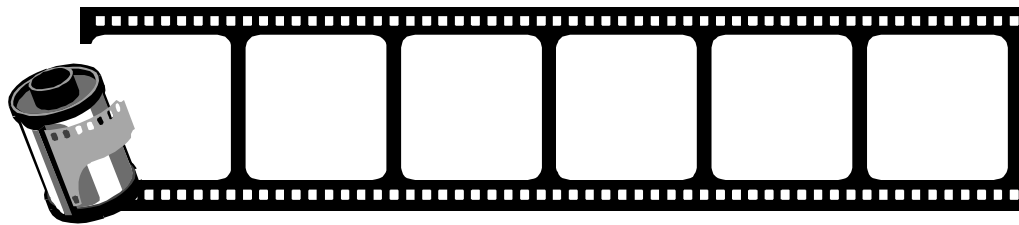


Domestic Violence Across the Lifespan of African Americans:



Teens/Youth

Domestic Violence Across the Lifespan of African Americans: Teens/Youth Introduction

Dr. Esther J. Jenkins

Peer Violence

There is good news and not so good news in the area of youth peer violence. After dramatic increases in youth violence from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the last several years have seen significant decreases—particularly in lethal violence and serious assault among teens. Between 1994 and 1995, there was a 32 percent decline in aggravated assaults among teens and a 17 percent decline in juvenile homicides (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997). An analysis of the trend indicates that the decline in juvenile homicides was accounted for almost exclusively by a drop in firearm homicides of non-family members by Black youth (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997). Early figures from 1996 indicate that the decline in youth-perpetrated violent crime is continuing, with a 9.2 percent decline in violent juvenile arrests between 1995 and 1996 (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997).

As encouraging as these reports are, there is clear evidence that youth involvement in violence, as victim and perpetrator, remains alarmingly high, as evidenced by the following:

- Despite the declines in juvenile arrests for violent crimes in 1995, the number of arrests is still much higher than in the mid-1980s prior to the upsurge in youth violence (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997).
- Youth ages 12 to 19 still have the highest simple and aggravated assault rates of any group (Taylor, 1997).
- The number of youth reporting violent victimization at school between 1989 and 1995 has not changed, with a slight increase in the number reporting being threatened (Kaufman et al., 1998).
- According to the 1995 *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 10 percent of high school students carried a weapon to school in the month prior to the study; 8 percent (15 percent of which were Black male youth) were threatened or injured with a weapon in the last 30 days; and fear of violence at school kept 5 percent of high school students at home in the last 30 days prior to the survey (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997).
- The percentage of students fearing for their safety at school or between home and school actually increased between 1989 and 1995 (Kaufman et al., 1998).
- The involvement of girls in serious violence has increased considerably: from 1984 to 1994, with female arrests for violent offenses increasing at 4 times the rate of males (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997). In 1995, female juveniles accounted for 15 percent of

juvenile arrests for violent crimes and 20 percent of arrests for aggravated assault (Kelly, Huizanga, Thornberry, & Loeber, 1997).

- Homicide remains the leading cause of death for Black males age 15 to 24 and the second leading cause of death for Black females in this age group. In 1996, the homicide death rate of for Black males between 15 and 24 was 123.1 per 100,000, as compared to 14.0 for White males; for young Black women, the rate was 14.7 per 100,000 (Peters, Kochanek, & Murphy, 1998).

Taken together, the good and not so good news points to several conclusions. First, it is possible to reduce youth violence. The declines in youth violence, which have continued long enough to suggest that they are not simply statistical corrections to extreme scores, are particularly impressive given the dire predictions that were made in the early 1990s about the continued escalation in violence among young males. Secondly, because violence is still a serious problem for youth, it is important that we identify, enhance, and expand the programs that are most responsible for the decline. The mixed results, i.e., dramatic declines in serious violent offending not matched by declines in less serious incidents, indicate the need to look more closely at what is working with whom.

Dating Violence

Dating violence is a serious problem among teens. Girls between the ages of 16 and 19 have one of the highest rates of intimate violence of any group of women (Greenfeld et al., 1998). Estimates of teen dating violence vary considerably, but it is estimated that 12 to 59 percent of teens are involved in dating violence (Schwartz, O'Leary, & Kendziora, 1997; Malik, Sorenson, Aneshensel, 1997). While research indicates that teen girls are as likely as boys, and often more so, to perpetuate intimate violence (Girschick, 1993), the evidence suggests that girls are the victims of the more serious violence. For example, in Chicago in 1995, 14 percent of the 13- to 19-year-old victims reported to the police were victimized by a boyfriend, as compared to 0.6 percent victimized by a girlfriend (Chicago Department of Public Health, 1996). Furthermore, there is evidence that teen dating violence is a precursor to adult involvement in domestic abuse (Girschick, 1993).

Despite their prevalence, youth peer violence and youth dating violence are typically not addressed together. There are almost no studies—the one exception being Malik, Sorenson, and Aneshensel (1998)—which explicitly examine the possible/probable relationship between the two in terms of risk factors and prevention. Studies of incarcerated batterers, i.e., those committing the most serious offenses, that find that these perpetrators have the same profiles as prisoners who have assaulted strangers and acquaintances (Healy, Smith, & Sullivan, 1998) certainly suggests a nexus between these two types of offending.

Plenary Goals

The goals of this plenary session were to address youth peer violence prevention and youth dating violence prevention among African Americans. Ms. Renée Wilson-Brewer from the Newton, Massachusetts-based Educational Development Center discussed traditional programs that address peer violence among African American youth and what seems to be working and not working in the area. Mr. Ivan Juzang of Philadelphia-based MEE Productions, Inc. talked about his work on teen dating violence among urban youth and the production and use of multimedia products in the prevention of such violence. Drawing on her work in youth violence prevention and other sources, Ms. Renée Wilson-Brewer also discussed the relationship between peer and youth violence and how this has impacted the youth violence prevention movement.

