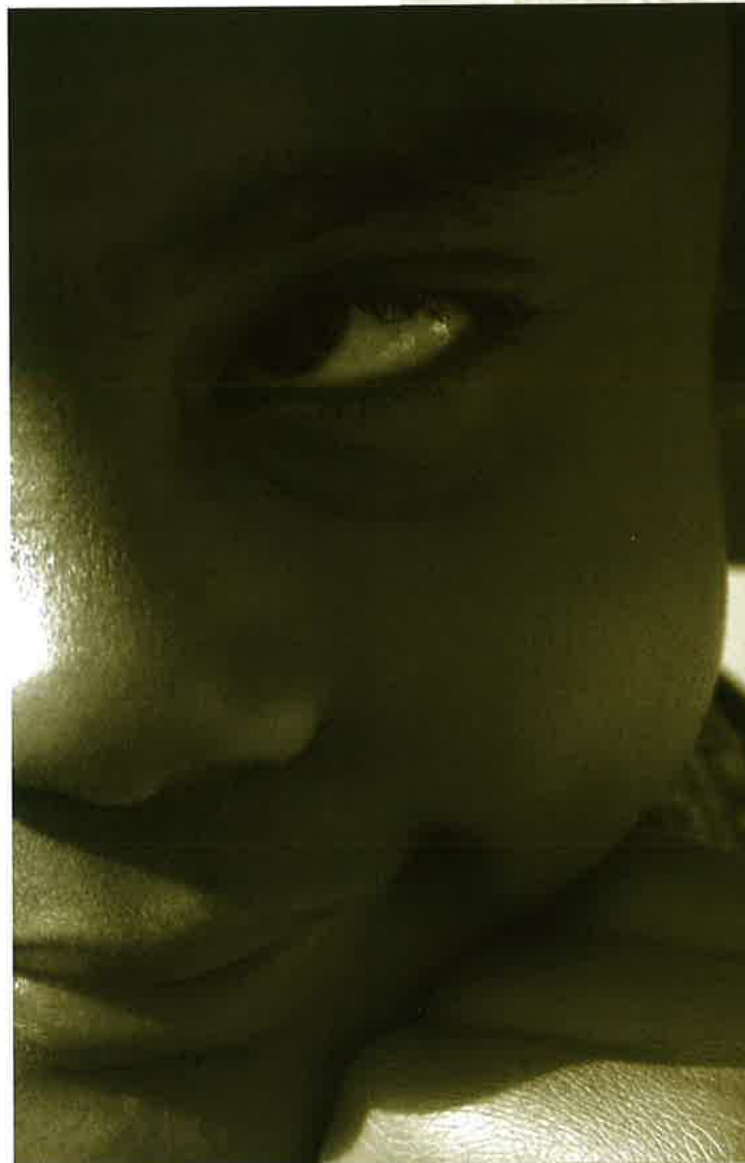


Respondents formulated a list of causes of domestic violence. Poverty, the breakdown of the family, the subjugation of women, societal norms or expectations, and lack of respect were the five key factors upon which they agreed. African American men in the community were described as being “pushed to the bottom,” and no longer “the hallmark of keeping the family strong,” according to one member. The abasement in status of African American men was not the only way in which participants saw poverty affecting their community. Lack of financial resources also was noted as a reason why victims were likely to stay in violent or abusive relationships. The breakdown of the family was another cause of violence. Participants stressed that violence was learned and that children pick up violent actions or tendencies from having observed such behavior at home. The group discussed how violence specifically perpetrated by youth could be an extreme expression of rebellion against parental status or values. Participants discussed the detrimental effect of women attempting to build up their partners by permitting verbal, physical, or emotional abuse. They described women who become the “whipping post” in order to make their spouses or boyfriends feel more important or of greater worth. The traditional female role was discussed as imposing certain expectations and pressures on women.

Women are taught to grow up to get married and to accept what happens within their marriage; in other words, keep the big house and the car and the status in the community... I think the subjugation of women is something that America has to look at. Because we are told, you get your man; you stay in this relationship and this marriage.

