Doing feminist intersectional and community engaged research: Adaptations to scoping reviews and the secondary analysis of national data sets

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Abstract

As Hankivsky & Cormier (2011) and Denis (2008) note, the theoretical evolution of intersectionality has outpaced its methodological development. While past work, for example by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF, 2006; Morris & Bunjan, 2007; Simpson, 2009, CRIAW-ICREF & DAWN-RAFH, 2014), has contributed to our understanding of how to apply intersectionality in research, gaps persist. This paper draws on the work of Changing Public Services: Women and Intersectional Analysis, to explore the methodological challenges and opportunities of incorporating feminist intersectional and community engaged research commitments into secondary data analyses, not only in terms of making choices about which questions to ask, but also in terms of making decisions and compromises about priorities for the data to be analyzed. Specifically, building on Arksey & O’Malley’s (2005) and Levac et al.’s (2010) scoping review guidelines, we describe the incorporation of feminist intersectionality and community engagement into our process of undertaking a scoping review. We also detail our incorporation of feminist intersectionality and community engaged commitments in an analysis of three cycles of data from Statistics Canada’s Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), and four cycles of data from the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES).
Introduction

This article presents research design and methodological adaptations to two different components of a community engaged, interdisciplinary research project about the impacts of changes to public services on diverse women as users and providers of service. These adaptations incorporate principles of feminist intersectionality and principles of community engaged scholarship. As Hankivsky & Cormier (2011) and Denis (2008) note, the theoretical evolution of intersectionality has outpaced its methodological development. While past work, for example by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF, 2006; Morris & Bunjun, 2007; Simpson, 2009; CRIAW-ICREF & DAWN-RAFH, 2014), has contributed to our understanding of how to apply intersectionality in research, gaps persist. Scholars have also focused on the application of intersectionality (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011), and the role of communities in policy development and analysis (Elstub & McLaverty, 2014; Lenihan, 2012), but likewise, these practices remain elusive. Concurrently, as universities increasingly espouse the benefits of working collaboratively with non-academic partners to advance scholarship and impact (Canadian Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2017), the methodological protocols and institutional mechanisms required for so doing sometimes lag.

We begin with a brief overview of the research project of focus, Changing Public Services (CPS1), and of our understanding of community engaged scholarship and feminist intersectionality. On these foundations, we describe how we incorporated these two concepts into the overall design of the research, and then how we incorporated them into two specific data collection and analysis processes associated with our team’s work – a scoping review, and a statistical analysis using Statistics Canada data.

Changing Public Services: Women and intersectional analysis. The Changing Public Services (CPS) project was a four-year partnership (2013-2017) between national community organizations, unions that organize public sector workers, and universities. The project, born from a concern about dramatic shifts in public services across Canadian jurisdictions, was designed in collaboration with all partners, and was based on commitments to both feminist intersectionality and community engaged research. As discussed more extensively below, in practice these commitments included building collaborative leadership structures to guide the project’s work, and applying an intersectional analysis to our team’s research efforts. The project’s initial intention was

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1 We acknowledge with thanks the financial and in-kind support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the University of Guelph, the University of Ottawa, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. We also acknowledge the collaboration and invaluable knowledge contributions of several community organizations, provincial unions, and national union locals, as well as the contributions of student volunteers, particularly at the University of Ottawa.
to consider four key questions related to understanding and responding to the impacts of public service changes on diverse women as users and providers of public services. The project’s leadership team was comprised of two academic partners and two community organization partners; the community organization partners are also retired labour organizers who were thus able to provide an ongoing connection to other union members involved in the project. The leadership team was supported and directed by a guiding group, a larger circle of community, union, and academic partners who worked in four distinct regions of the country (Halifax, the National Capital Region, Saskatoon, and Vancouver), and who met annually to draw together insights from across the project’s sites. Each regional cluster identified a priority area of focus based on the needs and preferences of collaborators in that region. For example, Vancouver’s team focused its efforts on challenges with accessing and providing public transit services, while the National Capital Region focused more generally on diverse women’s access to public services, and changes that both service users and providers had noticed over the previous five to seven years. The team continues to disseminate the results of its research in several formats.