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Traditional School-Based Approaches to the Prevention of Violence among African American Youth

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Introduction

Violent crime decreased 7 percent between 1996 and 1997, with homicide rates declining to levels last seen in 1970 (U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 1998a). However, teens and African Americans continue to experience the highest rates of violent crime. In 1997, the serious crime victimization rate for African Americans was 20.7 per 1,000 population, compared to 12.9 per 1,000 among Whites (DOJ, 1998b). Data also tell us that young people are both the victims and the perpetrators of violence. Approximately one-quarter of serious violent crimes are committed by juveniles between the ages of 12 and 17 (DOJ, 1998b).

Most traditional efforts to address the problem have been based in school settings. Current school-based approaches to the prevention of youth violence began in the late 1980s when youth violence became recognized as a serious and growing problem in the United States. More than 10 years ago, an article that chronicled 15 days in the life of Lafayette Walton, a 12-year-old African American boy living in a Chicago public housing project, appeared on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* (Kotlowitz, 1987). During those 15 days, no 24-hour period passed without violence. He witnessed gang recruiting and gang wars; drug dealing and drug taking; assaults, both verbal and physical; shoot-outs; family violence; rape; and death. There was also frequent fear of death, constant nightmares concerning death, and feelings of grief as the result of death. The article, written by Alex Kotlowitz, was the basis for his 1991 book, *There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America*.

The violence detailed in the June 1987 *Wall Street Journal* article shocked many readers. People living and working in communities not yet touched by violence were unaware of its pervasiveness or its effects. According to the article, psychologists and social workers had recently become alarmed by findings suggesting that many youngsters exposed to violence on a routine basis were exhibiting the same post traumatic stress symptoms as Vietnam combat veterans. Such revelations raised questions about the effects of regularly witnessing violence on the social and emotional development of these urban youth.

But during the ensuing years, violence intensified in some areas and spread to others. For small but growing segments of the population, violence became the context of daily life. Youth witnessed it, barely escaped it, or became caught up in it. Both local and national print and broadcast media began to dramatize violence in story and image on a daily basis. Unfortunately, the media often exploited it for effect and to increase their audience base. Eventually, violence was trivialized via cartoon characterizations and satiric representations, such as the now-famous

New Yorker (1993) cover of gun-totting youngsters alighting from a bright yellow school bus, their Uzis and Tec-9s in tow.

During this time, many people became informed—and many more ill-informed—about the scope and nature of the problem of violence. Some saw violence as just an urban problem, while others viewed it as a youth problem. Still others saw violence as a race problem—specifically, an African American problem and even more specific, an African American male problem. Additionally, most people regarded violence solely as a criminal justice problem to be handled by the police, the courts, and correctional facilities.

Others attempting to find ways to deal with violence and its consequences—including, youth, parents, teachers, principals, health care providers, community residents, and human service workers—held a different perspective on the issue. To them, violence was not just a criminal or a juvenile justice problem, but also a public health problem—one that was taking an enormous toll in terms of injury, disability, death, and general quality of life. Although in the minority, at least in the beginning, these were people who advocated for and initiated violence prevention interventions. During this time, funding, initially scarce, became available from some local and national foundations willing to support early prevention efforts.

Over what seemed to be a relatively short period of time, there was a proliferation of violence prevention interventions and materials. Unfortunately, although more and more interventions were being developed, many of them were similar to interventions that already existed. When replication took place, decisions regarding which interventions to replicate were often based on less than sound criteria. In some cases, the fact that an intervention intuitively “sounded good” was reason enough to try it. The philosophy was that doing something was better than doing nothing, and that it made the most sense to direct interventions at the nation’s adolescent population.

What was missing in all of this, though, was an understanding of the range of risk factors for violence and the importance of developing interventions designed to reduce one or more of those specific risks. As a result, many youth violence prevention interventions were school based, employed classroom curricula, and were attempts to change the individual behavior of adolescents. By their very nature, these interventions did not involve youth disconnected from school, many of whom are African American. In addition, because these interventions were aimed at all students, and thus were generic, they seldom met the needs of those in-school youth most at risk. Moreover, because they were developed for all youth, most of these interventions did not speak to African American youth’s problems in meaningful ways.

There were other problems. Few interventions addressed the school environment in which the violence was occurring, or involved the larger community in collaborative, multi-component efforts that acknowledged the pervasiveness of violence in our society. Nor did prevention efforts capitalize on the rich body of knowledge on aggression and violence from the behavioral sciences, including research methods and measures by which to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Although this view of the nation’s youth violence prevention history over the past 10 years presents a rather negative account of attempts to intervene, substantial change has occurred

in recent years. Via trial and error, as well as sound research, the knowledge base has improved substantially. Many efforts are no longer reactive in nature; instead, they are truly preventive measures designed to change social, behavioral, and environmental factors that have contributed to the prevalence of violence. Poverty and socioeconomic inequality have been acknowledged as major risk factors for violence. Collaboration across disciplines, as well as among organizations and communities, has also begun to take place, and the large gap between research and practice is slowly narrowing. Also helping to advance the field has been recognition of the central role of firearms in interpersonal violence and the clear associations among alcohol, drugs, and interpersonal violence. All of these advances have affected policy decisions, funding priorities, and program evaluation requirements. We do not have “the answer,” but we are certainly asking better questions.

Violence Prevention Interventions and Violence Prevention Programs

There is a range of school-based approaches that is being employed to prevent violence among African American youth. Although the majority of interventions are not designed specifically for African American students, many are being used within schools with predominantly or solely African American student populations and are being adapted to meet these students’ needs.

An important step in the advancement of violence prevention efforts is that the difference between violence prevention interventions and violence prevention programs is now recognized and understood by many working in the field. Violence prevention interventions are specific, targeted activities for preventing violence that can either stand alone or comprise part of a program. Violence prevention programs are multi-faceted prevention efforts, i.e., programs are comprised of interventions.

