



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COURT SERVICES AND OFFENDER SUPERVISION AGENCY &
PRETRIAL SERVICES AGENCY
RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 17, 2002 *Approved 10/24/02*
TO: Paul Quander *Do not support*
CC: Susan Shaffer
FROM: Claire Johnson *cmj*
RE: Study of Domestic Violence Recidivism Among African-American Men

The Research Review Board (RRB) has reviewed the research proposal submitted by Nicole Gaskin-Laniyan of Howard University to conduct a study of domestic violence recidivism among African-American men in the District of Columbia. Our recommendation is for CSOSA to not support this study, and the statement supporting this is attached.

Please indicate your acceptance or non-acceptance of this recommendation as soon as possible so that we may inform the researcher of the outcome of our review. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-220-5553 or claire.johnson@csosa.gov.

Thank you.

Enclosures: Research proposal and addendum
RRB Recommendation Statement

Research Review Board

Janice Bergin, Director of Operations, PSA • Calvin Johnson, Director of Research and Evaluation, CSOSA •
Claire Johnson, Director of Community Justice Programs, PSA • Carolyn Peake, Senior Program Analyst, Strategic
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Director, Community Supervision Services, CSOSA



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RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT

I. RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Investigator: Nicole D. Gaskin-Laniyan

Title: Domestic violence recidivism among African-American men in the District of Columbia: the impact of judicial disposition, social context and perceptions of criminal justice sanctions

Institution: Howard University, School of Social Work

Type of Data: Interviews using open-ended questionnaire and administration of the Revised-Conflict Tactics Scale

Subjects: Offenders and/or defendants - Sample size of 15 batterers

Description: This study looks at 15 African-American men who have been arrested for a domestic violence offense in the District. The study design is a multiple case study design and data will be collected via face-to-face interviews. The interviews will consist of open-ended questions and administration of the Revised-Conflict Tactics Scale. A convenience sample of participants will be recruited throughout the District. Respondents to the initial request for participants will be screened. One of the screening criteria will be a confirmed arrest for a domestic violence offense. The arrests will be confirmed using the publicly available DC Superior Court database.

The researcher proposes to recruit potential study participants by distributing flyers outside of treatment group rooms before and after sessions.

II. RECOMMENDATION

The RRB recommendation for this study:

Support

Support with Conditions

Do Not Support

The RRB recommendation is for CSOSA/PSA not to support this study as it is currently designed.

III. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed study is compliant with Federal regulations regarding the protection of human subjects as certified by Howard University, Office of the Provost, Institutional Review Board (Federal Assurance FWA00000891) on July 22, 2002.

However, since the proposed recruiting method would take place in a restricted facility, it raises the following issues or concerns:

1. The research design does not incorporate a method for obtaining informed consent prior to knowing the identity of the offenders. In order to be acceptable, the proposed method would have to protect the identity of a potential participant until an informed consent form has been signed.
2. The proposed methodology raises a concern as to the perceived coercive nature of the researcher/subject contact in association with the subject's required participation in treatment sessions.

The proposed method for recruiting study participants is a common request from researchers that presents a dilemma for the Agency. Although the research supports several of the Agency's priorities and interests, the Agency cannot support research projects that risk the Agency's compromising Federal regulations, Agency policy, or operational effectiveness.