Community engaged research. As noted above, this project developed with a commitment to principles of community engaged research. We use the term ‘community engaged research’ as an umbrella term which recognizes that “knowledge acquired in the academic setting is strengthened and enhanced by the real world experience found in communities...[and that] a mutual, reciprocal, and respectful exchange of ideas, practices, and applications among the engaged partners” (Whiteford & Strom, 2013: 72) provides invaluable opportunities for identifying important research questions and answers, and ultimately, achieving social change. In health research, where the use of community engaged research has been well-documented, factors such as community collaboration, significance to the community, and benefits accrued by the community are noted as important ethical foundations of community-based research (Mikesell et al., 2013). Community engaged research protocols also emphasize the importance of self-reflexivity (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008), which refers to understanding one’s own position in the research process, as well as one’s own positionality.

Across disciplines and over time, various terms (i.e., participatory action research, community-based participatory research, emancipatory research) are, and have been, used to imply similar principles. A recent article in the Canadian Journal of Political Science refers to community engaged research broadly as ‘collaborative research’ or ‘partnership research’, and suggests that although there is limited evidence of partnership approaches in Canadian political science, “policy and public administration, local government, environmental projects, housing policy, citizen engagement, youth political activity and women in public leadership are just a few examples of areas where partnership-based approaches could be fruitfully applied” (Goodman et al., 2017, p. 204).
The roots of community engaged research are commonly traced to instrumental action research (sometimes referenced as the ‘northern tradition’), and/or to popular emancipatory education (the ‘southern tradition’), with the latter more strongly emphasizing social justice (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008, pp. 28-29). However, similar principles have also infused branches of various social sciences. For example, much feminist research, including in political science, was and is “tied to the feminist movement and... [is] critical of how traditional social and scientific theories obscured women’s experiences, while portraying men’s behaviours as the human norm” (Frisby et al., 2009, pp. 17-18). As well, Indigenous responses to colonial research paradigms have long emphasized principles related to community ownership and control of data (First Nation Information Governance Centre, 2014), as well as the need for working with, rather than on or for communities (Smith, 2012). In other words, especially where diverse women’s experiences are the focus, there are compelling reasons to couple the theoretical and methodological orientations of community engaged research and feminist intersectionality.

**Feminist intersectionality.** Intersectionality is a theoretical and methodological orientation to research or an analytic tool constantly under construction (Collins & Bilge, 2016). It does not have a commonly accepted definition. Dimensions of the concept found across the literature are synthesized in two recent publications: as inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity and social justice (Collins & Bilge, 2016); and as context, inequality and complexity (Scott & Siltanen, 2016). Intersectionality is concerned with the ways in which systems, institutions, and social structures of power intersect with individuals’ identities and/or social locations to create temporary or sustained experiences of privilege and exclusion. It is a critical theoretical approach that fundamentally seeks social justice, a goal that we pursue in our work as well. Intersectionality involves the concurrent examination of multiple sources of subordination/oppression that cut across each other (i.e., that intersect). It is based on the premise that the impact of a particular source of subordination (such as gender or social class) may vary, depending on its combination with other potential sources of subordination (or of relative privilege). Early arguments in support of intersectional analysis were made by Maria Stewart, an African-American, in 1832 and by Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist former slave in 1851. Intersectional analysis can be understood as an outcome of applying the same critiques of the homogenizing of societal analysis within feminism that second-wave feminism had applied to male scholarship. Within feminism this involved a critique of the homogenization which resulted from assuming all women were white, middle class and heterosexual (Denis, 2008). These challenges within feminism seem to have begun independently during the late 1970s and early 1980s, for example in the UK (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983), Canada (Juteau-Lee & Roberts, 1981), and the USA (Collins, 2015), though not necessarily using the expression ‘intersectionality’. Intersectionality was a metaphor introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, which has been widely adopted to express a concept which initially related especially to race/ethnicity/birthplace, and social class, in relation to sex/gender.
Earlier analyses, such as Marxism or radical feminism, for instance, assumed that one basis of subordination was primary and all others were secondary. Other early analyses assumed that the bases of subordination could be added together. In contrast, contemporary intersectionality is relational, and does not automatically prioritize a particular criterion of inequality or assume additivity. It may consider multiple levels of analysis, from the individual to the institutional to the societal and the global. It can refer variously to identity\(^2\) and social position/location. It acknowledges the possibility of contradictory social positioning (for an individual, a group or a society), and that it is important to consider concurrently both the disadvantages (subordination) and advantages (privilege) of relations of inequality. It also highlights the importance of context, in both time and space: this can result in the differing and changing salience of aspects of specific social attributes, including in terms of power relations.

