

The Healing Journey: Intimate Partner Violence & Mental Health Issues

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National Conference on Health and Domestic Violence
Washington DC, March 2015

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The Funders

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; Community-University Research Alliance
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
- Alberta Centre for Child, Community and Family Research
- PrairieAction Foundation
- Status of Women Canada
- TransCanada Pipelines

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Statistics Canada 2009

- In 2009, about the same proportion of men as women reported being targets of violent acts from intimate partners in the past 5 years (6% women; 6% men)
- But abuse against women is more repetitive & life-threatening.
 - 42% of women were injured (18% men).
 - 13% vs. 2% sought medical help (AuCoin, 2005).
 - Women more likely to report multiple victimizations (57% vs. 40%)

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- Women 3 times more likely than men (34% versus 10%) to report having been sexually assaulted, beaten, choked or threatened with a gun or a knife.
- Women fear their partners' violence to a greater extent: 34% of women compared to 10% of men were afraid for their lives (AuCoin, 2005).

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Aboriginal Women & DV

- Aboriginal women are three times at higher risk of IPV (21%) than non-Aboriginal women (7%) (Brownridge, 2008).
- Vulnerabilities also related to
 - colonization,
 - residential schools (trauma, sexual abuse; loss of parental role models)
 - poverty.

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Visible Minority Women & IPV

- Hyman, Forte, Du Mont, Romans & Cohen (2009) compared racial-minority Canadian women to White Canadian women (in Stats Canada 2009 GSS).
- No differences in self-reported rates of physical or sexual violence in the last 5 years compared to the majority.
- No differences in disclosures to friends, family or police.
- Given population differences, it would be useful to compare racial background groups.

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Mental Health & IPV

- Women abused by partners often diagnosed with depression and anxiety (Dowling Evans & Shapiro, 2011; Hegarty, Gunn, Chondros, & Small, 2004; Houry, Kaslow & Thompson, 2005;).
- PTSD associated with both childhood abuse (especially child sexual abuse) (Clemmons, Walsh, DiLillo & Messman-Moore, 2007) and intimate partner violence.
- Current study focuses on how women abused by intimate partners are doing and whether racial background is linked to mental health.

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The Healing Journey Project

- 659 women from 3 Canadian provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba) who had experienced IPV
 - Recruited through shelters and other service providers
- Longitudinal study (2005-2009)
 - 7 waves of data collected about 6 months apart
- Current data from the first two waves.
 - demographic characteristics and IPV from Wave 1
 - mental health measures collected six-months later in Wave 2
- Data collected in one-on-one in-person interviews.

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Measures

- Composite Abuse Scale (Hegarty, Bush, & Sheehan, 2005).
- Symptom Checklist-10: global assessment of psychological distress (Nguyen, Attkisson, & Stegner, 1983)
 - Clinical cut-off of 4/5 to identify those with a greater likelihood of a mood or anxiety disorder (Cano, 2001).
- Centre for Epidemiological Studies – Depression (CES-D-10) (Radloff, 1977)
 - Clinical cut off of 15 (Björngvinsson et al., 2013)
- PTSD Checklist (Blanchard, Jones-Alexander, Buckley, & Forneris, 1996)
 - Clinical cut-off of 44 (Blanchard et al.)

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Overall Demographics

- N = 595 (Attrition of 70 from wave one to two)
- 37% had never stayed in a VAW shelter
- Diverse racial backgrounds:
 - 263 Caucasian (44.8%),
 - 292 (49.7%) Aboriginal (First Nations = 218, Métis = 73, Inuit = 1)
 - Racial minority (32 or 5.5%): most from African roots (N= 13), South Asia (N = 7) and Latin America (N = 8).

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Overall sample

- Average age: 36.7 years.
- 87% no longer with abusive partners
- Total family income (all sources in last year): \$22,504
- 90.3% have children, 70% of whom are 18 years and younger (average age 9.2). The adult children were an average of 27.8 years.
- 40% had not completed highschool but 38% had some post secondary (tech or university)
- 60% not currently working

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Abuse & Disabilities

- Child abuse history:
 - only 20.5% had no child abuse
 - Any sexual abuse: 54.4%
 - Other child abuse: 25.1%
- Disability/illness: 63.3%
- Do women link the disability/condition to abuse?
 - Childhood abuse: 9.6% (n = 24)
 - Partner abuse: 43.4% (n = 109)
 - Both childhood & partner abuse: 47% (n = 118)

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Differences between Groups

- Caucasian women older: 38.4 years
- Aboriginal women were
 - more likely to still be with partner (17%),
 - not have completed highschool (52.7%),
 - less likely to be working full-time (14.4%),
 - less likely to **not** have been abused as children (14.1%).
- Women from visible minorities more likely to have resided in a shelter (81% versus 64% Aboriginal and 59% Caucasian) ($\chi^2 = 6.4$, $p = .04$, Cramer's $V = .10$)

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Measures by Racial Group

Scale	Caucasian	Aboriginal	Racial Minority
CAS Severe Combined	6.6	7.3	7.6
CAS Emotional Abuse	28.3	26.4*	33.5**
CAS Physical Abuse	10.9*	13.6*	12.5
CAS Harassment	7.3	7.8	8.7
CAS Total Score	53.1	55.0	62.3
SCL-10 Total Score	12.3	13.5	12.1
CES-D Total score	12.0	12.2	11.3
PTSD Checklist	26.2	27.4	27.4

- Average CES-D & PTSD **not** in clinical range.
- SCL-10 in clinical range.
- Few differences between groups.
 - Racial minority women reported higher CAS Emotional abuse.
 - Aboriginal women reported higher physical partner abuse.

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Intercorrelations

	SCL-10	CES-D-10	PTSD
CAS-Severe	.225***	.161***	.294***
CAS-Emotional	.135***	.085*	.216***
CAS-Physical	.162***	.122***	.215***
CAS-Harassment	.109**	.08*	.173***
CAS-Total	.187***	.131***	.271***

- Measures significantly correlated with IPV such that higher CAS scores related to higher mental health symptoms

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Child Abuse (plus IPV) & Measures

	No child abuse	Abuse but no CSA	Any child sexual	F-test
CAS-Tot	55.7	49.2	56.5**	F = 3.7, p = .02*
SCL-10	11.4	12.9	13.6	F = 2.9, n.s.
CES-D-10	11.1	11.5	12.7**	F = 3.7, p = .03*
PTSD	23.6	26	28.6**	F = 5.7, p = .004**

- Women with IPV and a child sex abuse history scored more highly on CAS, depression and PTSD (though average not in clinical ranges).

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Implications

- These women lead complicated lives: considerable childhood abuse, disabilities/illnesses, low incomes, IPV post separation.
- On average, the women were not in the clinical ranges on depression or PTSD scales.
- SCL-10 (psychological distress) in clinical range but scale best as screening tool (Muller et al., 2010) and the women coping with many difficulties.

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- Important not to stereotype women whose partners have abused them as having long-standing mental health problems.
- Many women improve MH symptoms substantially in a short time (i.e. YWCA shelter study (Tutty, 2006) & You're Not Alone study (Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Rothery, 2015)).
- Counsellors must take a holistic view of these women's lives and be prepared to assist them with both their basic and emotional needs.

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