Table 2: Assessment Group by Age (N = 38)

Assesment Group	Age			
	20-30 yrs. (n = 4)	31-40 yrs. (n = 10)	41-50 yrs. (n = 15)	51-73 yrs. (n = 9)
Community Activists	1 (25%)	1 (10%)	1 (7%)	3 (33%)*
Faith Community	–	1 (10%)	7 (47%)	–
Human Service Community	1 (25%)	1 (10%)	5 (33%)	3 (33%)*
Law Enforcement	–	3 (30%)	2 (13%)	3 (33%)*
Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Community Advocates	2 (50%)	4 (40%)	–	–

*Rounded percentages do not equal 100%.
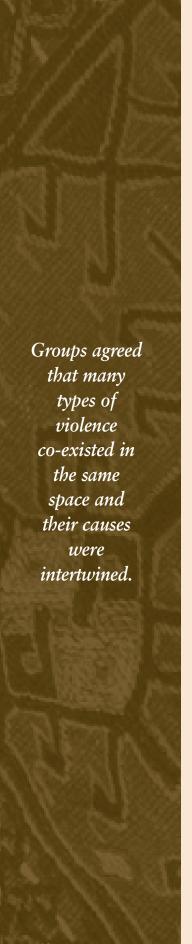
Table 3: Assessment Group by Education (N = 38)

Assesment Group	Level of Education					
	High Sch./ GED (n = 1)	High Sch.+ (n = 3)	BA/BS (n = 16)	MS/MA (n = 14)	Ph.D/M.D. (n = 2)	J.D. (n = 2)
Community Activists	–	–	3 (18.5%)*	2 (14%)	1 (50%)	–
Faith Community	–	1 (25%)	3 (18.5%)*	3 (21%)	1 (50%)	–
Human Service Community	–	2 (75%)	3 (18.5%)*	5 (36%)	–	–
Law Enforcement	1 (100%)	–	3 (18.5%)*	3 (21%)	–	1 (50%)
Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Community Advocates	–	–	4 (26%)	1 (8%)	–	1 (50%)

*Rounded percentages do not equal 100%.

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

For analysis of the conversations, transcripts (developed from the audiotapes) were coded using the seven categories of inquiry (types, causes, consequences, priority, barriers, responses, and solutions). In the reports, some writers collapsed categories (priority was collapsed into types and responses into solutions) because

was collapsed into types and responses into solutions) because participants responded to the two categories as one. As a result, the global or across group findings highlight responses to the following categories: 1) types of violence, 2) causes of violence, 3) consequences of violence, 4) barriers/obstacles to addressing violence, and 5) solutions to violence. Group facilitators analyzed their transcripts and drafted reports for their respective group (except where indicated), which provided analyses of findings, or themes, within each group.

The across group findings will be presented in the next section, followed by summarized versions of the reports from each group.

Perceptions of Domestic Violence
Across Group Findings - Types

Types of violence ranged from community violence, which included stranger-on-stranger and acquaintance assaults initiated within the community; family violence, or violence within the home between relatives and among intimate partners; social violence; and other oppressions. Stranger-on-stranger community violence included youth and gang violence, drive by shootings, drug-related violence, hate/bias crimes, harassment on the street, school violence, and black-on-black crime. Violence committed by acquaintances involved dating violence, statutory rape of juvenile females by adult males, child sexual abuse, violence against the elderly, and emotional degradation of another. Family violence was described as physical, verbal, psychological and emotional abuse, sexual abuse by an intimate partner, child abuse, incest and abuse of elders. Respondents also mentioned social violence as a problem, stating that the African American community has been and continues to be hurt by oppression and racism in the United States.

Moreover, participants noted links between different types of violence pervasive in the community and in the home. Linkages occurred between the

Groups agreed that many types of violence co-existed in the same space and their causes were intertwined.

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

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

However, the general consensus in terms of the types of violence was that community or stranger-initiated violence was as important to San Francisco/Oakland area African American residents as violence that occurred within

the realm of relationships involving acquaintances or family. The constant presence of community or stranger-initiated violence was frightening because of its randomness and its familiarity. It was also baffling given the reality that the community needed to be shoring up and building on its resources to better itself and to deal with the multiple threats that come from outside the community.

Across Group Findings - Causes

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

contributed to community ignorance about domestic violence issues.

Second, social oppression and racism struck chords as fundamental causes of violence in the African American community. Some groups spoke primarily in terms of institutional racism, and its accompanying social oppression. Institutional racism is defined as informal and formal structures created by the dominant culture which subordinates a person or group because of his or their race (Rothenberg, 1988). Others focused more on historical racism toward African Americans. Amos Wilson cites several examples of historical racism that include economic discrimination; Jim Crowism; the near condoning and virtual approval of Black on Black violence; differential arrest; segregation; job, business, professional and

labor discrimination; negative stereotyping; addictive drug importation; inadequate and often absent health care and inadequate family support to name a few (Wilson 1992). Respondents reported that social oppression, whether in the form of restricting economic opportunities, marginalizing the unique cultural aspects of African Americans' lives, or perpetuating negative racial stereotypes, fueled hopelessness that resulted in violence in the community.