If one rejects the assumption that one source of difference is automatically key, what makes an intersectional analysis feminist? We use the term feminist intersectionality to suggest that gender is a dimension of inequality that must be examined in any feminist analysis of intersectionality (rather than being either ignored or assumed), but that a priori assumptions about which dimensions of inequality and power will be most relevant should be avoided. Feminist intersectionality can also involve considering the fact of the patriarchal (and heterosexist) societal context of most, if not all, contemporary societies – including Canada and the possible influences of this context on the outcome.\(^3\)

Incorporating feminist intersectionality and community engaged research into Changing Public Services

**General project design.** Our commitment to the integration of feminist intersectionality and community engaged principles into our work aligns with the work of others who have pointed out that incorporating feminist theory into participatory action research (PAR), a form of CER, allows us “to be transparent about our interest in understanding, through participatory processes, how gender inequalities intersect with other axes of oppression and how they can be transcended” (Frisby et a., 2009, p. 20). Two features of our project’s general design warrant some discussion. First, as noted above, the leadership circle and guiding group for the project were comprised of both community (union and community organization) and academic partners. Among other benefits, our regular team discussions and annual project gathering revealed critical intellectual questions that underpinned our overall approach, and thus some of our research decisions. As we have discussed elsewhere (Levac & Cowper-Smith, 2016), established definitions of the public sector range from being narrowly focused on the central

\(^2\) Collins and Bilge (2016) define identity more broadly than the individual, in effect also incorporating the notion of social position or location into their use of the concept of ‘identity’.

\(^3\) Scott and Siltanen (2016) suggest the use of context as a higher order level of analysis as means of assessing regression from a feminist perspective. From a different perspective, Winker & Degele (2011) also propose intersectionality as multi-level analysis.

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government, to broadly incorporating publicly funded and publicly provided services. Based on concerns – raised particularly by our community partners – about the steady plod towards the privatization of both national and sub-national public services, our partnership approach enabled an ongoing discussion about how to define public services. This ultimately led us not only to using a broad definition of public services across our work, but also to including services that advocates across Canada and the provinces have long-recognized as warranting public funding (e.g., childcare), and/or that are under significant threat of privatization (e.g., transportation, health care).

A second feature that reflects our commitment to integrating feminist intersectionality and community engaged principles is the internal review process in place for the project’s publications. First, each product released (e.g., community report, fact sheet, technical report) under the Changing Public Services banner undergoes a review by both an academic and a community team member who were not involved in the development of the product. As part of the internal peer-review, reviewers are asked to consider, among other things, the document’s: (a) inclusiveness (e.g., ‘Does the document/product address and include often-marginalized groups of women in ways that reject and work to transform relationships of oppression?’); (b) commitment to intersectionality (e.g., ‘Does the analysis explicitly address the multiple and varied situations of women as well as noting and reflecting on the silences and absences of groups of women?’); and (c) participatory nature (e.g., ‘In what ways did the communities involved in the research participate in its writing or production?’). Not only does this process help to ensure the scholarly rigor of outputs, it also ensures that we learn from each other as we strive to uphold our commitment to recognizing and revealing diverse voices and experiences.