1. Summary Statement

- a) The researcher for this study is Nicole D. Gaskin-Laniyan, a doctoral student in the Howard University School of Social Work in Washington, D. C.
- b) The title of the study is *“Domestic violence recidivism amongst African-American men in the District of Columbia: the impact of judicial disposition, social context and perceptions of criminal justice sanctions”*
- c) The purpose of this study is to explore childhood experiences with domestic violence; experiences within the criminal justice system after an arrest for domestic violence; and perceptions of criminal justice sanctions for domestic violence of African-American men who have been arrested for domestic violence in the District of Columbia.
- d) The project will be conducted in the District of Columbia at either the Howard University School of Social Work or the Martin Luther King Jr. Library in the North West quadrant of the city. ✓
- e) The study duration is from September 1, 2002 through November 1, 2002.
- f) Research methods to be employed include the recruitment and interview of 15 African-American men from domestic violence treatment centers in the D. C. metro area. Study participants will be interviewed for a period of 90 minutes by a male and/or female interviewer.
- g) The required sample size for this study is 15 African-American men who were arrested for domestic violence between April 1996 and December 1999. The data collection time frame is one month (September 1-September 30, 2002).
- h) No Agency staff will be needed to support the study.
- i) The risk or discomfort to subjects as a result of participation in this study is expected to be moderate.
- j) It is anticipated that study participants will provide valuable insight that will broaden our understanding of the social context within which domestic violence recidivism occurs.
- k) There will not be deliverables from this study. The only product of this study will be a dissertation.

2. Detailed Statement

a) Review of the related literature

Little is known about the context within which domestic violence recidivism by African-American men occurs. However, a great deal has been written about the characteristics and treatment of men who batter women that informs our conceptualization of this phenomenon (Gondolf, 1997; Gondolf, 1996; Edelson & Syers, 1991; Caesar & Hamberger, 1989, Roberts, 1987; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986; Fagan, Stewart & Hansen, 1983). In a growing number of studies, samples of African-American men have been included yielding preliminary information about their experiences with batterers intervention programs (Gondolf, 1996; Williams & Becker, 1998; Edleson & Syers, 1991; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). Still, nothing is documented that focuses on the domestic violence recidivism of African-American men.

The domestic violence literature provides several explanations for men's abusive behavior. Research repeatedly stresses the need to consider multiple factors in explaining the abusive behavior of some men. For those theorists that subscribe to singular explanations for men's violence, the debate tends to rest in three camps: (1) intergenerational experience of violence beginning in the family of origin (social learning theory); (2) costs/punishment versus benefits/rewards for abusive behavior (exchange theory); and (3) social support for men's domination of women coupled with various structural stresses such as unemployment and racism (structural theory). The integration of these theoretical perspectives can best aid us in our understanding of the complex phenomenon of partner abuse. These theories provide us with a framework for understanding why someone could repeat their abuse of an intimate partner after an arrest for domestic violence. Depending on their childhood exposure to domestic violence, any costs or benefits they incurred as a result of their adult abuse of their partner and their social-cultural reality, recidivism may occur for some men regardless of criminal justice intervention.

b) Detailed description of the research plan

Potential participants will initially be recruited at domestic violence treatment centers in the D. C. metro area. At the sites, potential respondents will be given flyers (Appendix B) introducing the study and requesting their volunteer participation. Upon participants' expressed intention to be in the study, participants will be screened on site to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the study. Potential participants will be told that if their arrests for domestic violence between April 1996 and December 1999 is confirmed, they will be contacted to schedule an interview within 24 to 48 hours.

Subjects will be selected for inclusion in the sample using purposive, non-probability sampling procedures. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of sample elements are listed below.

Criteria for Subject Inclusion

Subjects will be included if they are:

- African-American
- Male.
- Age 18 and older

And if they have been

- Arrested and charged at least two times for domestic violence in the District of Columbia.
- The arrest has occurred between April 1, 1996 through December 31, 1999

Criteria for Subject Exclusion

Subjects are excluded if they

- disclose in the initial screening call that they are currently using drugs or alcohol.
- If at any time during the face to face interview they appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Have an open criminal case (e.g., pending, probationary status) in the District of Columbia at the time they volunteer to participate in the study
- If the subject's arrest record does not appear in the Criminal Information System database

Following the verification of arrest information, the caller will be asked to schedule an interview. Each interview will occur in an office at the Howard University School of Social Work or at the Martin Luther King Jr. Library in North West, D. C. Study participants will be provided directions to the Howard University School of Social Work at the point when the interview is scheduled.