Societal norms as a cause of domestic violence encompassed two themes: messages from popular media and the materialism of today's youth. The group talked about messages from the media, including rap music containing harmful or violent lyrics and the lack of real role models. The shortage of media role models comes at a time when such examples are also in short supply in local neighborhoods and communities. The group noted that with desegregation came the loss of the black community. Those with the resources to move to a neighborhood with greater safety or status did. This shift, they explained, created a void once filled by the doctors, nurses, or teachers on the block who served as representations of good values. The materialism of youth was also a reflection of societal norms that the participants discussed as being a cause of violence. Group members thought children today were willing to do almost anything to get what they want. Violence is viewed by youth as an acceptable method of attaining material goods without thought to natural consequences. Lack of respect for self and others, especially women, was also a cause of violence enumerated by the group. Dehumanizing language in the form of popular slang was given as an example of degradation of peers or family by one person, while self-hatred within the African American “race” was noted as problematic by another respondent. Violence was also depicted as an unhealthy way of building self-esteem or affirming masculinity.





Because we are told, you get your man; you stay in this relationship and this marriage.

For some men, their sense of self becomes greater if they're seen as abusers or if they're the ones in their household that everybody's afraid of. He's the one that's coming through and everybody cringes when he walks up. That makes him a man, almost.

The perspective on life in today's culture has changed, respondents reported. One member commented on the idea of the devaluation of life by stating, "The image that society gives to us is that your life is nothing." Participants provided insight into the arena of youth, relating that this generation of children has been reared in a culture where they have been desensitized to violence and killing in their environment.

Focus group members noted the major consequences of domestic violence as: (1) substance abuse, (2) mental illness, (3) the breakdown of the family, (4) homelessness, (5) poverty, and (6) community division. Substance abuse and mental illness were described as rising in incidence due to violence, with issues such as anxiety and depression being prominent. With the breakdown of the family unit, members are not able to financially achieve what they could together --a possible precursor to poverty and homelessness. The group saw

violence affecting not just the family unit but the community as a whole, with violence precipitating the flight out of lower-income areas by those who are financially able to relocate to a more secure neighborhood.

The law enforcement group saw gender as a factor in determining the consequences of domestic violence. Men are seen as empowered by violence if they are the perpetrators but ashamed if they are the victim. Men would be more likely to undergo classroom training if they have been violent, but likely have few resources if victimized. Respondents thought women were likely to attend groups or therapy for support, but have many obstacles to overcome as the victim.

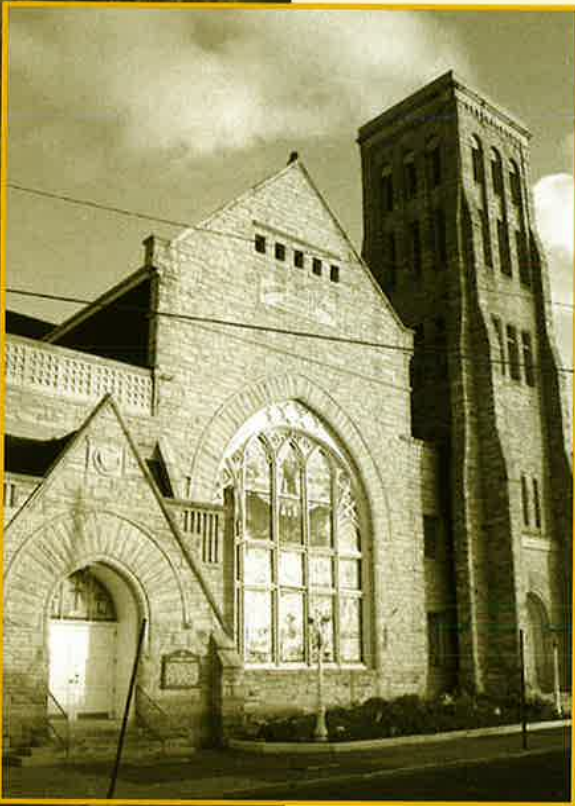


Group members highlighted solutions in the areas of education, early identification and intervention, and rehabilitation for abusers. Education was an important theme, and several different suggestions were made as to possible informational venues. Programs to empower children and teach good coping skills would be useful in schools, the group believed. Getting parents involved was seen as a vital part of community education. Group members also pointed to the media as being a tool to utilize in educating the public. Media blitzes or informative commercials could help spread awareness about the issue of domestic violence. Even those not directly touched by domestic violence could benefit from further knowledge on the subject, according to the respondents. Identifying victims of domestic violence early was another solution proposed by the group. One example given by a participant was working with pregnant women who have been victimized before they have children, providing resources and education to empower and equip them and benefit the next generation. In addition, group members emphasized the importance of rehabilitation for abusers to decrease the likelihood of further violent acts.