Specific project components. Beyond the general effects of our community engaged and feminist intersectional commitments on our work, they also explicitly informed two core pieces of our research – a scoping review of literature describing empirical impacts of changes in public services on service users, and a statistical analysis of diverse (primarily public sector) women workers drawing on two Statistics Canada data sets, SLID (Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics) and PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), both of which are described below.

Scoping reviews. While not benefiting from one widely accepted definition, scoping reviews “commonly refer to ‘mapping’, a process of summarizing a range of evidence…to convey the breadth and depth of a field” (Levac et al., 2010, p. 1). Comparing them to systematic reviews, Arksey and O’Malley (2005) describe scoping

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4 These review guidelines are adapted from a previous partnership project of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women called the Feminist Northern Network.

5 This review focused on public services, notably their impact on users, not on work within public services. This parameter was established because there were other dimensions of the research which focused on employment in public services. These other dimensions were a scoping on precarious employment (Cowper-Smith et al., forthcoming) and the statistical analysis of employment discussed in this article.
reviews as “[tending] to address broader topics where many different study designs might be applicable...[and as] less likely to seek to address very specific research questions nor, consequently, to assess the quality of included studies” (p. 20). They go on to suggest four common reasons for undertaking scoping reviews, including “to identify research gaps in the exiting literature” (p. 21). This purpose positions scoping reviews as having research ends beyond serving as a literature review for another study. Building on Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) work, Levac et al. (2010) offer additional methodological guidance for undertaking scoping reviews (see Table 1). Specifically, they offer additional details and guidance for each of the six stages (five required and one optional) outlined by Arksey and O’Malley (2005), and argue that all six stages should be required. Incorporating feminist intersectionality and community engaged research commitments into our scoping review necessitated additions to four of the six stages proposed by Levac et al. (2010) (see also Table 1).

Table 1. Feminist intersectional community engaged scoping reviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework stage</th>
<th>Components of framework stage</th>
<th>Feminist intersectional and community engaged considerations in scoping reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify the research question</td>
<td>Combine research question with clear scope of inquiry, including rationale for research</td>
<td>• Incorporate dialogue with collaborators, especially those with diverse and historically undervalued knowledge and voices, to determine rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify relevant studies</td>
<td>Balance breadth and comprehensiveness based on research question and rational; assemble methodological and content expertise; justify decisions to limit scope</td>
<td>• Develop and revise search terms and search locations with collaborators • Prioritize student training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Study selection</td>
<td>Iterative process of searching, refining, and including; discuss inclusion criteria and co-review to ensure inter-rater reliability</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Chart the data</td>
<td>Collaborative development of data charting and extraction form; incorporate qualitative analysis as required for process-oriented data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Collate, summarize and</td>
<td>Comprised of three stages: analysis, report results to</td>
<td>• Include a focus on whose experiences and needs are being</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
report results | produce overall outcome, consider meaning and implication of findings | considered and met (or not) in the literature
- Consider social change and policy implications, in particular with regards to whose experience needs further consideration

6. Consult | Establish clear purpose and use preliminary finding to inform consultation; incorporate opportunities for knowledge transfer and exchange | • Include dialogical components throughout study

*Columns 1 & 2 based on original framework by Arksey & O’Malley (2005) and adaptations from Levac et al. (2010) respectively. Column 3 reflects our additions based on our community engaged and feminist intersectional commitments.

