research on black homicides. Why not interview the relatives of victims or some of the offenders?

There has been too much emphasis on comparisons of blacks and whites. We need to concentrate on understanding what is occurring within the black community (7).

Discussion of the presentation brought out the following points:

• More than 75 percent of homicides involve family members, friends, or neighbors as victim and perpetrator.

• Alcohol-related homicide is determined by the presence of alcohol in the blood based on coroners' autopsies. The statistics do not reveal how many of the offenders were also under the influence of alcohol.

• There is a need for rural as well as urban data on the incidence, prevalence, and other characteristics of drinking in the black community; longitudinal research involving interviews of offenders as well as collection of data on the victims; data on development of normal adults in the black community; and less focus on problem behavior and on blacks in prison.

• The importance of developing black norms for values accorded housing, income, conception of family, and the like was noted. Characteristics of these for blacks have been found to be significantly different from values for the sample of whites (7). Using white values for black characteristics, therefore, would distort the results of research.

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Causal Factors

Na'im Akbar, PhD

(This presentation includes material that was to have been presented by Louis Ramey of the Southern Regional Education Board, who was unable to attend.)

A basic reality is that being black in this country is clearly dangerous to your health. Black homicide is not always a rational process but, instead, it should be considered a situational process. To assume that it is a rational process is to analyze the perpetrators in terms of their individual dynamics and psychological functioning and conclude that the victimizers are themselves victims. Homicides do not always result from a rational, premeditated, deliberate process, with people acting on the basis of conscious determinants; instead homicides often involve a situational process.

What situations are responsible for impulsive homicidal behavior? Insidious and persistent racism is the underlying cause of many situational homicides involving blacks in this country.

One byproduct of racism is a tremendous sense of frustration, anger, and helplessness exacerbated by a system that perpetrates wrongs and unresponsiveness. The result is what Louis Ramey calls "free-floating anger" that is easily triggered by an inappropriate object. The real frustration arises from institutional factors that encourage economic victimization of blacks. Unable to identify the cause of his frustration, the person directs his anger toward a specific situation and specific person. Displaced aggression, therefore, is a factor in many black homicides.

The data on black homicides suggest that both the victim and the perpetrator of black-on-black homicides tend to be the people who are least successful in operating within the existing economic system.

People most likely to be the perpetrators or victims of homicide are exposed more than most other persons to cues in the environment that might trigger homicidal activity. For example, television violence is a causal factor for homicides in general, but it is especially important among low-income blacks who spend much more time watching television than other people (1). To wit, people who are frustrated by the limited avenues to success available to them in real life are likely to take the fantasy routes portrayed on television.

Other possible factors include the following:

• The prevalence of handguns in society
• The disintegration of traditional black support systems such as the family and spiritual institutions
• A weakening of moral consciousness and sense of identity
• A mental health system characterized as "psychologically inaccessible" (few black males are involved in primary care in mental health).

In sum, black homicide is a systematic expression of what racism does to human beings in a society where the reality is "us" and "them," and cultural diversity is automatically lumped under "all other." This racist motif of "us" versus "them" undergirds the data, the services, and the systemic structures in the society. Only when the environmental cues, societal pressures, and racist determinants are reduced, can homicide be reduced.

Three major points were brought out in the discussion following this paper.

1. The increasing segregation of lower class blacks should be studied as a cause of homicide. Over the past 15 to 20 years homicide has occurred most often among groups that have been racially and socioeconomically isolated.

2. There appear to be three main types of encounters that can be used to classify homicides: (a) a situation characterized by force, (b) a situation characterized by face, and (c) a situation characterized by identity. The first type leads to felony murders and rape murders. The second type comprises challenges and counter challenges that escalate to fights and end in homicide. The third type of encounters involves disputes between persons who have a deep, intense relationship. A study is being conducted to develop a typology of homicides, but the situational differences resulting in black homicides and in white homicides has not yet been addressed.