Those working in the field also acknowledge that there are primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions that should be targeted toward populations based on level of need. Primary prevention strategies are designed to be applied to an entire population or to the environment that affects them in efforts to prevent violence before it occurs. Secondary prevention strategies are used with youth who have had some initial involvement with violence, either as victim or perpetrator. These two levels of prevention are distinguished from tertiary interventions, which are designed to address violence among adolescents who are already involved in violent activities or are practicing behaviors that put them at high risk for violence. In addition, as outlined by the public health approach to health promotion, interventions need not—and should not—employ educational strategies alone. Instead, they must be combined with legislative, environmental/technological, and recreational strategies.

In the process, it has become clear that it is essential not only to implement programs, but also to evaluate their interventions. It is extremely unlikely that one intervention strategy alone will be effective in preventing or reducing violence; rather, it is a combination of interventions that is apt to be successful. Still, in examining prevention efforts, it is appropriate to look at interventions, not programs, as the unit of analysis.

School-based Youth Violence Prevention Interventions

The school-based interventions presented in this discussion are divided into six broad categories: curricular/classroom instruction, student support services, home and community linkages, environmental and technological, school policies and procedures, and miscellaneous. There are several interventions within each of these categories. See Tables 1-6 for listings of the interventions within these categories.

Curricular/Classroom Instruction

The educational interventions in this category (Table 1) are based on the theory that if violence is the result of behavioral choices, it can be prevented through the use of educational interventions that provide young people with a range of nonviolent options. It is also important to acknowledge that these options must be realistic, and the interventions must help instill in youth the desire to choose a nonviolent response.

Table 1 School-based Violence Prevention Interventions Curricular/Classroom Instruction
Peace education Cooperative learning Conflict resolution and peer mediation Violence prevention Gang prevention/reduction Crime prevention and law-related education Handgun violence prevention Life skills training/social competence promotion Relationship/family violence prevention Prejudice reduction/cultural awareness Stress management/reduction Positive anger release Street-smart skills Self-esteem development/self-discipline Dealing with death Bullying prevention Aggression reduction
<hr/> Source: Wilson-Brewer, R. (1995, June). Peer violence prevention programs in middle and high schools. <i>Adolescent Medicine: State-of-the-Art Reviews, Special Volume, Violence and Injury Prevention</i> .

Although there are many interventions in this category, those being employed most often within middle and high schools are conflict resolution and mediation. Students are taught that conflict is normal and does not have to result in violence. These interventions help youth build a range of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication (Wilson-Brewer, 1994). These curricular interventions are not tailored to the needs of African American students. However, because an important component is role-playing of conflict situations, youth are often able to create scenarios relevant to their situations. This is especially important as they attempt to analyze responses to conflict and consider the possible negative consequences of conflict escalation.

Peer mediation is an intervention employed to resolve conflicts with the assistance of a neutral third party. It has proven effective not only in helping students assist one another resolve their conflicts without adult involvement, but also in empowering student mediators with the skills to resolve their own conflicts more effectively (DeJong, 1994). Student mediators often work in pairs after completing training that includes both students and teachers acting as advisors.

Classroom-based violence prevention interventions place emphasis on educating adolescents regarding their risk for violence involvement, as well as the negative consequences of violence. Over time, these interventions have evolved to address how alcohol and other drugs, weapons, media messages, and societal norms impact violence.

Student Support Services

There was a time when many of the interventions in the student support services category would not have been considered violence prevention interventions (Table 2). However, it has become clear that interventions that provide students with supports outside of the classroom have the potential to enhance their chances to make healthy choices, including the avoidance of violence. For example, interventions that improve the economic futures of young people are likely to have an effect on the prevention of violence. Several of these interventions, such as mentoring experiences and peer counseling, have provided some students with their first opportunity to discuss the violence in their lives and to seek help in finding viable ways to avoid it.

Table 2 School-based Violence Prevention Interventions Student Support Services
Mentors and role models Career exploration Work experience placements School-based health clinics School-linked student services Peer counseling Student support groups Individual and group counseling Student leadership Drop-out prevention Extracurricular activities
<hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> Source: Wilson-Brewer, R. (1995, June). Peer violence prevention programs in middle and high schools. <i>Adolescent Medicine: State-of-the-Art Reviews, Special Volume, Violence and Injury Prevention</i> .

In terms of mentors and role models, youth are exposed to positive adults who help them see the value of staying in school, avoiding violence, and working hard to excel. The mentors have varied backgrounds and include persons like community residents, business owners, college students, senior citizens, high school seniors, high school athletes, and teachers. The range of mentor-mentee activities is also broad and includes job-shadowing, tutoring, counseling, cultural enrichment, social skills development, life experience sharing, summer jobs, and sporting events. Community organizations have supported interventions that focus on African American males. Churches, police departments, and fraternal organizations, for example, have matched these youth with African American adult males. However, both mentee and mentor need not be African American for this intervention to be effective. A review of mentoring programs involving primarily African American (70 percent) and Hispanic (10 percent) students attending large urban schools in 16 cities found that the race of the mentee did not matter. The majority of the 400 students involved cited 6 areas in which mentors had a strong positive influence on them: learning to succeed, improving grades, avoiding drugs, increasing regard for people of other races, improving relationships with teachers and families, and choosing a new career path. Approximately half reported gains in at least four of the six areas (Moloney & McKaughn, 1990).

School Policies and Procedures

Achieving a safe school environment must be a primary goal of any school-based youth violence prevention program. School policies and procedures should, therefore, be considered violence prevention interventions (Table 3). Some of these interventions, such as school safety plans, are designed with parent and community input. Others, such as gang elimination procedures, have involved school-police collaborations to identify and deter developing gangs and gang rivalries. Zero tolerance for violence policies define behavior that will result in mandatory disciplinary action, and some schools have created student arbitration boards to involve students in the settlement of school conduct violations.

Table 3 School-based Violence Prevention Interventions School Policies and Procedures
School safety plans Gang elimination procedures Zero tolerance for violence policy Student and staff conduct/discipline codes Suspension (including in-school) and expulsion Student arbitration boards Staff development Personnel diversity Multicultural awareness/prejudice reduction/sensitivity training
Source: Wilson-Brewer, R. (1995, June). Peer violence prevention programs in middle and high schools. <i>Adolescent Medicine: State-of-the-Art Reviews, Special Volume, Violence and Injury Prevention</i> .