The main barriers to ending domestic violence in the Memphis area were identified as: (1) lack of collaboration between domestic violence programs, (2) institutional or societal support of marriage preservation in spite of danger, (3) lack of services rendered by African Americans, and (4) lack of shelters or options. Respondents from the group described programs as being isolated from one another, seeking to promote the goals and objectives of their own organizations without contemplating how they could work together. One member included churches as an institution which functions in isolation from other groups, as well as one that can, at times, promote marriage preservation at all costs. Another barrier listed by the group was the lack of services offered by African Americans. The group saw a need for the system to reflect those being served by it. Group participants cited the lack of resources as an obstacle. Members have encountered scarcity in the form of a lack of shelters or those that only admit women with children, creating difficulty in placing all of those who need help leaving an unsafe situation.



Faith-Based Community—



Historically, religion and spirituality have been integral parts of African American culture. Many of the social movements of the mid-twentieth century originated in the churches of the southern United States and were fostered by religious leaders and congregations, which sought change for what was at that time the country's largest minority group. That Martin Luther King, Jesse Jackson, and Ralph Abernathy were pastors and congregational leaders was no accident because it was the church that led the way of change for African Americans. Religion and churches helped a people define themselves rather than education or occupation or other socioeconomic descriptors (Boyd-Franklin, 1989).

The church is often the first resource consulted for help with family problems (Ellison, 1993). It is logical then that the faith perspective be included in any discussion of domestic violence within a community setting. Four persons (3 women and 1 male) comprised the Faith Community focus group, which responded to the 9-question interview. Two of the four persons were ministers in the Memphis area; one of the other two persons was the administrator of a counseling agency; the fourth respondent was employed as a counselor.

Respondents initially identified violent crime (i.e., family violence, murder, violence against the elderly) as the primary type of violence that occurs in Memphis area. After some discussion, they added gang violence, date rape, child abuse, drug-related violence, partner violence among unmarried couples, psychological abuse (acts such as verbal abuse, threats, intimidation), robbery and assault, and financial abuse (i.e., exploitation, mismanagement of funds).

When asked about the frequency and impact of violence on their community, respondents said, "Family violence and spousal abuse have an enormous impact on the community." They mentioned that "in the Black culture, there tends to be an acceptance and even a willingness to embrace things ... negative." Specifically the group cited playing The Dozens, which is commonly accepted. "Part of a young black male's growing up is learning how to handle being talked about—"cracked on" or "checked," within families, within friends. The group was very aware of local statistics regarding murder and elder abuse, gang violence, rape, child abuse, and spousal abuse. All agreed there was a high incidence of violence against individuals and that this violence was extremely important in their community. Respondents spent a great deal of time talking about violence that is reported versus that which has not been reported. They thought one reason for the high incidence of murder, elder abuse, rape, and other crimes is because of the violence in people's houses every day that has not been reported. In such instances, the police are not called and no report is made. They surmised that non-reporting made it difficult to determine both frequency and impact of violence because you cannot easily link one with the other.



The group moved easily into a discussion of how the various types of violence are related. There was much discussion about gang violence and the breakdown of the family. Gangs were presented as where the young people go to seek a connection when they cannot find a connection in their family. Gang violence and the lack of family support was also related to a breakdown or loss of spirituality in the African American community; this relates to being able or unable to reference behaviors that identify violence as right or wrong. Another respondent proposed that violence is rooted in needs that people have that go unmet, i.e., people reacting violently out of frustration. She related various types of violence as related to unmet needs, limited resources, having a mindset of being a minority or an oppressed people and having to deal with all of the “isms” that come along with that. Black people constantly carry out acts of violence on themselves, even when the key target is someone outside of our community --“why we burn our own neighbors and stores.” A lot of times the reference is because the dominant culture or majority population “won’t allow me to do this, that, or the other,” but the actions aren’t carried out toward those who are viewed as being the oppressors. It’s carried out against those who are considered to be the same level, someone close in the home —“someone who can’t do anything about anything.”



That's like I heard a man once say that the reason that he abused his wife was that he had to take abuse all day long outside and he felt like she was his wife and she should love him, that she should be able to understand... He said, 'I've got to dump it somewhere! I think she would understand.' I can't do it at work. I can't do it with the boys, so God bless her, she's the one that caught it. And he didn't even see how that did not make the least bit of sense.

