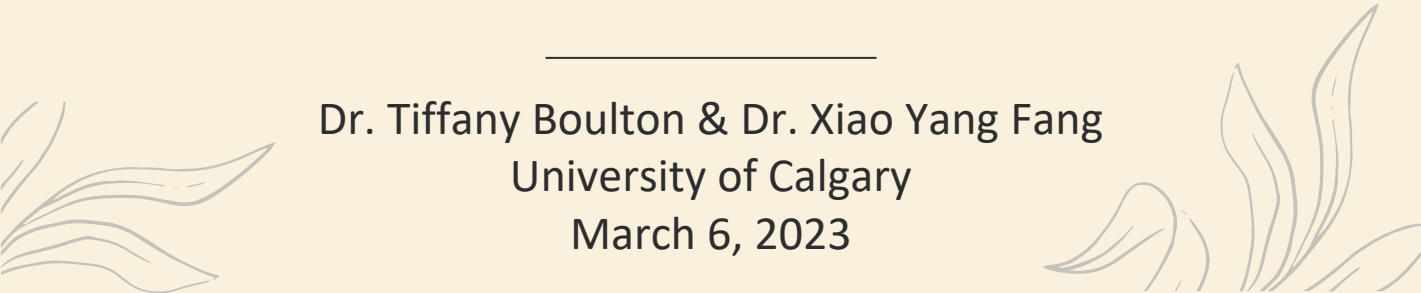




Patient to Expert: Centralizing the voices of women with mental illness in the development of Radical Mental Health Doulas

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University of Calgary
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Objectives

1. Identify the role of gender in mental health support delivery
2. Understand the role of a Radical Mental Health Doula
3. Examine how women with mental illness can go from patients to experts in the development of innovative approaches to women's mental health



**RADICAL
MENTAL
HEALTH
DOULAS**

SUPPORT, COMFORT,
EDUCATE, ADVOCATE



Who We Are



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Principal Investigator



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Co-Principal Investigator



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Postdoc, project Manager



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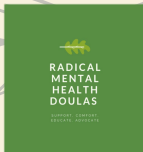
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Project Funders





Gender & Mental Health



- ❖ Women have **higher rates** of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation than men
- ❖ Women are much more likely than men to experience **gender-based trauma** and violence
- ❖ **Sexist stereotypes** minimize women's mental health challenges
- ❖ Healthcare remains **male-dominated**

<https://www.camh.ca/en/get-involved/join-the-cause/womenmind>





Lack of Gender- Informed Mental Health Services



- ❖ Mental health services are **fragmented**
- ❖ Services do not adequately consider gendered dimensions of mental illness
- ❖ Canadian women **consistently** report the failure of the system to address their needs (Moyser, 2020).
- ❖ Needs for mental health support skyrocketed during COVID-19

A (Radical) Shift is Needed

- ❖ Urgent need for inclusive **gender-informed** mental health policies, services, and therapeutic options
- ❖ Traditional doula vs radical doula
- ❖ **Our grassroots approach:** focus on access, equity, participation, and social justice



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Support.
Comfort. Educate.
Advocate.



Critical Feminist Disability Theory



- ❖ Shift **away from a medicalized and punitive approach** of understanding mental health and ability
- ❖ Unpacking “**gendered experiences**” within an oppressive system
- ❖ Leveraging the **power of lived experience**



Participatory Action Research

- ❖ Women with lived experiences as co-researchers
- ❖ Regarding lived experience as expertise
- ❖ Breaking down power dynamics
- ❖ Change-focused



PAR in practice

- Relationship building
- Reflexive practise
- Member checking
- Navigating and challenging institutional power
 - Ethics
 - Ownership of data
 - Choice in compensation





Methods

- ❖ 15 women co-researchers
- ❖ 3 rounds of preliminary consultation meetings
- ❖ 3 rounds of curriculum development
 - ❖ 7 sessions total
 - ❖ 2hr focus group
 - ❖ 1hr workbook
- ❖ \$25/hr



Women's Lived Expertise Tells Us:

Women Feel Alone:

"There is no one to help you, there is no one."



Women Feel Dismissed by Healthcare Professionals:

"They talk to you, but they don't hear you. They don't understand."

Women Believe in the Benefits of Doula Support in Mental Health:

"I want to see myself as a wounded healer. Just because I'm broken, doesn't mean I can't be good. It doesn't mean I can't help others."



The RMHD Model

- ❖ Individualized Support Based on Lived Experience
- ❖ Privileging Women's Voices
- ❖ Community-Based and Peer-led
- ❖ Prioritizing Rights and Dignity

"I just need someone to ride the wave with me."



What is a Radical Mental Health Doula?

