

WOMEN'S HEALTH & MENTAL WELLBEING SPEAKERS SERIES



Fall 2011 – Winter, Spring 2012

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SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Presentation	Summary
<p>October 5, 2011</p> <p>Dr. Annette Bailey Assistant Professor Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing</p> <p>Title: Traumatic Stress, Social Support, Cognitive Appraisal, and Resiliency Among Black Women Experiencing Gun Violence Loss</p>	<p>Dr. Annette Bailey shared her research which examined the relationship between traumatic stress, social support, cognitive appraisal and Black mothers' resilience following the loss of a child to gun violence. The presentation shed light on the lived experience of gun violence loss by Black mothers in Toronto. It emphasized that stigma, marginalization and other interrelated factors hinder women' recovery process by silencing their voices in research, health care and social services.</p> <p>Dr. Bailey shared the stories of Black women and revealed the importance of social support (e.g., from a spiritual community, family and friends), positive cognitive appraisals and quality health care as important mediating factors between traumatic stress induced by gun violence loss and resilience. Her research shows that strong social support and the ability to make positive meaning out of the loss of their children were central to supporting their trauma process. This research addresses the need for further investigation of the social challenges faced by Black mothers who have experienced gun violence loss, and how these challenges hinder the development of services and supports that appropriately meet their needs. There is also a need for support to strengthen Black community mobilization, and a need for increased support</p>

	<p>from Public Health for gun violence prevention and assisting victims who have been affected by such loss.</p>
<p>November 16, 2011 Event co-sponsored by Centre for Refugee Studies</p> <p>Dr. Sepali Guruge, School of Nursing, Ryerson University</p> <p>Arzo Akbari, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community</p> <p>Title: Refugee Youths' Post-Migration Experiences: Implications for Mental Health and Wellbeing</p>	<p>On Nov. 16, 2011 Dr. Sepali Guruge and Arzo Akbari presented a paper based on an innovative study that explored the post-migration challenges encountered by refugee youth to Canada. This community based qualitative study engaged refugee youth peer researchers, as well as academic and community partners to understand the post-migration experiences of refugee youth from Sudanese, Karen and Afghan groups in the Greater Toronto Area. Altogether 10 focus groups were conducted with a total of 57 refugee youth. The study was guided by a critical resilience perspective.</p> <p>The study findings revealed that refugee youth participants faced social, financial, educational, and language challenges, and difficulties with balancing day-to-day lives, immigration and sponsorship, discrimination and racism, and services in Canada. The findings highlighted that in spite of the challenges they faced, participants demonstrated remarkable resilience and employed strategies such as: maintaining a positive mindset, focusing on priorities, taking advantage of opportunities and recreation, and relying on self, religion, and services. The findings also demonstrated that various psychological, socioeconomic, structural, and environmental conditions shaped the kinds of challenges the participants faced, how they experienced them, and the strategies they employed to manage and/or overcome them.</p> <p>Implications from this study point to the need to understand the social, political and cultural contexts in which youth are embedded and how this affects their resettlement. Currently, there appears to be a disconnect between the structural challenges faced by refugee youth and the individual accountability or responsibility promoted in Canadian society. Thus, there is a need for individual, micro, meso and macro level supports for refugee youth to address the various challenges they face during the post-migration experience.</p>
<p>January 25, 2012</p> <p>Dr. Noreen Stuckless Faculty, Department of Psychology, York University</p> <p>Title: Perspectives on Violence Against Women and its effect on women's</p>	<p>Rates of spousal homicide and family violence in Canada indicate that women are eight times more likely to be abused verbally, financially and emotionally. Root causes can stem from psychodynamic rationale, religious beliefs, patriarchal beliefs as well as societal acceptance. Dr Noreen Stuckless' presentation on violence against women and its effects on women's health explored key questions related to fatal and non fatal acts of violence against women. Barriers like language, employment,</p>

<p>health.</p>	<p>children as well as safety and interpersonal relationships present critical complications for abused women. Fear, less decision making power and the criminal justice system also compound the difficulty in leaving an abusive relationship. However, the most dangerous time for abused women is related to when they have left the abusive partner. The lack of proactive measures to prevent violence against women translates into a cost of billions of dollars for Canadian healthcare. More women's shelters, continued support of the Violence Court Program, hospital protocols as well as assaulted women's hotlines are some positive initiatives in support of the survivors of violence.</p>
<p>March 7, 2012</p> <p>Dr. Judith MacDonnell Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, York University</p> <p>Title: Activism and Wellbeing for Immigrant Women: Grounded Theory Insights</p>	<p>Dr. Judith MacDonnell from the School of Nursing at York University spoke about her collaborative research project on activism and its connection to mental health and well-being for immigrant women living in the Greater Toronto Area. Dr. MacDonnell and her colleagues conducted several focus groups with diverse immigrant women and performed a Grounded Theory analysis that illustrated the dynamics shaping their everyday lives. Although immigrant women have great strength and resilience, there has been very little research on their contributions to their communities and roles in activism. This study shed light on immigrant women's resilience, their contributions as activists in their communities, and how they challenged barriers and negative stereotypes in their daily lives. Dr. MacDonnell called for the use of participatory research to inform health policy and create programs to support and empower women to engage in their communities.</p>
<p>May 2, 2012</p> <p>Faye Mahdiah Dastjerdi Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, Faculty of Health, York University</p> <p>Title: Personal Narratives of Iranian Immigrant Women</p>	<p>Dr. Mahdiah Dastjerdi's presentation on "Personal Narratives of Iranian Immigrant Women" explored three major themes of social isolation, weighing options and becoming integrated as described by Immigrant Iranian women. Dr. Dastjerdi's discussion emphasized the differences in experience between immigrants and refugees. She also explored different groups of refugees, for example, those that are young and politically active and those whom are older and isolated because of their post-traumatic experiences. Another important idea that is emerging is the disconnection experienced by these women. This disconnection is characterized by feeling misunderstood or not understanding the host country, as well as changes in health and identity due to changes in one's profession, working conditions, social status and income.</p> <p>Iranian Immigrant women in this study also were found to be weighing options. Narratives explored women who</p>

were taking action, leaving abusive relationships because of changes in their values since migration to Canada. These women reported becoming integrated through activities of leisure and use of services like the library and the YMCA. In particular, they cited the role of librarians as an important resource. They also showed resilience in negotiating, rejecting and resisting in order to be happy.
