Women in the divided city: Gendered dimensions of neighbourhood inequality, polarization, and segregation in the Toronto CMA

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| Community Partner/s | Women’s Habitat, Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT), Maytree |

1. Rationale

The NCRP’s “three cities” analysis of Toronto reveals a deeply divided city: what was in the 1970s and 80s a city of mixed- and middle-income neighbourhoods has become a polarized and segregated city, with increasing proportions of high-income and low-income neighbourhoods.

But to date, there has been little research and analysis of how these trends affect women, or what programs and policies can address these effects.

This project aims to apply the NCRP’s socio-spatial methodology to an analysis of gender and income in the divided city. It will bring together the NCRP’s mapping and data analysis techniques with a review of empirical and theoretical literatures, in order to describe and explain Toronto’s gendered income trends. We will mobilize this knowledge at the neighbourhood level through participatory research and action, working with local organizations to identify and promote programs that address gender, racial, and economic injustice.

While extensively studied and documented, gender and income trends in Canada—including the feminization of poverty, the gender income gap, and intersections of gender-based violence and women’s poverty—tend to be analyzed at the national and provincial level, not at the city and neighbourhood level. At the same time, the impacts of these trends are most directly experienced at the local level, and increasingly, responses to these trends are also local – whether they take the form of municipal poverty-reduction plans, place-based programs (such as Toronto’s Neighbourhood Improvement Areas), and / or women’s anti-poverty organizing in neighbourhoods.

Just as local-level analysis provides a more grounded understanding of gender and income trends, accounting for gender also sharpens our view of neighbourhood inequality. Indeed, preliminary mapping for this project demonstrates that when gender, and intersecting variables such as age, are included in socio-spatial analysis, the inequality among Toronto neighbourhoods is revealed to be even starker than previously understood. New and even more distant polarities emerge, from the 47 census tracts in which working-age women’s earnings are less than half the city’s average individual income, to the single CT in which the average income for working-age men is more than thirteen times the city’s average.

Analysts agree that this divided city—marked by stark neighbourhood differences in incomes, health, quality of life, and life-chances—has been produced by specific political and economic changes in the past three decades: the rise of precarious and non-standard employment; the decline of manufacturing, and ascendancy of a polarized knowledge- and service-based economy; restructuring and downloading of state social provision to the municipal level; deep cuts to income security programs, social housing, and services; a standstill in development of purpose-built rental housing, and residualization of rental tenure; growing immigration of highly-educated workers from the global south, who face discrimination, deskilling, and under-employment in the labour market; and immigration policy changes that favour temporary migrant work and produce precarious forms of status.
Each of these changes has gendered dimensions. This project will synthesize the literatures that examine how these trends, and others, have affected women. We will also conduct participatory, neighbourhood-based focus groups and key informant interviews to document the consequences of socio-spatial inequality and polarization for women in Toronto neighbourhoods.

This exploratory project proposes to develop a knowledge base that can contribute to answering the questions below. The maps, data, literature synthesis, and local knowledge generated through this project will support further research and advocacy on the causes and consequences of, and solutions for, women’s economic disadvantage in Canadian cities.

2. Potential Policy Relevance

The NCRP has documented differences between Canada’s large cities in the prevalence of inequality, segregation, and polarization. These differences can be attributed to economic and demographic trends, but also to provincial and municipal polices and programs, and local organizing. Recent analysis shows differences among Canadian cities in women’s quality of life and incomes (McInturff, CCPA, 2015). This study will examine local policies, programs, and campaigns that may contribute to these differences, with a focus on municipal and regional poverty reduction strategies. The City of Toronto and Peel Region are in the process of implementing poverty reduction plans; this project will provide a gendered perspective on such initiatives.

Through its community-based, participatory methodology, the project will also build capacity among organizations in the women’s anti-poverty and anti-violence sectors to identify and advocate for municipal-level policy and program interventions to address gendered and racialized inequality, polarization, segregation, and violence.