While some school administrators are still opting for the automatic suspension or expulsion of students for certain violent acts, others have come to realize that banning students from school is not an effective intervention strategy. Research shows that such suspensions are often regarded as a vacation or a reward, are applied to minority students in disproportionately high numbers, and have not demonstrated a positive effect on violent or disruptive behavior in school (Kadel & Follman, 1993). This realization has resulted in the use of in-school suspension.

Minorities now comprise more than 30 percent of all students in American public schools, and 22 of the 25 largest central city school districts have predominantly minority populations (Hechinger, 1992). Nearly 10 years ago, a report of the Quality Education for Minorities Project (1990) forecast grave consequences for our nation if minority students are not provided with a more diverse teaching force in public schools. The group contended that because many minority students, rarely seeing a minority teacher, may conclude, “the authority, status, and accomplishments of learning are largely the province of Whites.” The group recommended that incentives be provided so that the best teachers would be available to the students who need them the most. The group further suggested the support and expansion of efforts of predominantly minority institutions to prepare teachers, including bilingual educators, and the establishment of loan forgiveness programs to attract high-achieving minority students to teaching.

Creating a teaching staff that more closely reflects the diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of student bodies is extremely difficult to achieve. Thus, some schools are attempting to involve parents, community residents, and others in activities to enhance the school’s responsiveness to

diverse student needs. Training in multicultural awareness and prejudice reduction is also being implemented.

Home and Community Linkages

It is important to acknowledge the vital role parents must play in violence prevention efforts. Being a victim of family violence, lacking family affection and cohesion, and, especially for males, being rejected or abandoned by a father have long been recognized as risk factors for violence (Gibbs, 1988). Other family-related risk factors include lack of parental supervision and involvement; parental rejection, neglect, or abuse; and poor parental disciplinary methods (Earls, 1994). Interventions that employ linkages to the home acknowledge the importance of involving the family in school-initiated violence prevention efforts.

Some of the interventions in this category (Table 4) have been implemented in response to parents' needs for assistance in their roles as nurturer, teacher, and disciplinarian. Others have been created to assist schools in their efforts to involve parents in school-based violence prevention activities. Even a strategy as simple as parent patrols, which entails parents working as volunteers in schools, can help ensure peace both in school and during extracurricular activities. Moreover, these parents offer students additional adults with whom they can discuss their concerns. Parent patrols also form groups that meet with school administrators on a regular basis and discuss ways the school environment can be improved. This intervention has resulted in parents being employed in some schools as part-time school personnel.

Table 4 School-based Violence Prevention Interventions Home and Community Linkages
Family support programs Parent skill training Volunteer parent patrols School-business partnerships Interagency collaborations School-community task forces School advisory committees
Source: Wilson-Brewer, R. (1995, June). Peer violence prevention programs in middle and high schools. <i>Adolescent Medicine: State-of-the-Art Reviews, Special Volume, Violence and Injury Prevention</i> .

Community involvement in violence prevention has consisted of a range of interventions, including partnerships with local business and industry to provide work experience to students for which they can earn money or credits. Collaborations with representatives from agencies and organizations, such as local police departments, health departments, juvenile courts, probation departments, youth-serving agencies, and parks and recreation departments to discuss common problems, develop joint interventions, and integrate services are also effective interventions. Additional interventions include the creation of advisory boards of community residents, not just parents of students, who can offer their perspectives, experience, and assistance in addressing youth violence and its prevention; and the recruitment of community residents to provide safe havens for youth.

Environmental/Technological

Access to weapons, especially firearms, is an important contributing factor to violence and its most fatal outcome, homicide. Firearms, which have a case fatality rate that is 15 times higher than that of knives, are used in more than 80 percent of adolescent homicides (Children's Safety Network, 1994). Adolescents have cited concerns about personal safety at home, in the streets, and at school as major reasons for owning and carrying a gun (Price, Desmond, & Smith, 1991). One study involving 1,500 inner-city high school students determined that 20 percent of the sample had been threatened by someone waving a gun, and 12 percent had been targets of gun violence (Sheley, McGee, & Wright, 1992).

Self-reported use of violence among 225 African American youth, 11 to 19 years old, living in and around 9 public housing projects in an urban area revealed: 35 percent of males and 16 percent of females had carried a weapon recently; 19 percent of males and 14 percent of females had attacked someone with a weapon; and 65 percent of males and 56 percent of females had been in a physical fight in the last 12 months (DuRant, Cadenhead, Pendergrast, Slavens, & Linder, 1994). For both girls and boys, the strongest predictors of use of violence were previous exposure to violence and violence victimization.

A 1991 study of weapon carrying among African American inner-city middle school students addressed the issue of knives (Webster, Gainer, & Champion, 1993). The study, designed to determine associations between beliefs and experiences thought to be related to weapon carrying by adolescents, found that among females, the strongest predictor for having carried a knife was a belief in the acceptability of stabbing someone under certain circumstances. The only other predictor was the number of victims of violence the females knew. In contrast, among males, the strongest predictors for having carried a knife were having been threatened or attacked with a knife, being more likely than classmates to get into fights, and not believing that having a weapon increases the risk of injury.

Interventions that are environmental or technological in nature, especially those that focus on the confiscation of firearms—and, to a lesser degree, knives—are receiving considerable attention, consideration, and use (Table 5). While educational interventions, such as handgun violence prevention curricula, are designed to inform youth of the dangers of weapon carrying and use and encourage weapon avoidance, many environmental/technological interventions are intended to rid the immediate school environment of weapons.

