

Strengths of older women living in hidden homelessness

Annie Boucher

School of Rural and Northern Health

Thesis Supervisors: Carol Kauppi; Lorraine Carter,

K. Fitzmaurice

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Background

Context: *Doctoral study*

Research gaps / problem

Definitions: age, Indigenous, hidden homeless

Positioning myself

Indigenous Framework

Narrative Inquiry

Strengths: *of older adult women living in hidden homelessness in a northern, urban place.*



Research Gaps

Age / Gender : Older women. Doubly vulnerable.

Place: Hidden homelessness

Northern, urban place

Race: Indigenous persons *over-represented*

Context: *Age, gender, & place.*

Lack of evidence = ***Inequity policy & practice.***

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Study Purpose / Puzzle



To describe the experiences and meanings that

older Canadian women,

living in an *urban, mid-northern place* attribute to home, homelessness, health, life challenges, and *personal strengths.*

To illuminate the intersection between

female gender, older age,

and northern place.

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Definitions

Homeless older adult: Age 50 + accelerated aging.

Hidden homelessness:

At risk for absolute or visible homelessness

Live in relative / temporary housing

Types: Couch surfing, doubling up, *single rooms*

Live in tents, recreational vehicles

Exchange sex for shelter

Substandard or relative housing – disrepair



Definitions

Indigenous persons:

First Nations, Metis, & Inuit peoples.

Indigenous homelessness must be understood within the context of past and ongoing *colonialism*.

Patriarchal settlers changed the roles & status of Indigenous women: Lost identity, subordinate.

Assimilation: Residential Schools, Indian Act, Sixties scoop.

Western research practices

Positioning myself

Age: *Older adult; same age as participants*

Gender: *Female*

Place: *Same urban, mid-northern place*

Education: *Nursing / health education*

History: *IPV; visible & hidden homelessness*

Research: *White researcher*

Novice feminist

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Indigenous Research Framework

Broad, interdisciplinary practice

Political activity / Rooted in critical theory

Aim: *Emancipate* re oppression, domination, and being powerless (West et al.).

Epistemology: *resists colonialism* by not setting boundaries or distinguishing among their epistemology, paradigm, or theory (Kovach, 2018, p. 223; Wilson, 2001).

Methodologies: Diverse. CBR, PAR, Storytelling

Indigenous focus: May or may not include Indigenous methodologies, address Indigenous issues, or involve Indigenous persons (Kovach, 2018, p. 215).

Thus, appropriate for this study.

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Why Indigenous Research?

Decolonizing: vs colonizing Western practices.

Unacceptable to apply western with Indigenous peoples

Need Reconciliation & Change

Strengthen Indigenous voices in research.

Emancipate from oppression, domination.

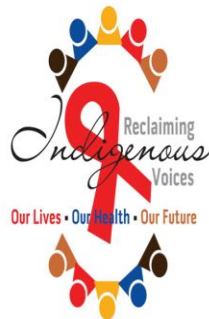
Empower (West et al.)

Relational, balanced, accessible, maintain collectivity & collective justice (reap what you sow).

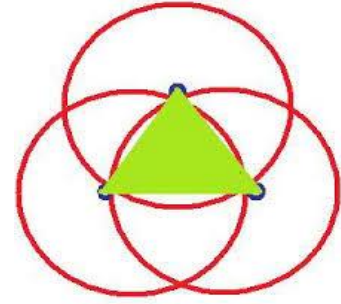
Involve *critical & postcolonial western theories*

(Kovach, 2018, p. 221-222; Simonds & Christopher, 2013; West et al., 2012)

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Triangulation of Indigenous Theory



Post-colonial feminism: *Decolonizing*

Intersectionality: *Core of feminism*



Two-Eyed Seeing:

Bridge Western and Indigenous paradigms. Strengths of both.



Triangulation of theory: Ethical merit

Decolonizing, gender-sensitive

Addresses complexity of homelessness.

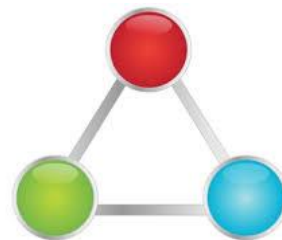
Aim: Emancipation & social justice.

Contextualized findings *promote policy development*.

Person-centered, support ethical caring

Promote personal autonomy, and self-determination.

(Werunga et al., 2016, 155).



Triangulation of Indigenous Theory Relational



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Narrative Inquiry: Relational

Clandinin and Connelly (2000)

Relational: researcher shares their storied lives, listens attentively & observes them.

Decolonizing: Research puzzle vs problem.

Respectful, collaborative, experiential, storytelling

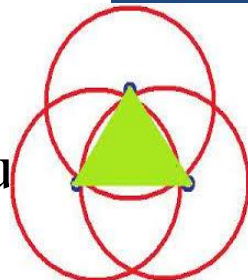
Partnership honors person & their stories as valuable knowledge sources.

Gives voice to marginalized, oppressed.

Culturally sensitive & appropriate: slow, takes time,

Socially justified: Findings may inform social action and future social and aging policy development (Clandinin, 2013, 37).