3. Research Questions

1) How are women—who have always faced higher rates of poverty and disadvantage—affected by Toronto’s increasing socio-spatial polarization, segregation and inequality?
   a) What is the spatial distribution of women’s incomes and the gendered income gap across neighbourhoods in the Toronto CMA?
   b) How do variables such as race, immigrant status, age, education, family status, household composition, housing tenure, and housing conditions, intersect with the spatial distribution of women’s incomes and the gendered income gap?
   c) What do the relevant literatures, and analysis of our own data, suggest about the factors influencing the geography of women’s disadvantage in Toronto? In particular, in what ways do trends in the labour market, immigration, and housing operate to produce and entrench Toronto’s deeply uneven landscape for women?
   d) What is the geography of gender-based violence, and how does it correlate with gender and income trends? How do scholars and practitioners explain these correlations, and what are their ramifications for women?
   e) How are gendered and racialized inequality, polarization, segregation, and violence affecting women’s daily lives in Toronto’s low-income neighbourhoods?

2) What local policies, programs, and campaigns can mitigate the impacts of gendered and racialized inequality, segregation, and violence, and improve quality of life and life chances for women in Toronto neighbourhoods?
   a) In particular, how might municipal poverty-reduction strategies, such as those recently developed by the City of Toronto and Peel Region, address women’s economic disadvantage and gender-based violence?
   b) What are examples of successful initiatives in other jurisdictions?
   c) What forms of local organizing—in Toronto and in other jurisdictions—have proven effective in encouraging the adoption and adequate funding of such measures?
4. **Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions**

This project draws upon the NCRP’s datasets and mapping capacities to analyze the nature, causes, and consequences of socio-spatial inequality and polarization for women in Toronto neighbourhoods. It also examines local policies, programs, and other interventions that can mitigate these trends. In doing so, it responds to the key questions in the NCRP proposal, and fills an important gap in gender analysis. The project’s participatory approach grounded in community partnerships, and its focus on municipal-level policies, also reflect the NCRP’s knowledge mobilization objectives.

5. **Research Design & Methods**

This exploratory project has three key objectives:

- To describe and explain current socio-spatial trends in gender, income, and violence against women in Toronto CMA, and their consequences for women in Toronto neighbourhoods;
- To identify municipal policies and programs that can respond to women’s poverty and gender-based violence;
- To build the capacity of women’s anti-violence and anti-poverty organizations to understand and explain gender and income trends; and advocate for policy and program solutions, particularly at the municipal level.

We will pursue these objectives through four main tasks:

1. **Mapping and data analysis**
   - Produce maps and other visualizations of data NCRP has in hand, including T1FF income data, census 2006, rental housing data, and police calls for service data.
   - Identify and acquire additional sources of data (for example, data from the Gender and Work Database http://www.genderwork.ca/gwd/; other variables available for T1FF such as median incomes and breakdown of income sources by gender; social assistance data; data on violence against women shelters).
   - Analyze these maps and data to describe socio-spatial trends in the distribution of women’s poverty, the gendered income gap, and gender-based violence.

2. **Literature review and synthesis**
   - Conduct a review of scholarly works, grey literature, and community-based reports that can help explain and address the trends identified through mapping and data analysis, including:
     - empirical and theoretical scholarship (particularly that grounded in critical race, feminist, and political economy frameworks) on current gender and income trends, including the feminization of poverty, the gender income gap, gendered differences in occupations and labour market participation, and intersections of gender-based violence and women’s poverty;
     - analyses focused on gender in the “divided cities” literature;
     - assessments of municipal policies and programs to address gendered and racialized neighbourhood economic disadvantage, including poverty-reduction strategies and place-based policies;
     - community-based reports on regional, municipal, and neighbourhood-based initiatives to improve women’s quality of life and advocate for gender, racial, and economic justice.
   - Produce a literature synthesis summarizing key insights and their application to socio-spatial trends in gender and income in Toronto CMA, and potential program and policy responses.

3. **Community-based participatory research with women’s anti-poverty and anti-violence organizations**
   - Convene a community advisory board to oversee and advise throughout the research process, including input into the design and implementation of the research, review of the preliminary findings, and development of outputs and knowledge mobilization strategy.
Host meetings and workshops with representatives from women's anti-violence and anti-poverty organizations, policy experts, and scholars focused on gender and income, to further refine the research questions, methodology, and preliminary analyses.