Once the caller has arrived for the interview, the interviewer(s) will verbally inform the subject of the study's purpose, procedures, risks and benefits. The subject will then be given the opportunity to silently read the consent form (Appendix D). The nature of the information contained in the consent form is specified in the form listed in the section of this document called "Consent Forms". Two interviewers will witness the consent form.

The interview will be conducted by this student investigator and an African American male. The African American male interviewer will be used because it is likely that an African American male may be better able to quickly establish rapport for the discussion of this highly sensitive issue. All interviews will be audio taped to facilitate transcription. As one interviewer engages the subject in the in-depth interview, the other will record written field notes and taping the interview. At the conclusion of the interview the subject will receive a twenty-dollar compensation.

Field notes and audiotapes will be stored by the student investigator in a locked file cabinet in the student investigator's office. The student is the only person who has access to the key for the data storage cabinet.

All of the original signed consent forms will also be maintained in the office of the student investigator. Copies of consent forms for the Howard University Investigation are found in Appendix D of this document. The consent forms prepared for this study follow the format recommended by the Institutional Review Board

c) Significance of the anticipated results and their contribution to the advancement of knowledge

Study findings will add to the scarce empirical data available on African American male perpetrators of domestic violence. Furthermore, it will expand our understanding of the social contextual dynamics experienced by some African-American men who abuse their intimate female partners.

d) Benefits of research and/or participation to CSOSA/PSA

Benefits to CSOSA/PSA are indirect. The research study will contribute to the general scientific knowledge of domestic violence offenders. This study is not funded, it is not an evaluative study of CSOSA/PSA. Therefore, it will not have an affect on the Agency operations.

e) Specific resources required from the Agency

No resources will be required from the Agency.

f) Description of possible risks, discomforts, and benefits to individual subjects...

Subjects may experience some degree of inconvenience because they will need to travel to Howard University of the Martin Luther King Jr. Library for an interview.

There is one direct benefit to subjects who participate in this study. Subjects will receive a twenty-dollar compensation for their participation. There are also direct benefits to persons interested in developing policies and programs to serve perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. In addition, study findings will add to the scarce empirical data available on African American male perpetrators of domestic violence. Overall, the level of risk to human subjects in this study is moderate relative to the anticipated benefits.

g) Description of steps taken to minimize any potential risks or discomforts.

To minimize the inconvenience the student investigator will provide subjects with directions to the campus. This study also poses some modest risk of psychological discomfort because subjects will be asked to disclose personal information about socially undesirable behaviors. The design of this study is likely to reduce the negative impact of such disclosures because of the use of an African American male interviewer. The student investigator is a trained, licensed social worker. Finally, subjects will be advised that they are free to discontinue the interview at any time.

h) Description of physical and/or administrative procedures to be followed to:

- a. ensure the security of any individually identifiable data and*
- b. destroy research records or remove individual identifiers from those records when the research has been completed*

Steps will be taken to maximize confidentiality of subjects. Procedures to maximize the confidentiality of information recorded on notes and tapes include storing these materials in locked file cabinets. Each respondent will be assigned a numerical code in place of their name. The list of respondents by name with their

assigned code will be kept locked in a file cabinet until the completion of the study at which point it will be destroyed. All tapes will be kept for a period of one (1) year beyond the conclusion of the study. This will be done in order to prepare articles for submission to refereed journals.

i) Description of any anticipated effects of the research project on Agency programs and operations

It is anticipated that this research project will not have an effect on the programs and operations of the Agency.

j) Relevant research materials, vitae, etc.

See bibliography of literature cited and biographical sketch of the student investigator.

k) Statement indicating that copies of all deliverables will be provided to CSOSA/PSA

There will be no deliverables for this study. The only product of this research is a dissertation. If requested by CSOSA/PSA, a copy of the dissertation will be provided.

l) Statement that copies of any datasets will be provided to CSOSA/PSA at the conclusion of the project.

The consent forms indicate that the participants in the study will be ensured confidentiality. The student investigator will not have participants' consent. Therefore, the datasets will not be released to CSOSA/PSA.