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

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

Across Group Findings - Consequences

The consequences of violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area have been profound and grave. The consequences are profound in that almost every aspect of family and community life have been affected by its impact on the community; grave in that the implications continue to span the generations. Two themes, community deterioration and intergenerational impact, underscoring this fact emerged from almost every group. In reference to community deterioration, participants referenced three areas. First, they stated that violence has diminished the ranks of male leadership and potential positive role models in the African American community through homicide, and disrupted family life through the unusually high incarceration rate for African American males. (One in seven black males ages 25-29, or 13.4 percent, was in prison or jail in 2001, versus 4.1 percent of Hispanic males and 1.8 percent white males. Compared to Hispanic males [16 percent chance] and white males [4 percent chance], Black males have a 29 percent chance of serving time in prison over their lifetime) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002). The absence of leaders has crippled the community by sapping it of its strength and its voice. Respondents noted that incarceration not only removed Black men from the community, but it also further stigmatized them, compounded the issues for which they were incarcerated (i.e., violence attributable to unemployment, lack of education, substance abuse, marginalization), and unduly emphasized punishment over rehabilitation (especially since African American men were more likely to receive prison time rather than deferment options). Second, participants reported that community deterioration occurred when its members were plagued

with a sense of helplessness in the face of ongoing pervasive violence for which it felt ill equipped to address. This sense of helplessness was described by faith representatives as "death of the spirit" and by human services representatives as "self-destruction." These feelings of helplessness fed upon themselves and produced a sense of social disorganization. Finally, participants noted that the lack of community cohesion (i.e., community deterioration) was attributable to the ways in which violence tended to isolate its primary victims and secondary victims (e.g. children who witness it) because of fear and shame issues. In addition, members of the LGBT community reported that the compounded shame of being in both a violent and a same-sex relationship further marginalized them from the services and support available in the broader African American community.

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

Institutional racism is defined as informal and formal structures created by the dominant culture which subordinate a person or group because of his or their race.

Across Group Findings - Barriers

Looking across groups, three themes emerged from the discussions on the barriers to addressing domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area. Overwhelmingly, participants cited the African American community's inability to mount a collective response to the issues of domestic violence as a major barrier. Some groups identified classism by more socially advantaged African Americans against less socially advantaged African Americans as a reason. Others suggested that it was a lack of intrinsic or extrinsic incentives (such as, failing to be concerned about the impact on one's children of witnessing violence, or to understand the public health implications of domestic violence). Still other groups noted that barriers came in the form of more pressing social concerns or the lack of knowledge on how to address domestic violence issues with youth. Regardless of the reason, respondents suggested that there were limited opportunities for collaboration when the African American community attempted to resolve issues of violence and domestic violence.

Inadequate resources were mentioned as a second important barrier to dealing with issues of domestic violence, producing inconsistent and haphazard services. Once more, inadequate resources fueled the competitiveness between groups seeking to put forth a concerted effort. One area where the lack of resources significantly impacted the African American community was in the area of culturally-specific services, for both victims and batterers. Either no funding was available for the services, or existing service providers did not possess the expertise to implement services which met the specific cultural needs of African Americans (such as, personal care/hygiene kits, psychoeducational materials targeting African Americans, or a shelter milieu where battered women do not feel a need to be vigilant about monitoring the environment for racism aimed at their children). Two groups stated that denial and shame inadvertently fuel the ongoing lack of services because the failure of African Americans to seek services indicated that no service demands existed. Although not stated explicitly, the lack of culturally specific services was also reflected in the law enforcement group's comments on the emphasis on and overuse of incarceration as an option for African American men in comparison to their European American counterparts.

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

Across Group Findings - Solutions

Appropriately, solutions to domestic violence were linked to the barriers to addressing domestic violence in the San Francisco/Oakland area African American community. When looking across the five groups, it was apparent that solutions fell into three categories. Consistent with the groups' statements about disunity being the primary barrier to their work, the groups overwhelmingly endorsed the notion of a collective community response as an important solution. Collective community response begins with individual actions, then family actions and finally a community commitment to action. Once volition has been stirred up within the community, then the groups suggested that the energy be channeled into various types of community education geared toward promoting healthy families and community through parenting education, family management education, and educating leaders in various key institutions in the African American community (i.e., the church, schools).

In addition to encouraging a collective community response, solutions should be holistic and systemic. Holistic solutions respect and strengthen the African American identity by encouraging African

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

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

Session Summaries
Within Group Findings

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

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

Community Activists Session—
Esther J. Jenkins

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

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

Likely reflecting the political (and in the Black community, nationalistic) nature of community organizing in which most of the group was involved, the discussion almost immediately focused on issues of oppression and the legacy of slavery. Participants viewed black people as both recipients and instruments of oppression and violence, but at its core, violence was seen as a consequence of self-hate and group hate that came from slavery and a continued history of oppression. The inter-relationship between slavery/oppression, acceptance of group and self, and violence, as perpetrator or victim, were major themes in the discussion. Participants also saw other types of violence as being related through generational and societal transmissions of violence. A history of family violence was noted as a contributing factor to an individual's current violent behavior. The discussion of media as a subtle shaper of negative images and values supporting violence added a dimension to understanding the role of media in violence that is not found in most discussions on this topic, which still focus primarily on the imitation of televised acts.

Barriers to addressing the issues of violence in general and domestic violence in particular in the Black community were seen as existing at the individual level as well as the community/group level. It was noted that females often remain in abusive relationships not only because they are afraid of being stalked and/or killed if they leave their abuser, but also because of their economic dependency on their mates. Group-level barriers referred to Black people's difficulties in working together towards some common goal or good. Several participants mentioned teen parenting and poor parenting as problems in the Black community. In more explicit connections to violence, the lack of education was seen as caused, at least in part, by the incarceration of youth in institutions where little or no schooling occurs. And a leadership deficit in the Black community was attributed to potential leaders being neutralized by their fear of youth in the community.

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

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

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

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

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

Faith Community Session—
Carolyn Y. Tubbs

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

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

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

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