Table 5
School-based Violence Prevention Interventions
Environmental/Technological

Metal detectors
 X-ray machines
 Gun-free school zones
 Gun- and drug-sniffing dogs
 Locker searches
 Locker removal
 Book bag bans
 Closed campuses
 Classroom phones
 Magnetic door locks
 Total darkness or increased lighting policies
 Safe corridor/safe haven programs
 Student I.D. cards
 Closed-circuit television landscaping
 Dress codes and uniforms
 School security staff

Source: Wilson-Brewer, R. (1995, June). Peer violence prevention programs in middle and high schools. *Adolescent Medicine: State-of-the-Art Reviews, Special Volume, Violence and Injury Prevention*.

There are many disadvantages to these types of environmental/technological approaches. Chief among them is high costs and lowered morale of both students and staff. The most important consideration is that although such interventions as metal detectors, X-ray machines, book bag bans, and the like may reduce the number of weapons brought into schools if implemented consistently, they will not result in behavior change. The factors resulting in conflict that often escalates into violence—anger, fear, jealousy, and misunderstanding—will not end because weapons are no longer present. Although school districts that implement technological or environmental interventions may be able to provide statistics regarding the number of weapons confiscated or even reductions in in-school violence, they do not address the causes of violence. Consequently, conflicts that begin in school frequently end as violent incidents elsewhere.

Some might consider dress codes as school policies and procedures intervention. However, because they are alterations of the environment, they are included as an environmental/technological intervention. Dress codes are used to ban certain types of clothing, jewelry, and hairstyles. They are also enforced in some school districts to deter gang activity by restricting the wearing of certain colors and gang-identified emblems, caps, jackets, and other clothing, as well as to reduce students' ability to conceal weapons in bulky clothing. Other schools are banning expensive clothing and jewelry in an attempt to reduce the violence that occurs as the result of fights over the thefts.

Although dress codes have been challenged, they have been upheld in court. In *Olesen v. Board of Education*, the court ruled that a student's right of expression can constitutionally be limited if it interferes with another student's right to learn (National School Safety Center, 1994). Some school districts have responded to the rise in violence by requiring that students wear uniforms. One example is the Long Beach Unified School District, which approved a policy that requires its 57,000 elementary and middle school students to wear uniforms (Cohn, 1996). According to Carl Cohn (1996), the school district superintendent, fighting and weapon possession, as well as robbery and vandalism "dropped sharply from the previous year without uniforms." He also attributed the drop in suspensions to the implementation of the uniform requirement.

Washington, DC, is one of the few districts where research has been conducted on the effects of school uniforms. Although the study found no evidence that uniforms affected student attendance, academic performance, or behavior, it did reveal that uniforms may produce a halo effect; that is, although there was no actual change in students attitudes or behavior, adults perceived the uniformed students as better behaved (Posner, 1996). According to the study, “principals felt there was something about students in uniform, especially boys with ties, that makes them behave better (Posner, 1996).”

Miscellaneous

Many of the diverse interventions in the miscellaneous category are not new (Table 6). Alternative programs and schools have often been used as options to expulsion not only for students with discipline problems, but also for those who are unable to function in the regular classroom. Other interventions, such as full-service schools, have emerged as a recent intervention strategy.

Table 6 School-based Violence Prevention Interventions Miscellaneous
Alternative programs and schools Crisis management teams Improvements to school campuses Violence hotlines Youth crime watch Manhood development Separate schooling Student speak-outs
<hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> Source: Wilson-Brewer, R. (1995, June). Peer violence prevention programs in middle and high schools. <i>Adolescent Medicine: State-of-the-Art Reviews, Special Volume, Violence and Injury Prevention</i> .

Also identified by such terms as beacon centers and second-shift schools, full-service schools are designed to meet the needs of the community as well as the school by involving teachers, students, parents, community residents, and health and social service professionals, among others, in its development and operation. The full-service school is “a comprehensive, integrated program that addresses the healthy social and educational development of youth (Pacific Center for Violence Prevention, 1996).” Many of these schools open early in the morning and close late at night, some operate on a 6- or 7-day week. New York, San Diego, and Boston are among the many cities operating full-service school programs. Although the full-service school cannot be considered a traditional intervention strategy, it is one that is gaining increased attention for its violence prevention potential. It is an example of the way in which the field has grown to acknowledge the importance of healthy human development in the prevention of violence. These schools not only provide youth with a safe place to be and ways to connect with adults in meaningful ways, but also engage them in worthwhile activities during times when most high-risk activities occur (Dryfoos, 1994).

Unlike the full-service school, some miscellaneous interventions, such as crisis intervention and violence hot lines, are designed to deal mostly with emergency situations. Crisis management teams have become essential components of some urban school systems, helping them deal primarily with violence, but also with other traumatic incidents. Teams often assist schools in developing action plans to be implemented when a crisis occurs, training school staff in its proper execution, coordinating

communication, and providing victim recovery services. Often established by the school district, crisis management teams are headed by mental health professionals and are assisted by representatives from the school district, law enforcement, and health care providers.

The major consequences of violence—injury, disability, and death—continue to take a disproportionate toll on young African American males between the ages of 15 and 24. A subculture of violence theories has been proposed to explain high rates of violence among this population (Hawkins, 1993; Rose & McClain, 1990). Alternate theories have also been proposed that point not only to such community-level risk factors as joblessness and poverty, but also to factors such as inequality and oppression (Hawkins, 1983; Messner, 1989).

Several interventions aimed at reversing the devastating toll of violence on African American males have focused on improving academic performance and reducing grade retention, suspension, and expulsion rates. Classroom teachers and mentors or role models are teaching manhood development interventions and providing classroom instruction that has an Afrocentric focus. These interventions are designed to create an environment that motivates African American students, males in particular, to develop the skills needed to make positive and constructive choices in their lives. The major objectives of most of these interventions is to improve academic performance and behavior by teaching the importance of living by a code of conduct that includes assuming personal responsibility for oneself, as well as one's family and community (Wynn, 1992).

