief that they are doing something constructive, useful, and positive. This approach can help relieve people's sense of traumatic helplessness, and can help in mobilizing limited personnel resources into an effective, efficacious violence prevention team.

Another high-leverage prevention strategy involves helping families and communities to clarify their missions. These missions are equally as important as personal missions. With families, each person should be clear from the beginning on the direction in which the family will move. Couples should resolve from the outset that if they do not get along, their issues will not trickle down to the children. Couples should also agree in the beginning on the consequences if violence enters their relationship. If missions are established up front, there will be far less domestic violence situations and destructive behavior. Similarly, communities must develop missions that establish a strong social infrastructure in the community to reduce the incidence of violence.

The utility of infrastructure in the community is illustrated by an interesting study that examined murder rates in Chicago.<sup>17</sup> The researchers found poor Black communities that had very, very low murder rates; and they found poor Black communities that had very, very high murder rates. All these African American communities were equally poor, so the difference was not poverty. The difference was the presence of social fabric. This social fabric, or lack thereof, can be a determinant of whether a community is violent. Where you have programs in which people go out and do things like helping people develop personal mastery and personal missions, you are less likely to see destructive behavior.

A key issue in dealing with violence among African Americans is learning to work within a system that many view as anti-Black. Take, for example, the problem of drugs in Black communities. The system has been known to spend \$30,000 a year, for at least 5 years, to incarcerate someone who possesses \$20 worth of narcotics. This money could just as easily provide funds for treatment for substance abuse as it can provide funds for incarceration for substance abuse. Instead of receiving treatment, African Americans are more likely to be arrested. Indeed, the drug arrest rate is disproportionately high in African American communities, as compared to other ethnic groups. The end result is that when the person is released from prison in 5 years, he/she will have a felony prison record, will not get a job anywhere, and is not going to get treatment for the drugs he/she was using in prison. Similar problems exist with the education system, as it fails to financially invest in African American children. If you spend \$5,000 on one child's education per year from kindergarten to high school versus \$20,000 per year on another child's education from kindergarten to high school, it's not difficult to figure out who will fare better on standardized tests and get into college. The problem with such an arbitrary distribution of funding is that no one can determine which child will find the cure for cancer or make some other great contribution to society. This type of systemic neglect has a great influence on all forms of violence.

Another violence-related issue deals with helping people to understand anger and the fact that anytime there is anger, there is hurt. If we enter a room and someone's crying, the first thing we ask is "What is wrong?" But if we enter a room and someone is angry, we do not ask that same question. We fail to see that beneath the anger is hurt. So another strategy that we have to

explore to cut across different types of interrelated violence is teaching treatment providers how to recognize the hurt behind anger and how to respond appropriately. Pain can prompt people to engage in destructive behavior, like drug abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence as a means of reenacting their pain. If they were sexually assaulted, they are likely to sexually assault somebody else. Revictimization rates are about 23 percent for most types of problems.<sup>18</sup> So there clearly needs to be a focus on hurt and dealing with that pain.

A final strategy to curtail violence is establishing collaborations and networks to influence policy. The African American community has made some mistakes by not maximizing its resources and failing to spend adequate time on strategizing and developing collaborations within the community. Indeed, this is the case with service providers, as child abuse, domestic violence, and police agencies fail to work together on common missions to address similar issues. Leaders in Black communities must mobilize to provide information on important issues surrounding legislation that affects African Americans. They must commit to investing in proactive behavior for the good of the community and encourage communication among service-providing agencies. This again relates to the idea of a strong social fabric. Enacting a networking strategy on city, State, and regional levels creates a strong social fabric for communities. With a strong infrastructure in place, communities can agree on a mission and advance a proactive agenda. The network serves as a source of labor, money, and expertise to promote the agenda; and it ultimately establishes a foundation for the decline in destructive behavior and social problems in the African American community.



**Table 1: Types of Violence with Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Strategies**

Type of violence	Prevention	Intervention	Postvention
Group (Mob) Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Carefully address social ills of the disenfranchised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have well-thought-out police intervention with contingency plans to address group (mob) violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rebuild and don't make the same mistakes twice</li> <li>▪ Provide relief and crisis intervention for community victims and front-line intervention staff</li> </ul>
Predatory Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that everyone's basic needs are met by ensuring adequate education, health care, housing, and job opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community policing, community organization, reduction in the availability of drugs, well lit streets, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Restrict gun access</li> <li>▪ Incarceration of perpetrators of predatory violence until after 35 years old</li> <li>▪ Treatment for victims</li> </ul>
Interpersonal Altercation Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children's rights, civil rights, women's rights, parenting classes, and conflict resolution training</li> <li>▪ Higher level of management sophistication within the U.S.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Police training addressing onsite intervention</li> <li>▪ Identifying victims in emergency rooms,</li> <li>▪ Better legal support for victims</li> <li>▪ Family therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adequate battered women's shelters with resources and treatment</li> <li>▪ Treatment for co-victims</li> </ul>
Gang-related Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction in class size, non-graded elementary schools, behavioral techniques for classroom management, cooperative learning program, one-on-one tutoring, school organization activities suggested by Comer, after school recreational activities, and alternate activities for youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Job Corps, vocational training with educational component, and employment opportunities</li> <li>▪ Portable metal detectors in schools</li> <li>▪ Group violence mediation efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mandatory sentencing for felonies involving firearms</li> <li>▪ Treatment for victims and co-victims</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Types of Violence with Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Strategies (continued)**