One participant noted that some African Americans in their workplace and everywhere else feel devalued in their roles and in their personhood. They think that the one place where they should BE valued and where they should BE esteemed, is in their homes with their mates, with their partners. And when they're not getting that, or when they perceive themselves as not getting that, then they become more violent. The devalued state was seen as one reason for individuals frequently turning to alcohol and drug use. One participant invoked a Langston Hughes' saying, “We wear the mask.” People have to wear it everywhere else and they refuse to wear it at home. All members of the group agreed that violence was much more important than the other social problems and spoke about its cyclical nature and the strong economical impact of violence on total communities.

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When asked about the causes of violence in the African American community, all of the participants responded in unison that they saw desegregation and the destruction of Black communities through urban renewal --resulting in loss of community identity-- as the primary causes. A good deal of time was spent talking about losses of connection and natural support networks that have been lost over the last 50 years due to integration. The isolation of the African American middle and lower economic classes was seen as causation for a high divorce rate, the high number of Black males in jails, and increasingly high statistics that reveal incestuous relationships in families. The cyclical nature was mentioned again when one respondent said, "We see young people who were molested and raped by their parents now being adults who are either raping or molesting their children."

The reality that many people (especially older people) are afraid to attend Wednesday night prayer meeting because of crime and fear was emphasized as a consequence of violence. Additional consequences cited were apathy, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) and resulting depression, and physical health symptoms (i.e., heart disease, etc.). The exponential growth among sexual abusers was described by one respondent. "If I sexually abuse my children—I have two children—then there are two more sexual abusers. And if they abuse their children... So it's an exponential growth. It's not just one on one and one on one. It's one to two to four to eight to twelve." Another participant spoke about the secrecy associated with domestic abuse and that Black people have nothing to return to; he understood the need to go back to a place where we are more spiritually grounded. But, he asked,

Do we go back to that or do we find the place where we really ARE spiritually grounded? ... You are under some illusion that things were all grand and great then." We've got to be honest and open, as we're trying to be now, about what worked and what didn't work and what WAS good for us and what wasn't. And one of the things that WAS not good, IS not good for the Black community, is this whole idea of don't ask, don't tell, don't share your business. Black folks love to keep their stuff to themselves.

Several gender-based differences were noted in consequences of domestic violence. The group acknowledged that men go to jail because traditionally the woman is the victim and the man is the abuser. Because women are then left alone without resources and emotional support, some questioned the notion that victims do not face dire consequences. Women vacillate when they have the perpetrator arrested for domestic violence; after filing charges, they often provide bail for the man. They felt that male abusers do not get rehabilitative help in jails—if the men actually go to jail. One respondent proposed that men do not know how to be in a relationship; many need to be taught about responsibility in relationships. Another respondent expressed concern that in Memphis and Shelby County, domestic abuse is considered a misdemeanor.

Raising awareness and breaking the code of silence associated with domestic violence was the number one solution proposed to ending domestic violence. They proposed that faith ministries should provide (1) mentoring support for young Black males, (2) counseling programs to assist males and females deal with their destructive emotions, and (3) encouragement to keep males in homes and reduce the feminization of Black males because of absentee fathers.

Respondents suggested six solutions that might reduce domestic violence in the African American community if the Memphis community had unlimited resources. These suggestions included:

- Take the 5K run done here locally, and take it nationally and internationally and turn it into what breast cancer awareness has done for breast cancer—Race for the Cure. That's one thing I would do.
- Give resources to faith communities. And I say faith communities, so that they could create whatever ministries are necessary in the church, temple, mosque, synagogue, to teach people how to be in better relationships.
- Provide more family counseling that will let men be with men, bonding with men, It empowers the man, builds his self esteem, and tells them it's okay to SHOW emotion. Counseling can also help people reframe their problems.
- Fund mentoring programs in the public school system because that is the easiest access to young people. Catch them before the problem starts.
- Provide more public service announcements about domestic violence on television, radio, newspaper, etc., and
- Create more places of refuge for both perpetrators and victims.

Unavailable financial resources, intra-racial prejudices and self hate among African Americans, community denial, and too few workers-too late were presented by respondents as obstacles to solving the problem(s) of domestic violence in Memphis. They thought that Memphis has reacted to the problem; local leaders have not taken a proactive or "planned" approach to the problem. The group also spoke about some misinterpretation of scripture by ministers that leaves people more oppressed than liberated. They talked about some churches in this area that have told the women to return to abusive situations. Pastors and deacons have told them they are not supposed to leave their husbands. The ladies were there to apply for orders of protection, to get warrants for arrest.



