

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community



PROCEEDINGS

*May 31–June 2, 1995
Hyatt Regency Hotel
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Services



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Steering Committee

Antonia Drew
Executive Director
ASHA Family Services, Inc.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Shelia Hankins–Jarrett
Private Consultant and Former
Executive Director
Women’s Justice Center
Tallahassee, Florida

Oliver Williams, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Robert Hampton, Ph.D.
Associate Provost for Academic Affairs
University of Maryland–College Park
College Park, Maryland

Joyce Thomas, R.N., M.P.H.
Founder and President
Center for Child Protection and
Family Support
Washington, DC

Foreword



FOREWORD

William Riley

When various African American researchers and practitioners in the field of domestic violence met two years ago at a conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the subject of research, and the lack of recognition and dissemination of existing research and writings by African Americans on the subject of domestic violence in the African American community seemed destined to surface in their discussions.

A strong indication of fate was the fact that the individuals in this small group felt compelled and willing to take action toward addressing this void. I express my sincere gratitude to, and admiration of those individuals—Antonia Drew, Robert Hampton, Shelia Hankins–Jarrett, Joyce Thomas, and Oliver Williams.

Literature describing violence in America has consistently ignored the culture, socialization patterns, norms, and experiences of African American families. Although the issue of domestic violence has received increased attention in recent years, experts note that African Americans are disproportionately represented in the statistics as victims and perpetrators.

The need for researchers to explore adequately issues surrounding ethnicity and violence appears immense. In response to the lack of knowledge about the extent and nature of domestic violence in the African American community, a steering committee for the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community was formed. The creation of the committee reflected the need for a representative body to address the concerns and perspectives of the African American community on the issue of domestic violence.

We are pleased that our efforts resulted in the first Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, which was co–sponsored by the University of Minnesota and held May 31–June 2, 1995, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Institute was stimulating and enlightening. I feel certain that the theories expounded at this conference will help us to understand this issue more fully, and will empower us to reduce the level of violence in the African American community.

Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Literature describing violence in America has consistently ignored the culture, socialization patterns, norms, and experiences of African American families. The need for researchers to explore adequately issues surrounding ethnicity and violence appears immense. In response to the lack of knowledge concerning the extent and nature of domestic violence in the African American community, a steering committee for the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American community was formed. The creation of the committee reflected the need for a representative body, an “organized voice,” to bring forth concerns and perspectives of the African American community to the field of domestic violence.

The steering committee met on September 16–17, 1994, in Detroit, Michigan and was given the task of organizing and convening the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community and defining its goals and objectives. The purpose and intent of the Institute is illustrated by its mission:

To provide an interdisciplinary vehicle and forum by which scholars, practitioners, and observers of family violence in the African American community will have the continual opportunity to articulate their perspective on family violence through research findings, the examination of service delivery and intervention mechanisms, and the identification of appropriate and effective responses to prevent/reduce family violence in the African American community.

Researchers, practitioners, and observers of domestic violence in the African American community met for the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community on May, 31–June, 2, 1995, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. During the plenary session, scholars Dr. Beth Richie, Ms. Joyce Thomas, Dr. William Oliver, Dr. Oliver Williams, and Dr. Esther Jenkins presented papers on the topics of Violence Against Women, Child Abuse and Neglect, Black Males and Violence, Cultural Competence in the Delivery of Services, and Community/Environmental Violence, respectively. Following the presentations, respondents Antonia Drew, Shelia Hankins–Jarrett, Dr. Robert Pierce, Dr. Richard Majors, Radhia Jaaber, Wilbert Murrell, and Dr. Tony Whitehead shared their comments, critiques, and viewpoints on

assigned research findings. Other participant attendees were also given the opportunity to voice their opinions on various issues addressed.