Type of violence	Prevention	Intervention	Postvention
Drug-related Violence – Economic-Compulsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthening ethnic identity</li> <li>▪ Legalization of drugs</li> <li>▪ Drug addiction prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cooperation while being robbed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incarceration</li> <li>▪ Readily available treatment for drug users</li> <li>▪ Treatment for victims</li> </ul>
Drug-related Violence - Systemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legalization of drugs and organized crime</li> <li>▪ Prevent U.S. from dumping drugs into the African American community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community policing</li> <li>▪ Community organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incarceration</li> </ul>
Drug-related Violence - Pharmacologic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Primary prevention of drug abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Skills in managing violence to keep from getting hurt by an intoxicated person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Combination of incarceration and treatment</li> </ul>
Drug-related Violence - Negligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public campaigns such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Arrest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incarceration</li> </ul>
Sexual Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Education of children about good touch/bad touch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encouraging kids to tell if being abused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incarceration for perpetrator</li> <li>▪ Treatment for victims</li> </ul>
Terrorism and Hate Crime Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Acceptance of diversity and education about stereotypes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surveillance activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Services to victims</li> <li>▪ Self-defense</li> <li>▪ Lawsuits</li> </ul>
Multicide - Mass Murder, Serial Killing, Murder Spree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensuring that children bond to a caregiver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surveillance</li> <li>▪ Arrest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incarceration for a long time</li> </ul>
Violence by Mentally Ill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parenting education for parents of mentally ill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conflict resolution</li> <li>▪ Equip emergency rooms to manage violent mentally ill</li> <li>▪ Train therapists on how to manage violent mentally ill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify chronically mentally ill and treat with structured milieu or outpatient commitment</li> <li>▪ Drug treatment</li> <li>▪ Treatment of victims</li> </ul>
Violence by Organically Impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seat belts</li> <li>▪ Safer cars</li> <li>▪ Lower speed limits</li> <li>▪ Bicycle/motorcycle helmets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and manage in a structured environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Placement in a structured therapeutic program and medication management with serenics and beta blockers</li> </ul>

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## **Response: Bridges between the Field of Violence and Other Destructive Behaviors**

### ***Respondent:***

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Although research in the field of domestic violence is not a new endeavor, researchers and clinical professionals have only recently begun to consider the impact of domestic violence in non-European American cultures. The decisions to separate groups have been used in some cases to show similarity among victims. In most cases, however, the separation has increased the amount of attention being paid to cultural difference. This is especially true of African Americans, who have historically been grouped with Caucasians in studies of domestic abuse. By not making the distinction between African Americans and other groups, inherent differences in beliefs, values, and attitudes surrounding domestic violence were not addressed. The risk involved in devoting no attention to such issues results in the creation of intervention and prevention programs that do not address cultural specifics.

The *Bridges between the Field of Violence and Other Destructive Behaviors* session highlighted many ideas and issues that can help researchers, clinicians, and providers in their attempts to work with African Americans who are affected by domestic violence. The session addressed important issues of socio-economic status (SES), intergenerational transmission of behaviors, and community influence. Obviously, these factors need to be considered when thinking about the occurrence of violence within the home and also its perpetuation. Perhaps with such knowledge, service providers and other professionals might be able to intervene and prevent future episodes or stop the cycle before it even begins. Dr. Bell's presentation outlines prevention and intervention treatment models. This is very important because in many discussions on domestic violence in the African American community, little, if any, attention is paid to prevention efforts. Instead, we are often inundated with statistics, figures, and reports that never provide concrete preventive strategies or convey an understanding of why preventive strategies for African Americans must be different than those used with mainstream populations. With impending welfare reform, community institutions will definitely need to play a greater role in these prevention efforts and, thus, will become even more important in the lives of African Americans. However, we must understand that prevention is not only the responsibility of community organizations, but also of others in the community who provide emotional, financial, and social support. This may go beyond community institutions and include friends, family, and co-workers. The main issue of concern should be delivering services in the most non-obtrusive manner.

Emphasis should not be placed on determining the cause of domestic violence and linking causality with poverty. In the field of research, it is well established that when dealing with people, it is very difficult to establish a definitive causal relationship. At best, we can determine the correlation and associations between poverty and domestic violence. Certainly those who live in poverty are at heightened risk for domestic violence, including child abuse and

partner abuse; but simply stating that poverty is the most significant risk factor does not tell the whole story.

