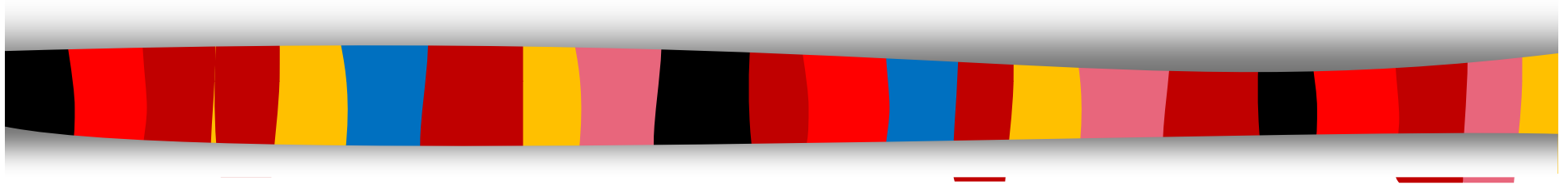


*Manifestation of Resilience in the Context
of Postpartum Depression: Experiences of
Women and Their Supporting Others in
Northern Ontario*



Health Care Research Seminar Series

Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research

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Overview of Literature

- Resilience among women
- Resilience among supporting others/caregivers



Resilience among Women

- ▶ Growing body of research on resilience among women across various disciplines
 - ▶ Ethnographic study on resilient trajectories among women in rural trailer park (Notter, MacTavish, & Shamah, 2008).
 - ▶ Study of intrinsic strengths and their relation to depression and anxiety among low-income women of Mexican descent in urban community (Heilemann, Lee, & Kury, 2002)
- ▶ Dearth of research on resilience among women in relation to postpartum depression (PPD) in Northern Ontario



Resilience among Supporting Others

- ▶ Studies on caregiver/family burden of individuals with mental illnesses (Abelenda & Helfrich, 2003)
- ▶ Resilience among Caregivers
 - ▶ Making positive meaning of illness
 - ▶ Mobilizing resources
 - ▶ Involving themselves in hobbies
 - ▶ Participating in advocacy
 - ▶ Resorting to religion and spirituality



Research Question

How do women and their supporting others in underserviced communities of Northern Ontario describe and interpret resilience in the face of postpartum depression?



Methods

- Hermeneutic phenomenology
- Location of research
- Recruitment strategies
- Participants
- Data collection technique
- Analysis of data
- Quality of research



Hermeneutic Phenomenology

- How people interpret their lives and make meaning of it.
- The participants are selected due to their lived experience of the phenomena and their willingness to articulate this experience



Hermeneutic Phenomenology

- The researcher invariably brings certain background expectations and frames of meaning to bear in the act of understanding and these cannot be ignored or bracketed out
- Similarly, the narration of participants is situated within their historical and cultural contexts.



Location of Research

- At the time of research, the participants were residing in the urban core of the City of Greater Sudbury as well as outlying rural areas
- Some participants had moved from remote and rural communities of North West Ontario, Parry Sound District, Algoma District and urban cities of Southern Ontario



Recruitment Strategies

- Recruitment by the staff of Perinatal Mental Health Program, staff at the Sudbury & District Health Unit and coordinator of peer support group
- Flyers
 - Electronic Distribution
 - Postings at various social service agencies, clinical practitioners offices
- Presentations at parenting classes
- Snowball method
- Facebook account for greater visibility



Participants: Mothers

- ▶ 18 women with or without psychiatric diagnosis of PPD
- ▶ They had experienced depression within 1 year of the birth of a live infant and no greater than five years ago
- ▶ Women were recruited through health care and social service agencies
- ▶ Women were residing in Northern Ontario



Demographic Features: Mothers

- Age Range: 24 to 39 years
- Multiparas: 11 mothers
- Ethnic Composition: Caucasian, Black Canadian, Francophone, Mixed Ethnicity (e.g., half Aboriginal and half Finnish)
- Education Level: some high school to university degree
- Occupations: health care, social service, education sectors, retail businesses and private firms, homemaker, entrepreneur



Participants: Supporting Others

- Women identified their primary source of support
- Supporting others mainly included 4 grandmothers of the baby and 4 partners of women



Demographic Features: Supporting Others

- Age Range: 32 to 64 years
- Ethnicity: Dutch, Ukranian, French Canadian, Caucasian
- Education Levels: some high school to university degrees
- Occupations: public sector, education sector, mining industry, social service sector, banking sector



Data Collection

- ▶ Ethics approval from Laurentian University and Sudbury Regional Hospital
- ▶ Semi-structured interviews were conducted at a location of women and supporting others' choice
- ▶ Interviews lasted for about an 1.5 to 2 hours
- ▶ Interviews were conducted in a conversational style and probing was carried out in a non-threatening and respectful manner



Analysis of Data

- Utilized the hermeneutic phenomenological methods proposed by Cohen, Kahn & Steeves (2000)
- Hermeneutic Circle (non-linear process)
- Combination of deductive and inductive approaches