In Afrocentric education classes, students learn about the social status and current demographics of the African American male, external threats that are destroying the African American male and the African American community, society's definition of manhood, and what can happen to African American males who accept that definition but are denied the resources to positively demonstrate their masculinity through traditional channels. These interventions are designed to help them gain a better understanding and appreciation not just of themselves, but of all African people. Youth are involved in exercises and readings that explore Afrocentricity, Black value systems, genealogy, traditional African names and proverbs, and special African American-centered days to celebrate (Perkin, 1989).

This type of intervention involves taking African American male students out of the traditional classroom, if the Afrocentric education is to take place in a school setting. A study on the impact of separate schooling for African American male adolescents was conducted during the 1991-92 school year with 40 middle school students (Hudley, 1995). Half of the students, the control group, were in the mainstream academic setting, and the other half were in a specialized self-contained program. Students were taught history and culture of both ancient and modern civilizations on the African continent; contributions of African Americans to the political, social, economic, and technological development of the U.S.; analysis of current social political issues and problems, including the impact of racism, classism, and sexism on society; and the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society. Selection criteria for participation in the experimental separate schooling group included high number of days absent, frequent tardiness, low grade point average, several disciplinary referrals to the principal's office, high number of days suspended, and teachers' recommendations of students at risk for school failure and dropping out.

The study revealed that the separate schooling program functions as a supportive environment. In contrast to the control group students, those in the experimental group were less likely to be tardy, attended schools on a more regular basis, rated their teachers and classmates as providing high levels of support, and perceived themselves as more academically competent. African American male students in the experimental group earned significantly higher grades in the science class. Although there was not a significant difference between experimental and control group students' grades in other subjects, less than one half a grade point, the experimental group did receive higher grades. Still, the very fact that the experimental group perceived themselves to be more competent is an enormous achievement.

Although not a component of the separate school intervention described, rites of passage is often a component of Afrocentric education. Young people are first taught the foundations of rites of passage, the relationship between rites of passage and socialization, and the differences between the ancient initiation

rites and the rites being practiced in the United States today (Hill, 1992). Versions of this intervention have also been implemented, on a limited basis, with African American girls and involve a “graduation exercise” that is a public event and pronouncement of a participant’s transition from adolescent to young adult.

These culture-focused interventions are based on the belief that many young African Americans, males in particular, are lacking a sense of cultural identity and pride that cannot be instilled in the traditional classroom setting—or at least has not been instilled thus far. While some of these interventions could be considered nontraditional, they warrant mention because they are being employed with African American students in efforts to address violence involvement and thus merit mention. Many supporters of such efforts contend they are, indeed, effective violence prevention interventions, because they offer African American youth alternatives to violence by raising self-esteem and ethnic pride.

An Emphasis on Evaluation

Indeed, there is a range of interventions being employed to prevent youth violence. However, it is difficult to identify those interventions that have proven effective. A review of available empirical evidence on the effects of youth violence prevention interventions reveals that although there are many primary- and secondary-level interventions being implemented, most have not been evaluated, nor has evaluation been planned (Tolan & Guerra, 1994). The authors of the review, Tolan and Guerra, considered their findings disturbing, since the type of interventions that focus on primary and secondary prevention have the least evaluation data supporting their effectiveness. For example, the researchers found no well-designed empirical study that evaluated the behavioral outcomes of peer mediation or conflict resolution interventions for adolescents. They concluded that, “Although peer mediation has intuitive appeal, particularly in terms of reducing situational and interpersonal violence, its efficacy has simply not been determined.”

Tolan and Guerra’s review indicates that the interventions considered effective involve the family. These interventions, broadly defined as family therapy, employed three major approaches: training to decrease negative parenting (Patterson, Chamberlain, & Reid, 1982); assistance in improving family relations and organization (Tolan & Mitchell, 1989); and multisystemic family therapy (Henggeler, Melton, & Smith, 1992). Tolan and Guerra acknowledge that although such interventions can enable families to withstand external stresses, stressors can limit intervention effectiveness.

It is important to note that the review examined few of the interventions outlined in Tables 1-6, as many of these were relatively new at the time the review was being conducted, had been implemented in very few settings, and/or had not been evaluated. However, recent efforts have been made to improve research and evaluation efforts.

In 1993, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded the implementation and evaluation of 15 multi-intervention youth violence prevention projects. Information regarding the interventions employed, including their theoretical and empirical foundations, as well as evaluation designs used, has been published, as has specific program information (Powell et al., 1996). For example, one of the funded programs, whose target population is 95 percent African American, is implementing a range of strategies with 7th- through 9th-grade students. Strategies include classroom education in conflict resolution and violence prevention, “exposure education” via quarterly field trips to agencies and organizations that address violence-related issues, and “proactive education that requires youth to draw from what they have learned to produce materials and events that can benefit others (Gabriel, Hopson, Haskins, & Powell, 1996). Soon, data regarding the effectiveness of this and the other CDC-funded interventions, many of which include school-based strategies, will also be available.

Researchers in the field of criminal justice have also added to the knowledge base via *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn’t, What’s Promising*, published in 1997 by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). This report is an attempt to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of DOJ-funded efforts and places special emphasis on youth violence (Sherman et al., 1997). Studies of school-, family-, and community-based prevention efforts were

examined, as were efforts that focused on violence prevention in the labor markets and specific sites such as subway stations and apartment buildings. A total of 149 school-based intervention studies were examined. Independent researchers conducted the study and began by establishing basic scientific elements needed for inferring cause and effect. They developed a system for classifying the strength of scientific evidence of each study (Table 7), a scale for ranking the evidentiary strength of cause and effect (Table 8), and, based on these findings, a scientific methods score for each study (Table 9).

Table 7 Classifying the Strength of Scientific Evidence	
Three basic elements were considered:	
1.	Reliable and statistically powerful measures and correlations (including adequate sample sizes and response rates).
2.	Temporal ordering of the hypothesized cause and effect so that the program “cause” comes before the crime prevention “effect.”
3.	Valid comparison groups or other methods to eliminate other explanations, such as “the crime rate would have dropped anyway.”
<hr/> Source: Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. (1997). <i>Preventing crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising</i> . [Report to Congress]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.	