One thing that the group stressed was that ultimately hearts have to be changed. Programs and procedures, counseling, all those have their place, but hearts have to be changed. It falls within the province of the faith community. Until the church decides that the ills of the community are the church's responsibility, neither domestic violence nor community violence will be dealt with to the fullest extent. "You cannot love somebody else unless you love yourself. Counseling, faith-based counseling—spiritual counseling, not just general counseling is what is needed because that is how you get to where people really are."



Human Services—

Domestic violence has been recognized as a serious problem by American society since the 1950s, although at that time the major emphasis was in the area of child abuse. With the 1970s came recognition of spouse abuse and partner violence and the stated desire to “curb the violence.” Ending the violence has been the goal of local activists, human service programs, academicians, social institutions, and community leaders. Much has changed since the 1970s. Some changes have been positive and other changes negatively affected this insidious community concern. There have been research studies and reports, the development of numerous crises intervention programs, multiple public awareness campaigns, national policy changes that address domestic violence, and a significant increase in the network of human services that cite the eradication of domestic violence as their primary objective.

Many of the community responses identified above fall within the category of human service initiatives. The community assessment described in this report is one of the first efforts that explore the extent of and meaning of violence among Memphis’ African American human service providers. Nine women comprised the human service group who were interviewed for this report. Their professional affiliations were diverse; they included a DHS program coordinator, a therapist/educator at a family service agency, a physician, a residential services administrator, a psychologist, a nurse and a nurse counselor, a private practice therapist, an office manager for a psychology practice, and a women’s service center counselor.

Group members identified twelve different types of violence as common in the Memphis area. These twelve types included physical abuse, which included physical assault, sexual abuse, gang violence, and verbal (emotional) abuse. Respondents talked at great length about health abuse or destructive

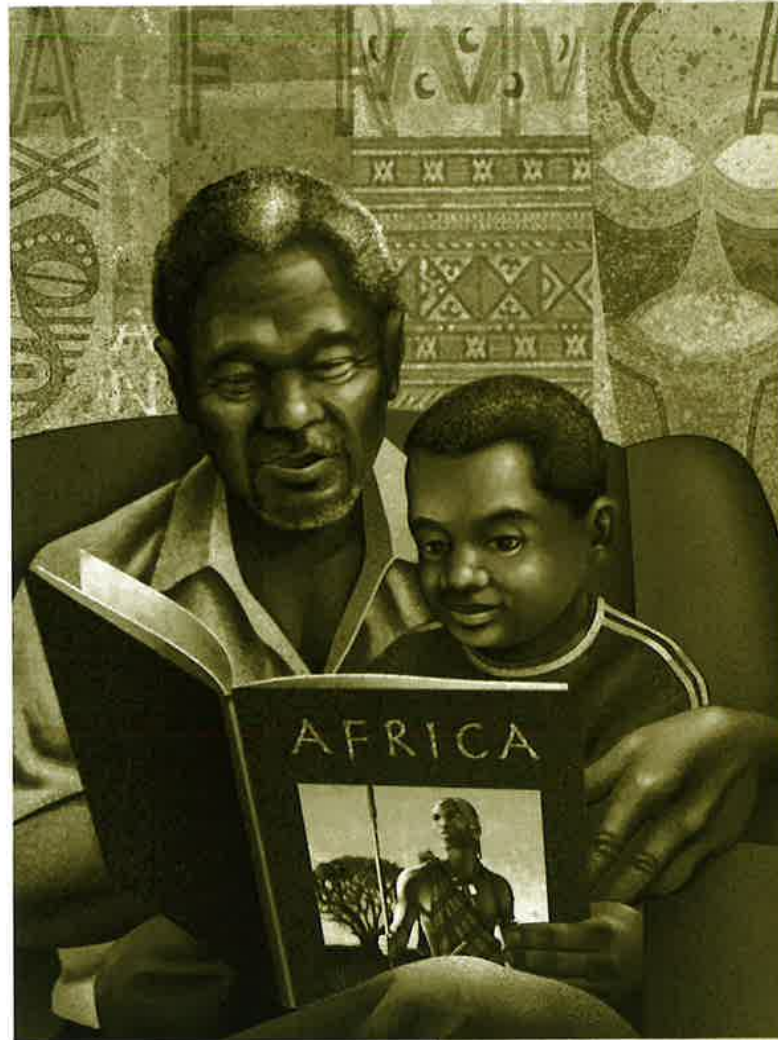
practices that relate to the human body. Health abuse included such activities as abuse of substances (alcohol and other drugs), overeating, and refusal or unwillingness to secure needed medical attention. Child abuse, elder abuse, and partner abuse were cited; the latter was described as abuse of spouses and of unmarried partners—including homosexuals. It was the consensus of the group that violence is a very serious problem in the Memphis community. One respondent noted that 300 women had been admitted within the last six months to the crisis shelter where she worked. That is an average of 50 families per month to a single domestic violence facility—but to only one facility. Another respondent said, “2500 Orders of Protection have been issued from 201 Hawthorne.” The group talked about a domestic violence victim being victims of homicides every 15 seconds nationally.