Quality of Research

- Credibility
 - Prolonged engagement and rigor
 - Peer debriefing
 - Member checking
- Transferability
 - Rich and thick description
- Dependability
 - Inter-coder reliability
- Confirmability
 - Reflective Journal and Audit Trail

Findings

- ☐ Experience of PPD
- ☐ Resilience in the Face of PPD



Experience of PPD: Mothers

- Sadness & crying
- Anxiety
 - About cultural expectations of motherhood
 - Potential effect of PPD on child(ren)
 - Finances
- Shattered expectations about motherhood
- Sleep deprivation
- Irritability & Anger
- Lack of motivation and energy



Experience of PPD: Supporting Others

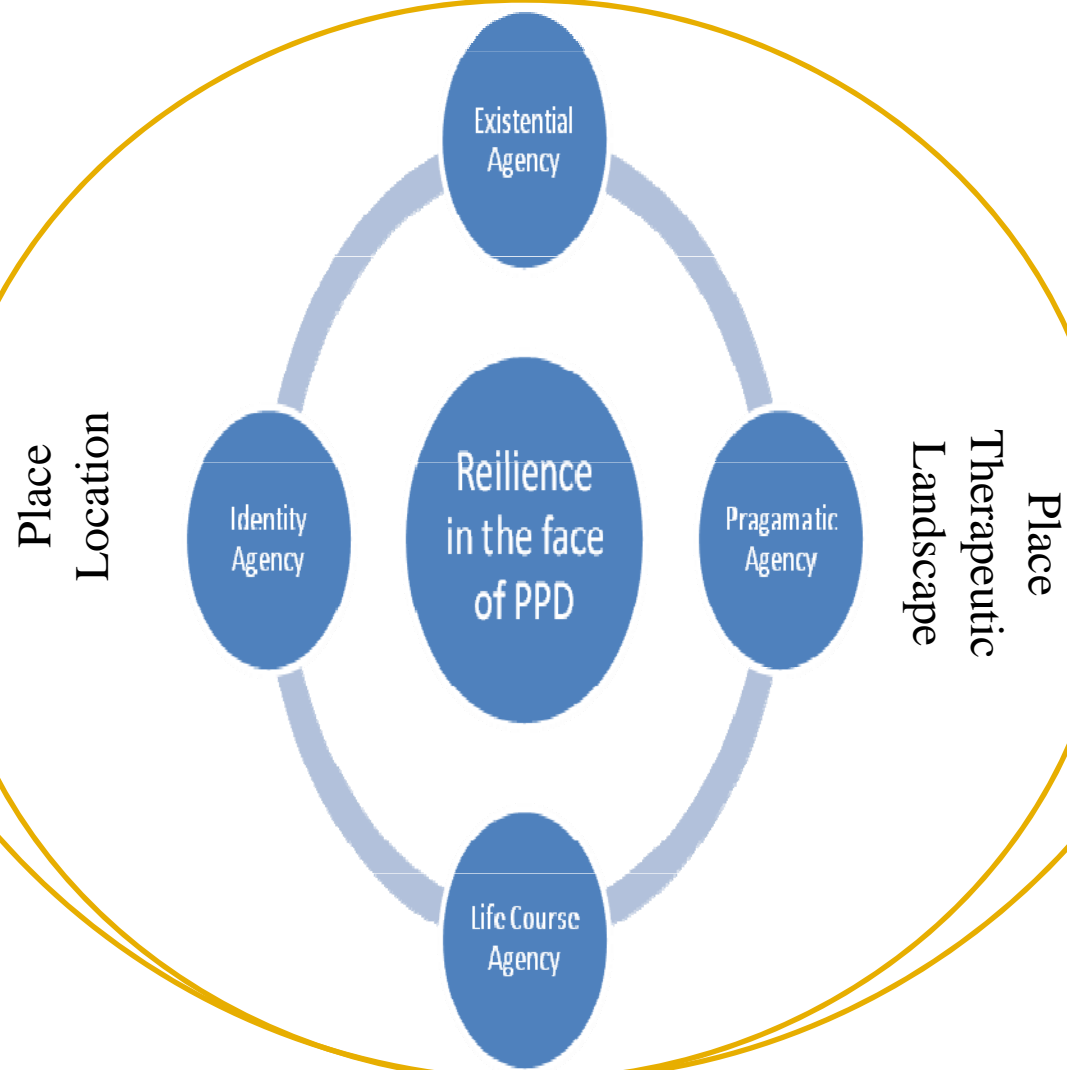
- Anxiety and worries
 - Safety of child and mother
 - Well being of child and mother
- Friction and conflicts
- Changes in lifestyle (sacrificing social life, personal life)
- Inability to 'fix' it
- Inability to fully comprehend PPD and empathize with the mother



