



# **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CONDUCTING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE RESEARCH WITH BLACK WOMEN**

BLACKNESS IN CANADA POLICY NETWORKING CONFERENCE

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# OVERVIEW



Purpose of Research Study



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Conclusion & Recommendations



Questions & Comments

## PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this study was twofold, to better understand Black women's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) and their experiences with the police in which they have been charged and/or arrested with an IPV related offence.

## BACKGROUND

- Intimate partner violence (IPV) has been recognized as a social issue affecting women from diverse backgrounds (Truman & Morgan, 2014).
- Black women are more susceptible to abuse by an intimate partner than white women (Black et al., 2010; Truman & Morgan, 2014).
- Black women are twice more likely to be murdered by their partners when compared to white women (Violence Policy Center, 2018).
- Black women more susceptible to poor health outcomes (Veenstra, 2019) due to economic and social disadvantages and at high risk of experiencing mental health issues, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicidal ideation (Bubriski-McKenzie & Jasinski, 2014; Houry, Kemball, Rhodes & Kaslow, 2006).



## BACKGROUND CONT'D

- Less likely to seek external support and use social services (Hyman, Forte, Du Mont, Romans & Cohen, 2009).
- Many women may resort to the use of defensive tactics in response to their partner's violence, which may result in criminal charges (Potter, 2008; West, 2018).
- Overlap between Black women's victimization and criminalization (Bent-Goodley, 2004; Brown, 2012; Potter, 2008; Richie, 2012).
- Underrepresented and their experiences remain homogenized with the experiences of white women (Chigwada-Bailey, 2004).
- Lack of race-based data in Canada, national data representing prevalence rates of IPV among Black women is nonexistent (i.e. Conroy, Burczyk & Savage, 2019).

## BACKGROUND CONT'D

- Black women participate less frequently in research studies than their white counterparts (Shavers, Lynch & Burmeister, 2001)
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Trust (e.g. Tuskegee Syphilis Study)
- Fear
- Religious beliefs
- Perceived social stigma
- Economic constraints
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of the research process
- Administrative issues (e.g. poor communication, establishing relationships)



# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## CRITICAL RACE FEMINISM

- Critical race feminism has been described as an intellectual movement (Crenshaw, 2011), and a body of writing that attempts to integrate the way race and gender function together in structuring social inequality (Dua, 1999).
- Places the experiences of racialized women at the centre of discussion and analysis.
- Racism is an everyday occurrence in society in its systemic and subtle forms (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007).
- Racialized people are not similarly situated in practices, principles, legal doctrines and rules as those from the dominant group (Aylward, 1999).

## CRITICAL RACE FEMINISM CONT'D

- Anti-essentialism is the belief that women of color do not have a single, unitary identity but intersecting and overlapping identities that impact how they experience their world (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007).
- Intersectionality is a method of analysis that recognizes that individuals occupy and embody multiple locations, subject positions, and identities (Brock, Glasbeek, Murdocca, 2014).
- Racialization is the process whereby racial categories are constructed as different and unequal in ways that lead to regressive social, economic and political impacts (Galabuzi, 2001).



# CURRENT STUDY

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What challenges are encountered when conducting research with Black women?
- 2) What strategies can researchers utilize during the research process with Black women who experience IPV and or are charged with an IPV-related offence?
- 3) Why do Black women choose to participate in a research study exploring their experiences of IPV and with the police? What factors influence their participation?

# INCLUSION CRITERIA

Self-identified Black  
woman

Over 18 years old

Resident of Ontario

Married, common-  
law

Experienced IPV,  
arrested and/or  
charged with IPV  
related offence



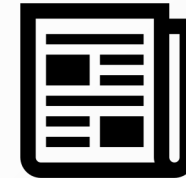
# RECRUITMENT SITES



# DATA COLLECTION



Semi-structured Interviews



Demographic Questionnaire



# RESULTS



## SAMPLE

- 25 women who self identified as Black
- Age range: 26-64 years old
- Involved in heterosexual/common law relationships
- Live across the Greater Toronto Area and surrounding areas
- Graduated from university, college, high School
- Employment/unemployed, social assistance
- Income level: \$5000-100,000 (most under \$29,000)

## CENTRAL THEMES

- 1) Mitigating barriers recruiting Black women
- 2) Navigating the terrain of unresponsive agencies
- 3) Managing Barriers Recruiting Black Women

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- 1) The invisibility of Black women's narratives
  - 2) Political change
  - 3) Racialized and gendered insider positionality
  - 4) A community's code of silence
  - 5) Safeguarding Black women and men from racial oppression

## MITIGATING BARRIERS RECRUITING BLACK WOMEN

- Broadened criteria to include victimized women
- Emails sent to 213 social service agencies and professional contact across GTA
- Follow up emails and phone calls within 2 weeks
- Most agencies-non responsive

## NAVIGATING THE TERRAIN OF UNRESPONSIVE AGENCIES

- Agency gatekeeping

“In order to protect our clients’ confidentiality, we do not allow volunteers, researchers, etc. into the groups.”