Conduct key informant interviews, and participatory, neighbourhood-based focus groups with representatives of women's anti-violence and anti-poverty organizations, policy makers, women facing poverty, and other local experts, to examine how racialized and gendered economic injustice and violence are affecting women’s daily lives in Toronto neighbourhoods, and to learn what initiatives are being undertaken to improve women’s quality of life and advocate for social and economic change.

Knowledge translation and synthesis

Develop plain-language thematic summaries, illustrated with maps and graphs, that can be used by partners in their community education and advocacy activities.

In addition to the research and knowledge mobilization tasks discussed above, we will identify and apply for funding opportunities to support ongoing community-based research and action on gender, income, and violence against women.

Role of Community Partners

This project was initiated by community partners. Upon approval for funding, the co-leads will draw upon their extensive networks to identify additional partners from the women's anti-poverty and anti-violence sectors in Toronto, Peel Region and York Region.

The project will employ an integrated knowledge translation approach in which community partners and researchers work together to define research questions, develop the methodology, gather data, interpret findings, and mobilize knowledge.

Partners will play a range of roles, including co-leading the research; serving on a community advisory board that will oversee the research and provide guidance throughout the process; and hosting the neighbourhood-based focus groups.

Organizations and individuals participating in the key informant interviews and focus groups will also have the opportunity to remain in contact with the project and will receive the final report.

Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training

A graduate student will carry out the literature review, while a community-based researcher will coordinate the focus groups. Both will work with the co-investigators, community partners, and advisory board to design and carry out the research and knowledge mobilization, gaining skills in research design, partner engagement, and qualitative and ethnographic methods.

Schedule

- October-November 2016: Convene advisory committee; conduct meetings and workshops with community partners, researchers, and other experts to refine research questions and work plan; develop ethics review.
- January – April 2017: Draft literature synthesis and plain-language thematic summaries
- April – June 2017: Conduct key informant interviews and neighbourhood-based participatory focus groups. Share draft thematic summaries and revise in response to feedback.
- July – September 2017: Prepare NCRP report on findings and journal article.
- Throughout project: Submit applications for other funding sources to sustain research and action.
9. Outcomes / Deliverables

- Thematic summaries on key trends in gendered and racialized economic injustice in Toronto, illustrated with maps and tables (draft April 2017, final September 2017)
- Neighbourhood-based participatory focus groups to share key findings and identify actions (April – June 2017)
- NCRP report (September 2017)
- Journal article (December 2017)
- Other funding applications (TBD – depending on deadlines)

10. Budget Explanation

Total NCRP cost to NCRP: $33,000.

- Student salaries and benefits: $8,500 (300 hours @ $28.50/hour): graduate research assistant to conduct literature review (a community-based researcher will be hired through a City employment program to coordinate the community-based participatory research).
- NCRP staff time: NCRP’s research manager will be seconded part-time to be the lead investigator / manager of this project (i.e., this is part of her regular salary, not in addition). 40 days @ $400/day = $16,000.
- Other expenses: $8,500
  - ($2,500) Honoraria for residents / representatives of unfunded organizations participating in advisory board, participatory focus groups, and key informant interviews.
  - ($3,000) Services of partner organizations to host and provide interpretation for neighbourhood-based workshops.
  - ($2,000) Other costs of neighbourhood-based workshops (food, childcare, TTC fare, etc.)

☐ Sent to the NCRP’s Research Advisory Board for comment: date __________________ deadline: ________________
☐ Funding approved by the NCRP’s Board: $_______________ date________________________
## SSHRC Budget Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount requested from NCRP</th>
<th>Contributions (In-Kind / Cash)</th>
<th>Contribution source</th>
<th>Total Project Cost</th>
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<td><strong>Personnel costs</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Student salaries and benefits/Stipends</strong></td>
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<td>Community-based researcher</td>
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<td>Community-based researcher - Women’s Habitat</td>
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<td>Co-investigators’ time – 8 days @ $500 (Leila Sarangi and Effie Viachoyannacos)</td>
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<td><strong>Other expenses</strong></td>
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<td>Other expenses (specify)</td>
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<td>3000 (in-kind)</td>
<td>Community partners – advisory board participation, hosting workshops, etc</td>
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<td>Focus group costs (food, childcare, TTC, etc)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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* Hourly rates for students: $28.50 ($25/hour plus 14% MERCS)