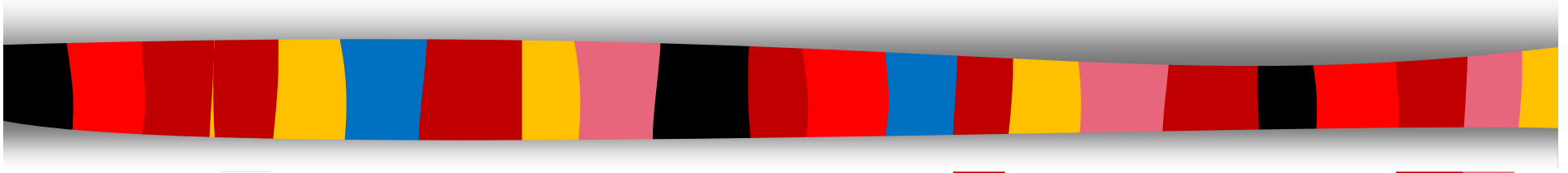
Experience of Resilience

- An eclectic theoretical framework involving
 - Human agency
 - Place
 - Certain principles of feminist standpoint theory
- Integrated Framework
 - Micro level (constrained human agency)
 - Meso level (place as a location and place as therapeutic landscapes)
 - Macro level (gender issues and power relations, structural conditions)

Feminist Standpoint Theory
Gender & Power Relations
Multiple Standpoints



Theme I: Constrained Human Agency



Sub-themes

- Existential
- Pragmatic
- Identity
- Life Course



Existential Agency

- Being Philosophical about PPD
- Making sense of motherhood
- Spirituality and religious beliefs
- Meaning of a strong person in the face of PPD



Pragmatic Agency

- Gender role reversal
- Professional help (particularly women)
- Reaching out to personal support network
- Advocacy work (particularly women)
- Providing support (particularly supporting others)



Identity Agency

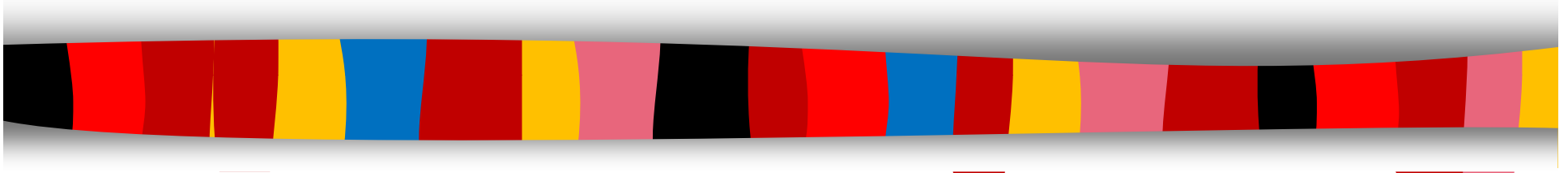
- Mother/parent and grandparent identities
- Hobbies and activities of personal interest
- Professional identity



Life Course Agency

- Moving closer to family
- Optimism about brighter future
- Desire to be a role model for children

Theme II: Place as a Source of Strengths



- Place as a Location
- Place as Therapeutic Landscape



Place as a Location

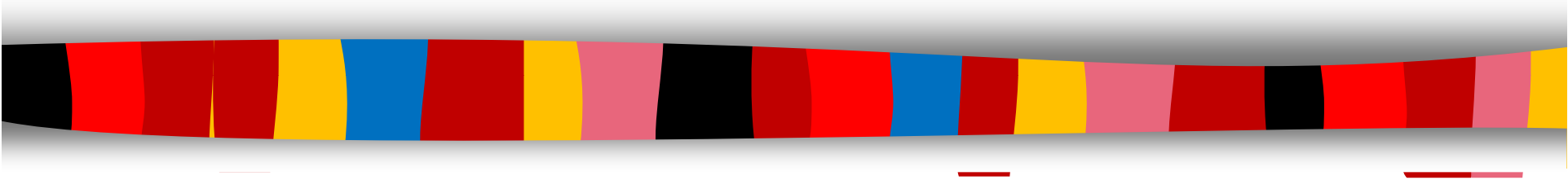
- Locality and characteristics of particular place such as rural or urban.
- Resilience of participants unfolded within and through the features of their place of residence
 - Availability and accessibility of mental health services
 - Distance from personal support network
 - Community resources



Place as Therapeutic Landscapes

- The settings and situations encompassing physical, psychological, social, and cultural environments that are associated with healing and health
- Dimensions of landscapes and resilience
 - Physical (nature)
 - Psychological (dreams and motivation)
 - Cultural (religious beliefs, values)
 - Social (informal & formal support)

Theme III: Feminist Standpoint Theory

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- Social locations of women and men
 - Power relations
 - Standpoints



Feminist Standpoint Theory

- Society is structured by power relations resulting into qualitatively different social locations for women and men.
- Within these structural positions, there are multiple differences among women based on power relations attributed to race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation.



Feminist Standpoint Theory

- However, standpoint is not equivalent to social location or structural condition; rather it entails an oppositional stance and resistance to the dominant worldview
- Participants showed an oppositional stance towards
 - Stigma of mental illness
 - Stereotypical notions of motherhood/parenthood



Implications for Practice

- Significance of human agency
- The place as a source of resilience
- The structural conditions surrounding men and women and how these conditions shape or shaped by resilience (human agency)
- The significance of standpoints in the manifestation of resilience