- Multiple ethics processes

“Our Research Committee reviewed your request and due to the recruitment of patients within ... and the sensitive nature of your research, we ask that your research protocol be reviewed by our local REB.”

- Restrictions and unreasonable demands

“The only incentive that participants connected to the agency were allowed to receive was gift certificates or bus tickets.”

## MANAGING BARRIERS RECRUITING BLACK WOMEN

- Establishing relationships with agencies
- Utilizing leads from professional contacts
- Using multiple sites to advertise and recruit (churches, grocery stores, West Indian stores, community boards, newspapers)



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# WOMEN'S REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

## RACIALIZED AND GENDERED INSIDER POSITIONALITY

- Gain or increase access to participants
- May be more sensitive or responsive to the needs of Black women (shared social, linguistic and cultural commonality)
- May have success eliciting deeper explanations

“If you weren't Black, I wouldn't have done this. If you weren't a woman, I wouldn't have done this. Representation matters. For me, it's like a marker of safety. I feel that internalized guilt around what it could mean if I talk about my pain somehow is eased because you're Black. And it may be fucked up, but I feel like it makes me feel less guilty. Although everybody's experience is really different, I feel like community trauma matters.” Ava

## THE INVISIBILITY OF BLACK WOMEN'S NARRATIVES

- Recognized the invisibility of Black women and misinformation regarding their experiences
- Participated to forefront their experiences

“For me personally, I think because we're not used to ever being important, you know, we're shunned from everything and resources.... I'm just boldly stepping up, to be honest with you. I was afraid before, but I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid to talk. I'm not afraid because I am now accepting it, you know. And I'm tired of running so I'm facing it”

Crystal

## POLITICAL CHANGE

- To help other Black women
- Bring attention to social injustice

“Well, you know what? I always think that if people know the statistics, about things like this, of what goes on behind closed doors it could make a change, it could change the system”

Pamela

“After what happened to me, I felt stronger. Like, there's something that needs to be done about it because a lot of people are going through this, and it's not nice. It's injustice. It's breaching the human rights of women, especially. I felt like if there were any means that I could actually help and resolve in this, I think this opportunity came, and I make use of it”<sup>24</sup>

Jocelyn

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# WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE BLACK WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION?

## A COMMUNITY'S CODE OF SILENCE

- Cultural script of silence
- Stigma
- Fear of violence within their homes and the communities
- Black women may not want to reify stereotypical and oppressive images of Black people
- Further harm

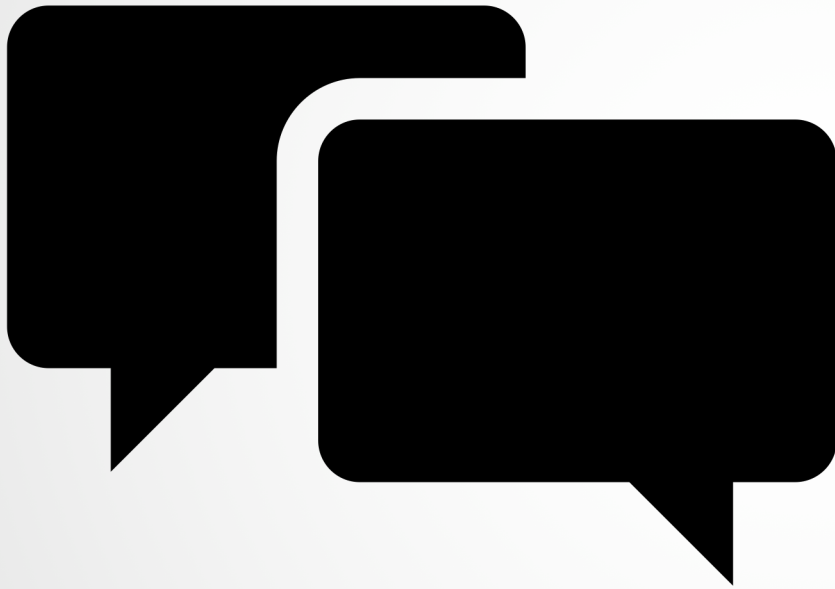
“We’re taught not to say anything, which is, don’t tell nobody your business. That means any good, anything bad. You just don’t tell anybody your business, except to your family. That can be harmful” Anna

## SAFEGUARDING BLACK WOMEN AND MEN FROM RACIAL OPPRESSION

- Fear of scrutiny, violence and victimization
- Perception of partner
- Negotiated information shared

“If this is something you think and you feel that this is going to be beneficial for other women, you know, at least – in the shadow of secrecy – that’s something that might help fix this process. Just don’t incriminate me.’ Like duh; you think I want to incriminate myself?”

Evelyn



# DISCUSSION





# IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE & RESEARCH

## RECOMMENDATIONS



The experiences of Black women must be positioned at the forefront of IPV research to better understand their unique needs.



More research is needed that examines the overlap between women's victimization and criminalization.



The criminal justice system must examine approaches that makes a distinction between women who are victims and those who perpetrate violence in their relationships




Service providers and policy makers need to adopt a contextually based framework that takes into consideration the intersections of race, gender, class and crime.



# CONCLUSION



# QUESTIONS & COMMENTS?



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