Doula Dos

Validate and advocate

Assist in system navigation and care planning

Provide continuous support

Provide emotional support and comfort

Accept people as they are

Present options and share resources



Doula Don'ts

Make diagnoses

Make Assessments

Perform treatment

Push personal beliefs

Judge or dismiss

Replace anyone on the care team





What's Next?



The RMHD Pilot Project

First time implementing the RMHD model of care in community!

1. Train first cohort of doulas
2. Match doulas with clients for a period of 6 months
3. Track doula and client experiences
4. Evaluation of the pilot project



RMHD Training

- 5 full days
- Skills and knowledge in core competencies, incl:

Emotional support
Mental health care planning
System navigation
Boundary setting
Client advocacy



RMHD Pilot

6 months

- * Each trained doula will provide mental health support to 2 clients for a period of 6 months. How this support looks like is mutually decided upon by the doula and client.

Data collection

- * Doulas and clients will track their experiences on Zamplo
- * Each doula will engage in two 1:1 interviews with the research team (3mo, 6mo).



Pilot Project Participants

Doulas (x10)

- 18+ in age
- Lived experience of mental health struggles and/or of accessing mental health supports (no diagnoses necessary)
- Able to complete 5-day training
- Willing to provide mental health support in the role of a doula for 6 months

Doula clients (x20)

- 18+ in age
- Has a self-identified need for mental health support (no diagnoses necessary)



Compensation

Doulas

\$575/month

Doula Clients

\$50/month



Doula Interviews

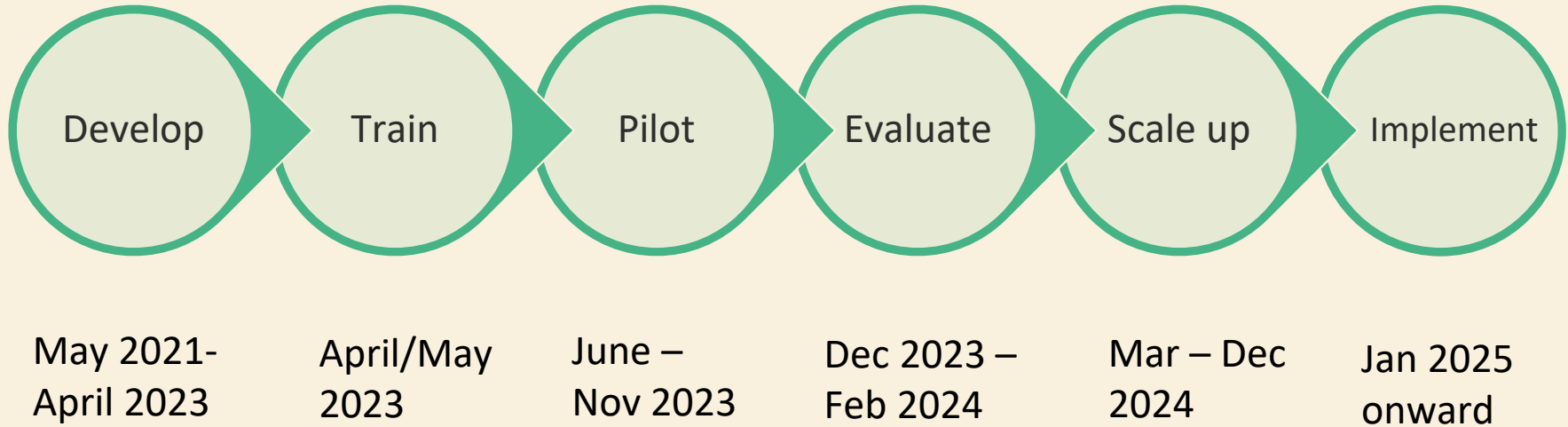
\$25/per interview

Zamplo

Free 1-yr subscription to
Zamplo Premium
(\$50/yr)

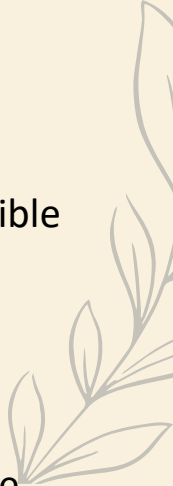


Timeline



Vision: We envision a community-based mental health support that is inclusive and accessible to all and that ensures the dignity and rights of the individual are upheld.

Mission: To develop and provide a Radical Mental Health Doula (RMHD) service that is rooted in the values of comfort, support, education, and advocacy. By partnering with community members and people with lived experiences, this grassroots approach will prioritize marginalized voices that are traditionally unheard.



In Conclusion

- ❖ RMHD model offers timely and necessary shift from the medicalized approach to mental health
- ❖ Involving women with lived experiences as experts allows for a model of care that is centered on dignity, rights, and justice





Questions



THANK YOU



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