In this age of “at-risk” diagnosis, it becomes easy to say that certain groups of people are at-risk for this or that. However, as researchers and practitioners, it is extremely important that we define risk and clearly delineate what is actual risk and what is not. With regard to poverty, poverty in and of itself may not be a risk factor. Certainly those individuals living in poverty who have strong social support networks, strong family ties, and supportive partners may be less at-risk than some middle- or upper-class individuals who lack such protective factors. It may be that extenuating circumstances that accompany poverty are the actual risk factors. If this is the case, then stating that those living in poverty are at increased risk does not explain that poverty is the problem—the factors associated with poverty are. Such factors include little social or familial support, lower levels of education, the stressors involved with rearing children as a single parent, and lower thresholds of tolerance. It is important to note that there are many individuals who live in poverty who are not abused and do not abuse their children. What might be of more interest is determining which individuals are more likely to abuse their children and what it is about conditions of poverty that leads to the abuse.

In examining the issue of social economic status (SES), ask the following questions: What about middle or upper SES individuals who abuse? In these cases, is the abuse attributable to SES or to issues of control? Arguably, there are many cases where partner abuse is a function of controlling behavior, not just income. In many cases, abusers have unequal relationships with the abused partner. Sometimes, when a partner challenges the abuser’s power, an abusive episode occurs to restore the inequitable relationship. This type of behavior can occur in higher SES households, as it can occur in those with lower SES. Unfortunately, those with lower SES do not have the resources to keep the abuse hidden. Unlike individuals with higher incomes who can seek expensive family counseling or clandestine medical attention, those living in poverty may be forced to seek assistance in more public manners, such as through police assistance or through public medical attention. After giving help for domestic disputes, these agencies are often required to report statistics to county or government agencies, who, in turn, report the numbers in monthly, quarterly, or yearly reports. The end result is that public perception of abuse as a problem among those in poverty is perpetuated.

## **Bridges between the Field of Violence and Other Destructive Behaviors**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Strategies to reduce violence in the African American community must address correlational factors that coexist with violence. The following is a summary of recommendations identified during the *Bridges between the Field of Violence and Other Destructive Behaviors* session.

#### *Expand Conceptualization of Violence*

There are various types of violence, from gang violence to drug-related violence. The nature of violence is also varied, prompting the exploration of circumstances and situations in which different forms of violence occur. The combination of the type and nature of violence attests to the complexity of the issue as previously noted. An expanded conceptualization of violence will point to different interventions and ultimately enhance the programmatic effectiveness of prevention programs. Furthermore, in the short term, an expanded conceptualization of violence will involve innumerable types of service providers and a broader base of support to address the problem of violence in the Black community.

#### *Explore the Common Risk Factors*

It is important to examine common risk factors when addressing the linkages between violence and other destructive behaviors. Such factors include poverty; social dislocations; decaying neighborhoods; addictions; mental health problems; and erosion of social, health, and human services. Policy shifts must also be geared toward effectively addressing increased risk, as well as improving services to marginalized members of the African American community. The assumption is that where risk is concentrated, family violence and other destructive behaviors may co-exist as part of a web of social instability arising from the common risk factors.

#### *Involvement of Various Agents of Change*

There are various sectors of the African American community that must be engaged in the process of building bridges between the field of violence and other destructive behaviors. Researchers and scholars have a particular role, as do other community members, in the change process. The role of the media has been identified as important in shifting public consciousness to focus on the issue of violence. The media should be used as a tool to market the truth and mobilize people to act. Similarly, Black leaders need to take on the issue and become agents of change. Specific suggestions included convening a leadership conference, networking with leadership groups, and developing a mechanism for political action and advocacy. All change agents must be held accountable for making the reduction/elimination of violence a priority in the African American community.

### *Develop a Systematic Approach*

Prevention and intervention strategies associated with families and communities require a systematic approach to addressing the problems they face. Many levels of intervention are necessary, and the full gamut of service providers must be involved in the solution. Services must be comprehensive and targeted at the shared risk factors for violence and other destructive behaviors, thus allowing several behavioral and systemic problems to be addressed at once. Solutions must be holistic, rather than devised out of a unitary view of issues. Wraparound services, culturally based intervention, and multidimensional programs are needed.

### *Focus on Resiliency*

The emphasis of the services, as well as the conceptualization of the problems, should be on strengthening community capacity so that there are increased opportunities for resiliency. This includes attempting to get a clearer handle on the factors influencing situations where individuals or groups respond to hurt, trauma, and violence with increased coping strategies. Appealing to an individual's or group's personal mastery and creating opportunities for growth, creativity, and involvement as agents of change are warranted. Programs and community interventions must be solution-based and long term.

### *Strengthen Social Fabric*

The long-term nature of the effort to build bridges between the field of violence and other destructive behavior points to the need to strengthen the social fabric of African American communities in the broadest sense. Social fabric has been found to be a major determinant of whether a neighborhood/community is violent. It is similarly linked with other problems such as educational achievement, substance abuse, crime, and other health and social measures of well being. Components of strengthening the social fabric include a sense of shared commitment and power in defining issues, understanding that the community is more than its problems, commitment to long-term struggle, and decreasing isolation and scapegoating. Focusing on helping African American communities embrace their strengths while taking an honest look at the problem of violence within their communities will enable the identification of common factors and the resolution of the violence problem.