Respondents spoke openly about the large number of unreported incidents of abuse in the Memphis area, when asked about the frequency and impact of violence in their community. They spoke of 34 percent of abuse cases being reported, while the larger number 66 percent are not reported. Members of the city's large middle class, who secure help from private sources, were mentioned as frequently not reporting abuse incidents. Private counseling programs and other private facilities often do not report middle class incidents as abuse or as domestic violence. Likewise the lower socioeconomic groups report only fifty percent of the abuse that occurs. The human service providers generated a number of reasons for this phenomenon. All agreed with the statement, "The definition of abuse is in the eye of the beholder; some people do not think what has happened to them is abuse." They also talked at length about the culture of rural communities, where abuse and discipline can be seen as synonymous acts, where privacy or keeping anything that happens in the family within the family and within the African American community is the rule, where victims frequently take responsibility for their abusers' behaviors, and where embarrassment limits reporting abusive behaviors.

In some African American communities, children do not know any other behavior because their parents have behaved abusively all of their (the children's) lives. Such children were said to have been "conceived in violence and reared in violence; it is all that they know." A health care representative in the group noted that x-rays of hospitalized children often indicate earlier serious injuries that were never reported and speak to continuous abuse of children. The respondents all thought that the minimalization of abuse, especially domestic abuse, was both socially and economically devastating for the Memphis community.

Respondents talked about the insidious, destructive nature of abuse when asked how violence related to other problems in the African American community. They spoke about violence destroying families and communities, about how violence is learned behavior that is essentially about power and control, and about how it emerges as a mental illness (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder –PTSD, depression, anger management) for those reared in its midst. Homicide, suicide, and serious injuries were discussed when a participant said, "Someone must die or almost die before domestic violence becomes an issue in this community." They thought it was extremely important that the domestic violence court had been established, with domestic violence judges, and a domestic violence community coalition. They were concerned, however, that sentences given by judges to perpetrators of heinous crimes were much too short, often only two or three years to repeat offenders.





When asked about the causes of violence in the African American community, respondents named five causes, which were (1) conditioning of children that “showed up” frequently in classrooms when coping and adaptation are necessary, (2) lack of education and the inability to break the vicious cycle of violence, (3) retaliatory behaviors due to frustration with social circumstances, such as unemployment/underemployment, inability to support a family, low education, learned helplessness, poor living conditions, (4) efforts to have an identity, to define themselves, secure respect, secure recognition even if as a “bad guy”, and (5) media presentations (movies, television, cartoons) of African Americans desensitize community to violence.

A question about the consequences of violence also produced several responses, which included an increase

in young perpetrators of violence against other children and against adults, sexual abuse, higher rate of imprisonment, economic losses, and loss of male role models. Elders, a traditional support network among African Americans, now avoid involvement with children in the community due to verbal abuse and fear. Grandparents have modeled behavior for kin and non-kin single parents, teaching them about childcare, how to protect their children, how to be parents.