Table 8 A Scale of Evidentiary Strength for Cause and Effect			
	<u>Weak</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Strong</u>
1. Reliable, powerful correlation test	x		
2. Temporal ordering of cause and effect		x	
3. Elimination of major rival hypotheses			x
<hr/> Source: Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. (1997). <i>Preventing crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising</i> . [Report to Congress]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.			

Table 9
Explanation of Scientific Rigor Score

Using the Scale of Evidentiary Strength for Cause and Effect, the researchers developed a scientific methods score of 1 to 5, with 5 being the strongest scientific evidence. Each eligible study examined for the report was given a score.

Level 3: A study employed some kind of control or comparison group.

Level 4: The comparison was more than a small number of matched or almost randomized cases.

Level 5: The comparison was to a large number of comparable units selected at random to receive the intervention or not.

Source: Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. (1997). *Preventing crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising*. [Report to Congress]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

The following are key findings relevant to youth violence prevention. The lists of what works, what does not work, and what is promising are not intended as a summary of the 420-page research report submitted to Congress.

What Works

The following have been identified as strategies that work in youth violence prevention:

- Family therapy by clinical staff for delinquent and pre-delinquent youth;
- Programs aimed at building school capacity to initiate and sustain innovation;
- Programs aimed at clarifying and communicating norms about behavior by establishing school rules, improving the consistency of their enforcement—particularly when they emphasize positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior—or communicating norms through school-wide campaigns, e.g., anti-bullying campaigns or ceremonies; and
- Comprehensive instructional programs that focus on a range of social competency skills—e.g., developing self-control, stress-management, responsible decision-making, social problem solving, and communication skills—and that are delivered over a long period of time to continually reinforce skills.

What Does Not Work

The following strategies have proven ineffective in youth violence prevention:

- Counseling students, particularly in a peer-group context, to reduce delinquency or substance abuse;
- Offering youth alternative activities such as recreation and community service in the absence of more potent prevention programming for substance abuse reduction (Effects on other forms of delinquency are not known.);
- Instructional programs focusing on information dissemination, fear arousal, moral appeal, and effective education for reducing substance use;
- Community mobilization against crime in high-crime inner-city poverty areas; and
- Gun buyback programs operated without geographic limitations on gun sources.

What Is Promising

The following are promising strategies in youth violence prevention:

- Gang violence prevention focused on reducing gang cohesion, but not increasing it;
- Volunteer mentoring of 10 to 14 year olds by Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America for the reduction of substance abuse, but not delinquency;
- Programs that group youth into smaller “schools-within-schools” to create smaller units, more supportive interactions, or greater flexibility in instruction; and
- Behavior modification programs and programs that teach “thinking skills” to high-risk youths.

As these and other findings are more widely disseminated, it is anticipated that both working and promising interventions will be more widely replicated and evaluated.

Dating Violence among African American Youth

As compared to interpersonal violence, dating violence among African American youth has received scant attention. Although a review of the literature will yield many articles from a range of disciplines that delineate statistics and characteristics of violence among African American youth, as well as risk and protective factors, the same cannot be said for teen dating violence among this population. However, in recent years, youth violence prevention practitioners have begun to recognize the need to address this public health problem and are seeking research and interventions that are relevant to African American youth. Organizations such as Motivational Educational Entertainment Productions, Inc. are helping to fill this void. Still, much more work is needed.

Only one published study that examines community and dating violence among adolescents was found (Malik, Sorenson, & Aneshensel, 1997). Although the study sample of 719 California high school students contained only a small percentage of African American students, 13 percent—as compared to 57 percent White, 23 percent Latino, and 13 percent Asian—its findings are important to consider. The following are among several findings of the study conducted by Malik, Sorenson, and Aneshensel:

- Among the strongest predictors of violence involvement in the community and in dating relationships were exposures to multiple forms of violence. This was the case for both the victims and the perpetrators of violence.

- Exposure to violence was highest among African American boys and older adolescents, i.e., 16- and 17- year-old youth.
- Being exposed to violence in one context, e.g., in the family, appears to have crossover effects to victimization and perpetration in another context, e.g., dating violence.
- Exposure to weapons and violent injury in the community was an important risk factor for both community and dating violence.

The authors of this study suggest that, based on their findings, limiting exposure to all forms of violence is the most important method for reducing youth participation in both community and dating violence. This finding is key to continued efforts to prevent violence among African American youth through research and practice.

Conclusion

There have been substantial advances in the youth violence prevention field. By continuing to work together and to learn from each other, researchers, practitioners, young people, parents, school staff, health care providers, community residents, and others will find better and more effective ways to address violence among African American youth.

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In Search Of Love: A Study on Dating Violence among Urban Youth

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The state of male-female relationships in modern America is often characterized by trouble, and African American male-female relationships are no exception. Although there are many theories about the causes of and solutions to dating violence, few studies have focused on the dynamics of teen dating and viewed race, culture, and communication as central factors in understanding these relationships. To stem the rising tide of intimate violence among urban youth, it is important to first better understand its causes. Only then can we develop credible ways to deal with the phenomenon.

To that end, MEE Productions, Inc., in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, conducted a national study on intimate violence among African American urban teens living in low-income census tracts. The study involved the use of focus groups over a 6-month period in 5 urban areas—Gary, Indiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Atlanta, Georgia; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Los Angeles, California—and was documented via videotape. Findings revealed that urban youth struggle just as much as their adult counterparts to successfully negotiate relationships with members of the opposite sex. These negotiations can result in violent interactions that are rarely confined to one-time instances and, therefore, have overwhelming implications for violent and aggressive behavior in future African American adult dating and marital relationships. Left unchecked, such behavior threatens to unravel the core of the urban community—the family. The attitude toward dating relationships among many of today’s urban youth can best be summarized as “Do unto others before they do unto you.”