**Stages 1 and 2:** ‘Identifying the research question’ and ‘identifying relevant studies’ included extensive dialogue with collaborators. Discussions – which were wide ranging about partners’ personal and professional experiences with public service changes – ultimately helped us to clarify the scope of the review and build a comprehensive set of search terms. Through this process, and combined with an initial scan of the literature, we created a catalogue of search terms, organized into four categories: (a) terms related to gender; (b) terms related to gender and other socio-demographic considerations; (c) terms related to changing public services; and (d) terms defining the jurisdictions of focus. We also identified a range of community literature sources, including research conducted by think tanks, community organizations, and union partners themselves. This helped us to ensure that our search terms, and the locations in which we looked for materials, were reflective of social identities/social locations, power structures, and collaborators’ knowledge of, and experiences with, the impacts of changing public services on service users. The breadth of the search did create a challenge in terms of managing the number of possible search combinations.

We also struggled with, on the one hand, wanting to identify empirical impacts of changes to public services on women, and on the other hand, wanting to avoid the

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6 Initially we assumed it was sufficient to include ‘gender’ (and related terms) only as our first category. We discovered, however, that including ‘gender’ both as a separate category and within the ‘socio-demographic’ category was necessary. Otherwise, because of our search strategy of combining the search term categories with the Boolean operator ‘AND’, any source that did not refer to another socio-demographic category apart from gender would have been excluded/eliminated (because the socio-demographic category would have been empty).

7 Bassett & McGibbon (2013) describe a similar commitment in their scoping of literature about “inequities in access to health care services for rural Aboriginal and African Canadians” (p. 3249).
implication that the impact(s) of policy changes should only be taken seriously if they can or have been studied empirically. In other words, outside of undertaking individual policy analyses, it is difficult to control enough variables to determine causality between policy change and the situation of individuals. Nevertheless, particularly given ongoing commitments to undertaking gender-based analyses across the country (Hankivsky, 2012; Status of Women Canada, 2016), it is important to try and take stock of the gendered impacts of policy changes to the extent possible. Finally, our community engaged commitments inspired a commitment to ensuring extensive student participation in the process. This demanded breaking the search into smaller pieces so that students could take on manageable chunks of the work, and the need for extensive attention to students’ inclusion/exclusion decisions.

**Stages 3 and 4:** Our methodological innovations do not suggest changes to stages 3 and 4 as outlined and elaborated by Arksey and O’Malley (2005) and Levac et al. (2010). We do note that Levac et al. (2010) suggest at least 2 reviewers for both abstracts and full articles; this was not possible given the range of articles reviewed – we instead tested inter-rater reliability with a sample of abstracts at the beginning of each reviewer’s work on the project, and adopted the practice of ‘errong on the side of inclusion’ to help guard against missing important details.

**Stage 5:** The fifth stage, ‘collating, summarizing, and reporting results’, was a key point in the method at which feminist intersectionality was incorporated in the sense that it pushed us to consider literature gaps in particular ways. In other words, a feminist intersectional analysis led us to ask who was invisible in the impacts being reported, as opposed to focusing on the general lack of attention to impacts.

**Stage 6:** The ‘consultation’ stage is described as an optional step for “including the perspectives of others with knowledge of, and a vested interest in, the area under examination [to give] an important additional dimension to the reviewing process” (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005, p. 30). Levac et al. (2010) suggest that this stage should be mandatory; we suggest a step further. Based on the commitments of community engaged research, consultation should not be approached as a stage in the process, but as an underlying component of the process. For example, our ongoing ‘consultation’ with community partners led us to create another categorization of literature during our review (stage 3), that we called, ‘exclude-keep’. While we wanted to continue to be able to identify specific empirical data about the impacts of changing public services, community partners remained interested in gathering details about the context in which changes were and are taking place. Because of the range and diversity of relevant information, we therefore opted to gather – for future use – relevant research that speaks to the broader context of changing public services. The ‘consultation’ component of the process should also include discussions about relevant outputs, particularly given the limited utility of academic articles for most community partners and organizations providing frontline service and advocacy work. To this end, we imported and tagged all uncovered literature into a literature repository that we could share with project team.
members, and built a searchable excel file providing a summary of many of the key results of our review.