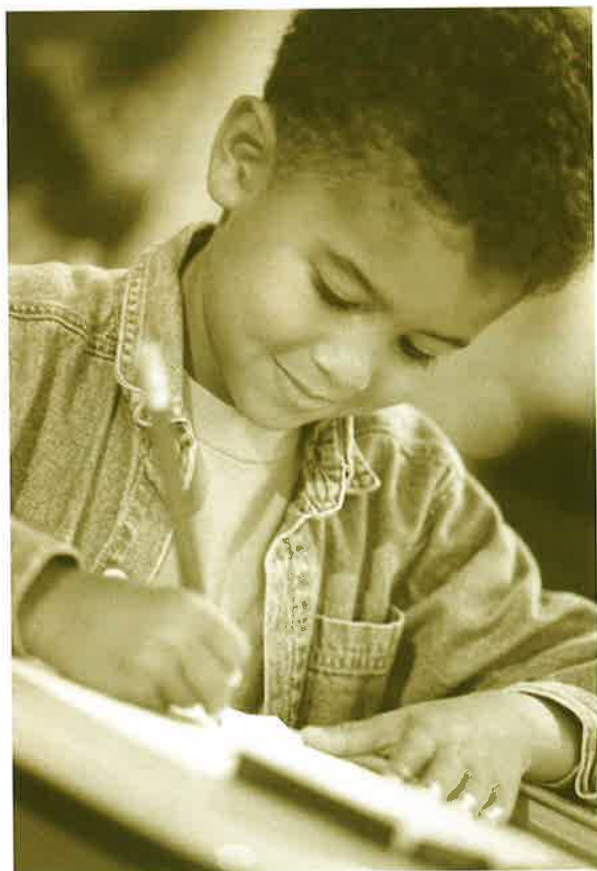
Respondents described differences between consequences of domestic violence for men and women. They thought that women were victimized by their abusers and by the courts if they reported their abuse. Women suffer economically and socially when their partners are imprisoned because of their reports to law enforcement. Males traditionally suffer through imprisonment. Women cannot secure good legal representation due to long wait lists at Legal Aid; they also fear charges of abandonment if they “leave and take the children to avoid future violence.” As victims, the system is much more accepting of women than men. Respondents noted that in 1990, 1.5 million cases of domestic violence were reported and 870,000 involved male victims but thought that male victims most often are too embarrassed to report their abuse.



Members of the group identified a number of solutions to domestic violence in the Memphis area. Their solutions included promoting community awareness or “making people aware that they do have options,” encouraging men to leave to “cool off,” encouraging couples to get counseling, providing training about domestic violence for public school teachers, and establishing peer mediation or conflict resolution programs in the public schools. The group thought that because religion is very important in the Black community, it is important to educate ministers about domestic violence and to discourage them from “saying it’s okay for a man to hit his wife and hit his children” and “sending wives back into abusive situations because the Bible says the man is the head of the family.”

When asked about obstacles to solving problems of domestic violence in their community, participants unanimously agreed that the religious community is a primary obstacle. Other obstacles cited were a need for more battered women’s shelters and more counseling programs for abusers, more funding for social programs, mentors for both victims and perpetrators, and education about the effects of violent behavior. Group members also noted that the Memphis community provided a number of services for both victims and abusers. These services take the form of treatment facilities that stress holistic care, housing, anger management classes provided by

private practitioners, mental health centers that provide support groups in the schools and in the larger community, the Victim of Sisters program, and training through the medical center. They said their community resources have different levels of effectiveness, which often depend on the size of the programs and how well supported the program is. They all need funding.



Law Enforcement—

Law enforcement officials are often the first responders to situations involving domestic violence. Given the nature of their work and the cases they deal with daily, it was hypothesized that this sample of professionals from the criminal justice field would have important views to share regarding the occurrences of violence, the priority of this issue in the community, and possible solutions and barriers. The group provided valuable insight into these topics and represented an important component of the response to domestic violence in the African American community.

The law enforcement focus group was comprised of four female members, who were interviewed for this report. These women occupied a variety of professions, which included a court advocate for domestic violence victims, police officer, a domestic violence specialist with the Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, a training facilitator, and a victim assistance specialist.

The Memphis Law Enforcement focus group identified a number of different types of violence, at times citing cases from their work. Domestic violence, street-related or gang violence among teens, sexual violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and abuse against the mentally challenged were listed by group members. They related stories of robberies, drive-by shootings, and violence related to drug use. Participants noted that violence is often an issue that is hidden and one in which there is a high likelihood of one person suffering multiple victimizations. It was acknowledged that there seems to be greater awareness surrounding the topic of domestic violence now than there has been in years past, although it is still viewed as a private issue. One member pointed out that this particular crime is unique because the victim cares about the offender.

Respondents viewed domestic violence as an issue of grave importance for their community. The subject was described as a force that perpetuates poverty, fuels the criminal justice system, and can be linked to a number of other social ills. Domestic violence was ranked by the group as falling within the top three most pressing concerns for the African American community, affecting individuals and families regardless of class.