3. Stresses in the black community differ from those in the white community. Black men must relate both to their own people and to the white community. In addition, systems that tend to reduce stress in the community—the family, recreation, education—do not operate effectively. A study to isolate and identify components of black anxiety was suggested. Just as anxiety is a common thread in mental illness, stress is a common thread in homicide. When stress becomes unbearable, either outward or inward violence results.

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Toward a Dual Labor-Market Approach to Black-on-Black Homicide

Phillip J. Bowman, PhD

There are many gaps in our knowledge about the root causes and the roles of factors related to black homicide. Three popular explanations for the disproportionately high black-on-black homicide rate are the handgun availability model, the deterrence model, and a social structural model. Although decreasing the availability of handguns might reduce their use in black-on-black homicides, this action would not necessarily reduce the number of homicides or the amount of physical brutality in black communities. And rather than deter homicides, capital punishment would certainly increase black mortality and probably intensify problems among the growing population of blacks in prisons.

A growing body of research shows societal variables such as unemployment, dense urban population, and low income are directly associated with black-on-black homicidal violence. Researchers have failed to isolate and separate social mediators from more basic structural causes. What is needed is research and demonstration to specify how employment-related experiences directly affect black-on-black homicide and how these effects are mediated through stress coping, economic hardship, family pressure, opportunities in the community, educational failure, and alcohol and drug abuse.

The "dual labor-market" approach to black-on-black homicide focuses on the employment-related experiences of black males as the root cause of their high rate of homicide. The approach also aims to clarify the role of key social stresses,

social support systems, and related alcohol, drug abuse, and mental health factors.

This approach was first offered to explain job-related low income and was further developed to account for various labor market problems facing blacks. In the model, employment problems of black males are a direct result of their systematic exclusion from jobs in the primary sector and their disproportionate tracking into unstable secondary sector jobs. A basic assumption is that two largely separate labor markets exist: primary sector jobs have a future, while secondary jobs are deadends. Montaga states that the primary sector offers high wages, good working conditions, advancement, equity, and employment stability (1). Jobs in the secondary sector are low paying or involve poor working conditions, limited advancement, a highly personalized relationship between workers and supervisors that is conducive to harsh work disciplines, instability, and a high turnover rate.

Researchers have documented several aspects of this dual labor market that are stressful for blacks who are overrepresented in the secondary sector and encounter hiring discrimination, isolated job contacts, and other barriers that restrict entry into primary sector jobs. Also, the growing unemployment rate among young blacks reflects the instability of secondary sector jobs and their vulnerability to technological change and economic risk. As a result, many drop out of the labor force and experience persistent economic hardship.

Despite the impact of these restraints of the dual labor market on blacks, no systematic understanding has tied the concept to black-on-black homicide or to the escalating rate of violence among black males. Are family pressures, unequal opportunity structures, and educational inequalities affected by the dual labor market experiences? Would promoting more constructive methods of coping with stress and true criminal justice reduce the prevalence of black-on-black homicide? Can homicide in black communities be reduced by strong family networks and better educational or skill development opportunities? How would the elimination of dual labor market experience altogether affect the incidence of black-on-black homicide?

The following five propositions address the research and intervention needs:

1. Direct effects of the dual labor market. If black-on-black homicide is caused primarily by destructive patterns of coping with the dual labor market, then effective intervention strategies should promote blacks' access to meaningful primary sector jobs and constructive coping experiences.

2. Indirect effects of the dual labor market. If destructive stress coping by blacks is mediated through economic hardship, coupled with family pressure, job-related stress, and educational inequalities, then economic security, legitimate opportunity structures, family support, and educational skills should be developed.

3. Direct role of alcohol and drugs. If alcohol and drug abuse often engender a destructive form of coping in black-on-black violence, then effective intervention should reduce alcohol and drug use as coping strategies.

4. Role of law enforcement activities. Given that enforcement varies systematically by race, effective intervention