**Statistical analyses.** Statistical analyses using secondary data take many forms, but are generally useful for understanding broad trends across a population, and for trying to establish causal relationships or correlations. We are not familiar with a discussion about the design of statistical analyses comparable to those we have just discussed about scoping reviews. In designing its surveys, Statistics Canada consults – but largely with academics and other professionals. Whether community engagement could be said to underlie any of their consultations is moot.

As far as the use of surveys is concerned, discussion by feminists has largely focused on whether quantitative analyses are appropriate within feminist research. While much feminist research is qualitative, several feminists acknowledge the relevance of quantitative methods (Elson, talking to the boys), see Scott & Siltanen, 2016 for a useful overview of this literature), particularly when used in mixed methods studies, in conjunction with qualitative methods. The survey questions asked, the categories offered for responses, the statistical analysis of the data and the interpretation of the results are all components of statistical analysis in which the use of a critical feminist lens is recommended (Bowleg, 2008; Harnois, 2013; Luxton, 1997). For example, while regression analysis has been identified as a helpful statistical technique for intersectional analysis, the limitations of some of its applications have also been highlighted, together with suggestions about how to at least partially overcome them (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016; McCall, 2001; Scott & Siltanen, 2016; Winker & Degele, 2011).

While bearing these debates in mind, as part of the Changing Public Services project, a secondary analysis of two Statistics Canada data sets, which are described below, were conducted, to offer our team a national overview of diverse women’s experiences with work, primarily in the public sector. In the absence of a framework comparable to those of Arksey & O’Malley (2005) and Levac et al. (2010), the description that follows of the analytical stages for the statistical analysis is informed by their frameworks (see Table 2).

*Table 2. Feminist intersectional community engaged statistical analyses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Stage</th>
<th>Feminist intersectional and community engagement considerations in secondary statistical analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify the research question; establish research rationale</td>
<td>• Incorporate dialogue with collaborators, especially those with diverse and historically undervalued knowledge and voices, to determine rationale</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Include a focus on whose experiences and needs to consider &amp; include in the analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify relevant data sets; attend to breadth</td>
<td>• Develop ‘wish list’ of information with collaborators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Of issues covered vs. comprehensiveness of coverage and assemble methodological and content expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>From this (and some group suggestions about possible data sets) our research assistant (RA) identified possible data sets for the team's consideration. Discuss trade-offs of using various data sets (e.g., dates and frequency of surveys, sample size, variables included) with collaborators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3    | Identify relevant variables (and their answer categories). Determine, in discussion with collaborators:  
- Which variables (specific questions & derived variables) to consider  
- Relevance of available answer categories  
- How to group (if needed) the answer categories of each variable. |
| 4    | Prioritize analytical questions to answer with statistics & select statistical techniques; conduct analyses. Discuss recommendations by RA about how to conduct intersectional analysis. Decisions with collaborators about prioritizing questions (& hence statistical analyses) and trade-offs. |
| 5    | Summarize, interpret (including in non-technical terms) and report results relative to initial research questions. Review results, including how to present them in a form accessible to non-statisticians. Interpret results in relation to initial research questions. Report results and their implications to various audiences. |
| 6    | Consult; consider meaning and implication of findings. |

*Column 1 adapted from Arksey & O’Malley (2005) and Levac, Colquoun & O’Brien (2010) for application using statistical data sets.