Multiple causes of domestic violence were listed, including (1) lack of education, (2) lack of understanding regarding healthy family relationships, (3) the need for control, (4) the impact of legal system involvement, (5) lower expectations for youth, and (6) the breakdown of the community. Participants felt that education was lacking both academically and in the areas of morals, values, and respect. The cycle of teen parenthood was also mentioned. Children raising children were more likely to be “parenting clueless,” without knowledge of what kind of values and wisdom to impart to the child in their formative years. The group stated that children are not taught problem-solving skills and are influenced largely by the desire for instant gratification.

They also discussed the concept that children need to be taught what healthy family relationships look like and how to relate to others. Children who do not learn how to show love and who grow up in homes where violence is accepted, the group believed, would be likely future offenders. The need for control was another cause of violence identified by participants. They explained that domestic violence was an unhealthy manifestation of the need for control that abusers lack in other areas of life. Control was also linked to the notion of a faulty understanding of manhood. Society depicts men as strong and powerful and the group discussed how this idea was related to the increasing inequality of background, status and achievement between African American men and women. The power differential between men and women combined with stereotypical beliefs about manhood could add friction to relationships. Further, the ramifications of involvement with the legal system were important to participants. One member related that involving the police or other officials in the case of domestic violence could implicate or impact the victim or abuser in other issues, such as drugs or probation violation. Victims, knowing the impact of a single phone call, might prefer to stay silent.

If you're in domestic violence situations, you try to manage these consequences before you make that final decision to call... So trying to manage these kinds of things will deter me from calling because once I open up this box, too many things jump out that I can't handle.

The group agreed that expectations for youth were lower today than they have been in previous years. Expectations held by parents, teachers, and even teens themselves were seen as being minimal. One member discussed that teens today don't act as if they care or even believe that they will live to be twenty-five or older. Those who don't hold this belief also fail to act responsibly or exhibit skills to plan for the future. Some parents allow children to act in destructive ways such as selling drugs if it benefits the family financially. The breakdown of the community was also mentioned, stemming from desegregation. Neighborhood support systems that used to be intact have become fragmented, the group explained, and a rift has been created between the 'haves' who moved away and those who 'have not' and remained.





The consequences of domestic violence were varied, according to members. The major consequences listed were incarceration, increased poverty, children's behavioral issues at school, illness (both mental and physical), and the erosion of the community. Jail was seen as the "bottom line" consequence of violence, though individuals might wind up there for different reasons. Increased poverty or more time spent living in poverty were also seen as results of domestic violence, as well as behavioral issues that occur at school. Children with violent home lives are likely less able to concentrate at school and lack support in attainment of educational goals, thus decreasing their likelihood of later financial stability or success. They are more likely, the group believed, to be misdiagnosed at school as at-risk due to misbehavior. Mental and physical illnesses such as depression, hypertension, and even HIV were listed as possible consequences of violence. Finally, the erosion of the community was an issue of serious concern for the group.

It's almost like systematic genocide that erodes the whole community. It's like a staph infection. And it gets on my family, then it gets on your family, and it erodes the whole community. It puts the whole community at risk, regardless as to where you are socially or your status or any of that. It's that it takes away our ability to be a success as a community. It affects everything. It takes everything we do.



Solutions proposed for ending domestic violence in Memphis were (1) involving churches as social action centers, (2) making domestic violence an issue important to both genders, (3) early intervention in schools, and (4) culturally-specific treatments instead of or alongside incarceration. Churches were seen as valuable community assets that could easily be utilized as social action centers. The group proposed training for ministers to effectively address the issue with their congregations. The need for making domestic violence significant to both genders was also discussed. One respondent stated that men, who exhort other men to take a stand against violence, can be an important asset in the elimination of domestic violence. Early intervention in schools was additionally listed as a solution. In assessing children, educators should be trained to question whether or not there could be domestic violence issues in the home that preclude physical or developmental issues. The group also proposed that culturally specific treatment options, instead of or concurrent with punishment, would be helpful solutions. Perpetrators of domestic violence would benefit from being in

rehabilitative programs run by African American professionals where they can have peer and mentor support, respondents stated.

The group identified three barriers to ending domestic violence. The first was a lack of resources. Domestic violence programs are limited by a lack of both money and people to combat the issue in the community. The second barrier noted was the attitude of society regarding domestic violence. Until attitudes change, little headway can be made, respondents believed. Finally, the criminal justice system itself was seen as an obstacle to ending domestic violence. Group members desired to see an increase in the incorporation of rehabilitation and education in appropriate sentencing by the courts.