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Narrative Inquiry

Relational: Metaphorical 3 - dimensional space:

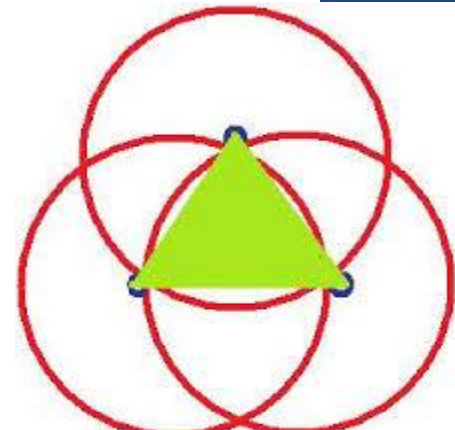
Time: Continuity over time

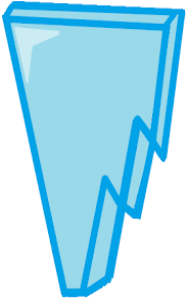
Social relationships: relational

Place or series of places.

Stories are embedded within multiple contexts.

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Findings

Analogy of shattered mirror & *reconciliation*.

Examine each piece: *home, homeless, health, ..*

Focus stays on lives as lived and told.

Knowledge produced: *Specific & Incomplete*

“I poems” and themes

Uncertainty remains.

Left to wonder about other possibilities.

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Diverse Sample

Sample: 9 women

(2 English; 2 French; & 5 Indigenous)

Common background:

Adverse childhood events. Trauma, abuse

Stolen childhood and youth

Abusive partners, separation, divorce.

Indigenous women: Unique findings

2 could not identify any strengths.

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I poem: Artie “Silent Scream”

I have learned to be *tough* and to be *unafraid*

I boxed for 11 years, and will fight to the grave

I *never back down* and I usually win

So I *gain respect* in the place I am in

When I walk down the streets in the worst neighborhood

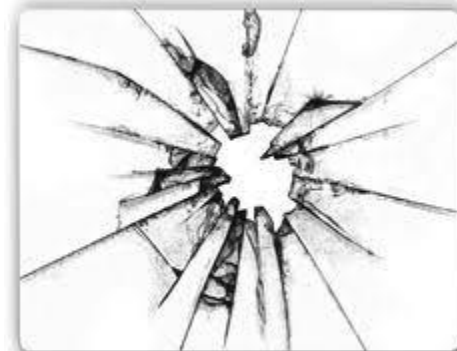
They leave me alone, knowing they should

The prostitutes, dealers and crack heads

Won't pick on me, they'd be better off dead

I live here and *won't be pushed around*

And if you try, you're going down.



I poem: Joey "Life is hard"

Life is hard, but *I learned to survive*

All alone, without, and deprived.

Starting at home, as toddler then

Hiding under the house, I did that when

The drinking, and rage, and all that abuse

Made me want to jump but it was no use.

I am quite a survivor, if you only knew

All the torture and trauma that I went through

I did not jump, many times I tried.

I can't believe I am still alive.



Shared Philosophies of Life

What goes around comes around.

Survive or die.

Learn from the past.

Know your limitations.

You must set boundaries.

Everything happens for a reason.

I am responsible for myself.

Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Women are strong.



Common strengths

Caring, compassionate: re others & animals.

Family role: Called auntie or momma on the streets

Strong woman

Self-reliant, Self-determination

Self-preservation, self-care

Endurance

Resistance Need for change.

Have a Routine

Creative – eg managing income.



Support

Limited number support persons – but appreciated.

Difficulty trusting.

Provide support.

Indigenous persons – greater sense of support & connections with street family.

Consider themselves all family.

Similar homelands / reserves.

Communicate via the moccasin express.



Religion / Faith / Spirituality

English:

Christian Faith = hope, strength

Wicca = protection

French:

Catholic = golden rule. Commandments.

Indigenous

Circle of Life – inter-connectedness. Vision quest.

Sense of belonging. Spirit names “eagle”

Sacred teachings.



So What?

Need strength-based approaches.

Most research is problem-focused.

Empowering to reinforce their strengths.

Gives meaning to experiences.

Congruent with Indigenous approach.

Need to integrate strengths in evidence-based interventions policy and practices.

They want to be advocates for change and have a lot of insight to offer.



Questions



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Indigenous Research Practices

Ways of knowing: *Pluralistic & diverse.*

Ontology: *Subjective, persons & things interconnected*

(Lavallee, 2009, p. 23).

Epistemologies: *Distinct, holistic, living, dynamic.*

Share 3 interconnected processes

- *Oral transmission* of traditional & spiritual knowledge to future generations
- *Spiritual revelations via* intuition, dreams, and visions.
- *Make empirical observations* differently (Lavallee, 2009, p. 22).

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Indigenous Epistemologies

Living, dynamic, cyclical, fluid (Kovach, 2018, p. 229)

Holistic: 4 Dimensions: (Kovach, 2018, p. 218)

Experiential, empirical, sensory, metaphysical

Body, mind, & spirit interconnected, interdependent, & interact with nature (Kovach, 2018, p. 229).



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Ethical Considerations

University REB approval

Feminist ethics of care:

Care about participants – not a means to an end.

Equalized researcher-participant power, roles, relationships.

Involved them in interpreting their stories.

Protected self as vulnerable researcher. Dream diary

Towards truth and reconciliation

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Ethical Considerations

(Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 16; Preissle, 2007, p. 515, 520-532)

Maintained Strong Critical Reflexivity Re:

Need for study; wording & language used; who benefits

Methodology: Indigenous, feminist, decolonizing, sensitive

Researcher positioning – White researcher, roles, responsibilities, relational, reflexivity

Researcher power, positioning, & effects

Issues of power, authority, difference, participation

Findings: Co-construction, representing voices, deciding what to publish, how to disseminate.

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