**Stage 1:** The goal of this examination of women’s (primarily public sector) employment experiences was to concurrently consider several comparative axes: the temporal context (in relation to the 2008 recession); gender (female or male); another socio-demographic variable, each of which related to an aspect of marginalization- or its absence (Aboriginal or not; a visible minority or not; disabled or not – in each case related to an aspect of marginalization – or its absence); being in the private or public sector, all in relation to various employment outcomes or experiences, such as likelihood of being employed or being in precarious employment. When using the PSES data set, only comparisons within the federal public sector could be made, but with this data set it was possible to examine more nuanced aspects of employment, including those related to experience with and knowledge about unions. Thus, an intersectional analysis could be conducted which focused on the comparative nature of the (possible) impact of recent economic change on the employment experiences of those who were marginalized (or not) in one or several ways.
Stages 2 and 3: The dimensions of marginalization, identified both by the experience and research of community partners and by academic research, in combination with various measures of the ‘employment’ variable, determined which data sets, among those available at the Research Data Centre (RDC)\(^8\), were considered. Our Research Assistant’s familiarity with the data sets, including their publicly available documentation, was invaluable: necessary considerations included the population studied, sampling design and size, the frequency of the survey, the topics included, both those related to employment and to socio-demographic characteristics. Two national data sets\(^9\) were selected, each regularly repeated, so that we had data from each for three salient points in time, before the recession of 2008 (2005), in 2008, and the most recent year since the recession (2011) for which the results of both surveys were available\(^10\).

Once the data sets were determined, there was a great deal of consultation about the variables to include, and how the answer categories should be grouped. With regret, sexual orientation was not analyzed, since none of the data sets considered included that variable. Similarly, gender was only available as a dichotomized variable. Variables relating to being a member of a visible minority\(^11\), being Aboriginal, and having a disability were all dichotomized, due to a combination of considerations which included the type of information available in the data set, the requirements of available options for statistical analysis and the size of cells when two or more variables were examined concurrently. In the case of language, the two official languages of Canada, English and French, were reference points\(^12\), together with Aboriginal languages.

Stage 4: The employment variables retained intentionally allowed for a nuanced overview. For instance, the various groups were compared for both ‘employed at all’ and ‘employed all year’, and Aboriginal women were the most marginalized in terms of the more demanding ‘employed all year’ measure. On the other hand, they were not significantly less likely than other women or than Aboriginal men to be ‘employed at all’, a less demanding indicator of employment experience than being ‘employed all year’.

Priorities for data analysis were then determined in consultation with our collaborators, while continuously referencing the original research questions. As part of the analysis, logistic regression models were used. By creating a new variable which

\(^8\) Research Data Centres (RDCs), located in over a dozen Canadian universities, provide secure access to detailed Statistics Canada data for researchers with SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council)-approved research projects. Our very helpful research assistant was Bradley Seward.

\(^9\) The SLID (Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics) and PSES (Public Service Employee Survey).

\(^10\) For PSES we also included 2014, which was the most recent data set available for it.

\(^11\) The concept used by the government – and thus present in its surveys.

\(^12\) To include French and English bilinguals, separate analyses were conducted for English and French speakers. Those who were bilingual in the two official languages were made part of each set of analyses. ‘English’ included those bilingual in English and French, and English and a non-official language, while ‘French’ included those bilingual in French and English, and French and a non-official language.
incorporated two dimensions of marginalization (gender and being Aboriginal, racialized or disabled) it was possible, using logistic analysis, to compare women who were also marginalized on this second dimension with all other women, with men sharing the second marginalization characteristic and with all other men. This was one way of including the interaction effects between two dimensions of marginalization, and thus avoiding the pitfalls of ignoring interaction effects that Bowleg & Bauer (2016) illustrate. By doing regressions for each year, it was possible to discern whether time, as a contextual variable (see Scott & Siltanen on levels of analysis), affected the outcomes. Unfortunately, in a few cases the sample size of those marginalized in respect to two variables was too small to permit release by the RDC (and use by the CPS team) of the results. Had we analyzed concurrently three axes of marginalization – such as being a woman, who was Aboriginal and who had a disability – considerably more cells would probably have been too small for release and use.

Once the analyses were completed and released by the RDC, they were then summarized in language which was understandable by non-statisticians, so that all partners could make use of it. To further enhance the accessibility of the results, summaries which highlighted statistically significant results were prepared. Both scholarly and community-oriented diffusion of the analysis of these results is ongoing. Using RDCs allowed those team members with access to themselves work out, in consultation with the broader team, the parameters of the desired analyses and then conduct them under Statistics Canada’s secure conditions. This allowed for more informed and iterative decisions about the analysis than would have been possible had we had to contract Statistics Canada to conduct the analysis for us.

