

Using arts-based research to create research spaces that encourage meaningful dialogue about gender, social inequity, recovery and mental illness

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF



**GENDER
SOCIAL INEQUITIES
AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Background and Rationale

While there has been a very rapid uptake of the concept of recovery, some domains have been largely overlooked in the commentary and research generated to date: questions of *gender* and *culture*.

This is a critical line of inquiry to extend, as a large body of literature clearly documents the differences between men and women across domains such as age of onset and type of mental illness, functional outcome, representation in psychiatric care, ability to meet gender norms, and use of social supports.

It is for the purpose of extending this line of inquiry that we developed a seed grant in which we are initiating an exploratory dialogue around the following question:

How do gender and ethnicity intersect with the housing and community participation experiences of women with psychosis?

This project involves three sites:

- *Kingston* – focus on the experience of young women experiencing an early onset of illness
- *Northern BC* – focus on the experiences of rural women
- *Toronto* – focus on the experiences of urban women from racialized groups

Methods

This study will employ an exploratory qualitative research method and, specifically, arts-based research.

Participants will meet for 3 afternoons over the course of 2 weeks to make art (media will include drawing, painting, poetry, collage, and movement) and talk about the key domains of inquiry.

At each of the three group meetings there will take place:

- conversation and story telling in the topic areas of mental illness, recovery, gender, ethnicity, community participation, and housing
- art making around experiences of recovery

A conversational format to prompting discussion will be used, flowing from the following questions:

What does home mean to you?

*Do you think the experiences of women with mental illness are different than men?
How so?*

How has your ethnicity impacted your experience in the community as a woman with mental illness?

For women like you, what is needed to help with developing good homes and positive involvement in the community?

What messages do people need to hear to better understand the lives of women with mental illness?

What have been the most important parts/components of your recovery process?

Data Analysis & Dissemination

Initial analysis:

- Following the first and second interviews
- Summary analyses based on memos/notes made by the investigators and an initial thematic analysis of interview materials that will generate common themes/categories

Second group meeting:

- Themes will be discussed with participants for further elaboration

Third group meeting:

- Detailed analysis will be undertaken which will generate themes and elaborate upon hierarchies of themes and relationships between themes

The findings from each arm of the study will then be integrated with the findings from the other two sites. After a full qualitative analysis, a detailed summary of that analysis will be shared between sites and integrated through a collaborative effort to produce a final version of the results.

Findings will be disseminated through:

- A peer reviewed journal
- An academic conference
- An art show organized for every study site to which the participants and key stakeholders will be invited

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