Themes that emerged from the Institute included:

- Acknowledgment of the need for knowledge and the recognition of how the Institute serves as a vehicle to bring together scholars and practitioners, with the intent of developing and disseminating ideas, research, and data;
- The intersection of race, class, and gender, and how they affect the actions and responses of individuals, groups, and institutions;
- The importance of understanding symbolic messages, historical context and the process by which violence occurs;
- The importance of maintaining and strengthening the bridge between research and practice;
- Recognition of macro and micro aspects of the problem of domestic violence; and
- The need to pay more attention to turning points in the lives of victims and abusers, as well as the importance of examining families that “work”.

Additional issues that were addressed included:

- A call for researchers to continue their exploration of issues specifically targeted to African Americans;
- The evaluation of treatment programs as a different question for African Americans, therefore requiring further analysis and theory building;
- A need to create a model containing those elements to be included in programs that provide services to African Americans;
- The question of how to triangulate research, practice, and training;
- The role of the community as an essential component in implementing strategies to reduce and end family and gang violence; and

- How to expand and incorporate the ideas of others interested in domestic violence and build upon the Institute.

The essence of the Institute was perhaps captured best when a participant stated, “We want to create change in our community, something that is replicable—that will make a difference; if we do not do it, no one else will!” At the conclusion of the Institute sessions, steering committee member Joyce Thomas--in collaboration with other Institute participants--agreed to develop a plan for the continuation of the Institute.

Welcoming Session



WELCOMING SESSION

Dr. Oliver Williams, Assistant Professor of the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, opened the first Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community by welcoming participants to Minneapolis and the Institute. The purpose and intent of the Institute were reconfirmed and awards for meritorious contributions in the field of domestic violence were announced for Dr. Beth Richie, Dr. Robert Hampton, and William Riley.

Distinguished guests included Sheila Wellstone, wife of Senator Paul Wellstone and advocate for reducing domestic violence, Dr. Jeff Edelson of the University of Minnesota, and various representatives of domestic violence programs in the city of Minneapolis. Highlights of the evening included an Internet demonstration by Laurel Consulting Group president Conrad Kenley, entitled *African American Presence on the Information Highway*, and a display of African American garments, literature, fabrics, and artifacts by members of the Minnesota African American Women on the Move.

The plenary session of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community was opened by William Riley, Federal Project Officer from the Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. He welcomed the participants and reminded them that the Institute was a forum to share current information and to discuss the limits of the existing research. He encouraged participants to discuss their firsthand experience in the field and to address areas where further research is needed. Riley noted that the Institute was the beginning of a long and continuing dialogue among African American researchers and practitioners about this particular phenomenon. Finally, he introduced the moderator of the Institute, Dr. Robert Hampton of the University of Maryland.

Dr. Robert Hampton, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of Maryland, laid out the goals for the following days. His unerring, sensitive, astute guidance was instrumental in keeping the group on course during the dynamic and often complex interchange of ideas. He observed that the Institute would be an exciting and wonderful opportunity for participants to bridge relationships with other African American researchers and practitioners.

Dr. Hampton summarized the steps taken by the steering committee to develop and implement the Institute. He related that the five issues in the program did not represent everything the steering committee wanted to do, but reflected what the participants could address in a day's time. He also noted that the format was designed to encourage dialogue between researchers and practitioners. In addition, the purpose of the Institute was to expand current research by extending discussion beyond what participants already knew about the correlates and consequences of violence. Dr. Hampton expressed his desire to go beyond simple summaries of research projects and to develop new paradigms for the way researchers approach the study of violence.

Dr. Hampton explained that their efforts would culminate in the second day of the Institute, when the participants would discuss ways in which such events could continue. He expressed his desire for the development of a strategy for future gatherings, as well as ways to involve the African American community in future events.

Dr. Hampton concluded by stating that the Institute was an ideal opportunity for participants to share their ideas and to network with other African American professionals. Additionally, the recording and videotaping of the proceedings by the film crew from the School of Journalism, Media & Graphic Arts at Florida A&M University (FAMU) will aid in a much broader distribution of information from the Institute.