Stage 5: An illustration of this diffusion is an initial, selective overview presented as part of an NGO session that CRIAW organized at the 61st meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (Denis 2017). In general, as we had predicted, the public sector has been a somewhat better – and more equitable - employer for marginalized women than the private sector has, in comparison with their female and male counterparts in the private sector, and with all other women, and all other men in the private sector.

It is concerning, however, that marginalized women (whether in the public or private sector) are often less different (and disadvantaged) in comparison with other women than they are in comparison with men who are marginalized in the same way as they are. Not surprisingly, non-marginalized men seem to have the greatest advantage in terms of the various measures we used. What these two aspects of the results suggest is that any women (whether marginalized or not) are likely to be at a disadvantage in comparison with any men, whether they are marginalized or not.

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13 Any results which might comprise the confidentiality of individual responses, for example, are not released for public use.
Stage 6: As with the methodological innovations discussed above regarding our scoping review, consultation in this component of our research underpinned all stages of the work.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper highlights several substantive and specific ways that feminist intersectionality and community engaged research commitments can be incorporated not only into the general design of research projects, but also into specific methods employed within a project, especially scoping reviews and secondary data analyses. Though we have not focused on the challenges of incorporating feminist intersectional and community engaged research principles into our work, it merits brief mention that the innovations described above are time consuming, and demand considerable commitment from community partners who may be volunteering their time, and academic partners whose work may be evaluated for its traditional scholarly contribution more than for its community contribution(s). Discussed elsewhere in community engaged scholarship literature (see for example Ross et al., 2010), this point demands ongoing attention, particularly in terms of developing community-university research partnerships, and when considering how academic institutions and funding bodies can better resource complex partnership research. We also faced several roadblocks when trying to integrate feminist intersectionality into our statistical analyses, including the lack of data on some groups (such as members of the LGBTQ+ community), or small sample sizes that prevented us from considering, for example, the experiences of racialized women with disabilities. We welcome the return of the Canadian long-form census as a signal that data matters to government policy makers, but nevertheless see the need for continued advances in this regard.

A common theme across this integration is our argument that consultation – described as a stage in the scoping review process (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005) – should not be approached as a stage, but rather as an underlying component of the process. While carrying out our scoping review, ongoing consultation informed our choice of search terms, our inclusion of valuable non-academic sites and sources of knowledge, our inclusion/exclusion criteria, and our decisions about how to organize and make available resulting data. As we undertook our statistical analyses, our ongoing collaboration informed our selection of data sets, our construction and use of variables in our analyses, and the type of statistical analysis done. The development of a range of clear language outputs for internal team use has been a way of making the results of complex analyses more accessible to non-academic partners. This integrative approach is in keeping with established community engaged research principles as outlined by Whiteford and Strom (2013).

In our statistical analyses, the incorporation of feminist intersectionality is evident in our decision to undertake regression analyses comparing, for example, racialized women’s experiences to racialized men, and to all other women. Our
commitment to feminist intersectionality is especially evidence in the fifth stage of our scoping review (collate, summarize, and report results), where we note the importance of considering whose experiences with public service changes are invisible in the literature, despite impacts that we might expect. In the future, the addition of a review of policy documents could help further highlight the presence or invisibility of social groups in the framing of public policy.

Overall, our dual commitments to community engagement and feminist intersectionality have challenged us to critically examine established way of conducting research. They have led us to explore new ways of asking research questions, of evaluating existing data (and their gaps), and of interpreting the results of the two components of secondary data analysis discussed here – scoping reviews and the use of government-generate large data sets. Our experience sets the stage for shedding new light on the considerations which should inform a feminist appreciation of public policy.
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