Many urban youth lack the social and communication skills to enable them to successfully relate intimately to another person. Depending on the type of relationship among African American teens, different expectations appear to apply. For instance, when one is simply “talking” to someone of the opposite sex, the relationship may not be deemed truly serious, and the parties may be free to explore other opportunities. Yet when actually dating someone, a more constrained set of expectations and rules tend to apply. Many urban youth are unable to clearly define the norms, rules, and rights of either circumstance, and often the two people involved in a relationship have different perceptions of these definitions.

The degree of verbal skills a young woman possesses seems to make a difference between ending a negative encounter with a male successfully or placing herself at risk of a verbal or physically aggressive response. Just as males hone their opening lines, as a survival mechanism, young females must have the verbal negotiating skills to deflect them. Many violent confrontations between the sexes result from a perceived disrespect on the part of one of the partners. To “diss” someone is the ultimate offense in the urban youth sub-culture. Conversely, it was found that positive relationships between the sexes are those that center around the perception of mutual respect.

Provocations that involve disrespect may be either verbal or a particular behavior or an act. Verbal disrespect includes using derogatory or gender-related insults towards an intimate partner. For example, terms such as “hoodrat” or the ubiquitous “bitch” for girls, and “dog” or “punk” for boys, were clear insults used by focus group participants. Disrespect may also be manifested through behaviors such as unsolicited touching or grabbing. If a young female within a relationship violates a directive from her boyfriend such as “I told you not to go...” or “I told you not to do...” many males indicated that “she could be in big trouble.” This type of perceived disrespect or transgression appears to challenge the young male’s sense of authority and control.

Another type of affront occurs when there is a perceived violation of an inexplicit agreement. For example, when a young male believes that a female invited him over to have sex while her intentions were really to spend quality time talking or watching TV, the miscommunication can have violent consequences. In today's urban youth relationships, it is often difficult for young men to show the respect expected by their partners without sacrificing some of their own "street respect." They are faced with the dilemma that being attentive and supportive to their girlfriends may cause them to lose the respect of their peer group, i.e., they are viewed as being "soft."

Today's young females have a tendency to fight back and not allow a male to get away with abusing them, even in cases where they believe they cannot compete equally in a physical confrontation. Most responses to provocations are made verbally or with fists. Weapons are seldom used to inflict violence in dating relationships and even less to inflict lethal harm. However, when they are used, guns are the weapons of choice for young men, while young women are more likely to report using knives.

African American family principles and values in some sectors of the community have a negative impact on how young men and women relate to each other. Young African American men lack sufficient positive role models. Without such positive role models, some young people grow up never knowing that there is an alternative to slapping someone in the face in order to settle a domestic or relational dispute. They never learn the appropriate vocabulary or that there are other alternatives for de-escalating disputes. In this void, young urban males, just like any other person who has not learned how to handle relationships the right way, revert to their most basic instincts—power and control.

Urban youth continue to search for love and respect through dating relationships. Very few give up on dating relationships with the opposite sex. Their resiliency and tenacity are positive qualities. Still, they need to learn from past mistakes and acquire the necessary tools to navigate the complex world of dating relationships. Young males must re-define the concept of what respect is. Young people have to learn to respect themselves, so that their peers will respect them.

In an attempt to sanction dating violence, we must transform our society in to one that fully respects women and encourages intimate relationships to be commitments between true partners—not partnerships involving dangerous games where individuals struggle with being dominated/dominating or controlled/controlling. Young black men should be taught to seek healthy, positive interactions with women, not opportunities to scam or get over on a woman. Females must learn that verbal aggression is a precursor for physical aggression, i.e., arguments often precede physical violence. Good negotiating skills are the keys to avoiding violence. How young people talk amongst each other about these issues is crucial.

Violence in relationships is learned behavior, and, consequently, it can be changed. Ultimately, physical abuse against women will stop when the community says stop. It will end when the judicial system, hospitals, schools, churches, and community agencies acknowledge that violence and battering are not acceptable. When judges, police officials, lawyers, doctors, psychologists, nurses, teachers, educators, ministers, community leaders and peers consistently say "no" to battering, treat it as a crime, and put consequences in place for perpetrators, then, and only then, will the violence stop.

Domestic Violence Across the Lifespan of African Americans: Teens/Youth Conclusion

The papers presented in this section address two different but related types of violence among African American youth. Ms. Renée Wilson-Brewer, after making the useful distinction between a violence prevention intervention and a violence prevention program, examined the various public health interventions that have been used to reduce youth involvement in community violence. Unlike traditional reviews, Ms. Wilson-Brewer emphasized programs that have worked or clearly have the potential for working well for African American youth. Based on years of experience as a violence prevention practitioner, she discussed factors that should be taken into account when planning programs for this largely poor and alienated population. The review covers the range of interventions and expands the conventional notion of prevention/intervention by including programs that have the desired outcome of reduction of violence, regardless of their original focus.

Mr. Ivan Juzang's work on teen dating violence focuses on data from same-sex focus groups conducted in several major cities around the country. Based on this work, he sees involvement in urban youth culture, with its focus on respect and narrowly prescribed communication and social skills, as a major risk factor for male-female violence among this group. Portions of the focus group discussions, along with commentary from a panel of experts, were presented via the videotape *In Search of Love: Dating Violence Among Urban Youth*. In the tape, which is used in teen dating prevention work, young men and women graphically describe interactions that they have experienced and witnessed that ended in violence, oftentimes with injury. As Mr. Juzang concludes, these youngsters struggle with relationship issues just as adults do, but with less skills and insight. Intervention with this group is essential in order to prevent these maladaptive ways of addressing conflict with intimates from becoming ingrained and permanent.

Recent declines in youth violence have defied the predictions that youth homicide and violence would continue unabated into the new millennium. However, African American youth are still overrepresented as victims and perpetrators of aggressive acts. Moreover, the primary contributors to violence—poverty and its attendant disadvantages—still affect African Americans disproportionately. While working to address the systemic causes of violence, we must keep developing, adapting, and implementing violence prevention programs that respond to the social and cultural realities of this high-risk group. Such programs must not only address youths' involvement in community violence, but also their approval of and participation in dating violence that has enormous implications for these youth, the Black family, and the Black community.