



ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023
EDITION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The inaugural year of the Centre for Advanced Research on Mental Health and Society (ARMS) has marked a transformative period, solidifying ARMS as a successful interdisciplinary hub within McMaster University. Launched in January 2023, ARMS is dedicated to better understanding the social determinants of mental health, emphasizing a multifaceted approach that transcends singular perspectives.

Under the directorship of Dr. Marisa Young, ARMS has achieved notable milestones. The Centre's focus on interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement has been instrumental, forging partnerships with local community organizations, the McMaster Community Research Platform, and SPARK: a Centre for Social Innovation. This collaborative ethos is integral to ARMS' philosophy, ensuring real-world relevance, tapping into local knowledge, and empowering communities to co-create solutions.

Looking forward, ARMS is poised for continued growth and impact. The Centre's governance structure ensures transparency and accountability, with the Governing Board overseeing progress and the Advisory Committee providing scholarly guidance. The involvement of core and associate members, community organizations, and a Student Advisory Board, reflects our commitment to diverse perspectives.

PROJECTS AT A GLANCE

Key highlights of the inaugural year include the University Student E-Mental Health Stakeholder Report, the Resilience and Connections Art Event, the Fulbright Research Chair Speaker Series, The Other Side Film Screening, and the ARMS Symposium- Mental Health Beyond the Vacuum. Each initiative reflects ARMS' commitment to knowledge dissemination, fostering dialogue on mental health through diverse channels.

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MORE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01. Centre Overview**
- 02. Centre Leadership & Staff**
- 03. ARMS Members**
- 04. Centre Governance & Student Advisory Committee**
- 05. Open ARMS Journal**
- 06. Research Areas of Focus**
- 07. Community Partnerships & Engagement**
- 08. Knowledge Dissemination & Grants**
- 09. Upcoming Events & The Year Ahead**

CENTRE OVERVIEW

The Centre for Advanced Research on Mental Health and Society (ARMS) officially launched as a formal research centre in the Faculty of Social Sciences at McMaster University in January 2023.

ARMS is the first interdisciplinary centre of its kind at McMaster and focuses on making contributions to our understanding of the social, structural, and institutional influences on mental health. ARMS takes the approach that mental health cannot be understood using one perspective alone. It is through dialectic engagement of multiple frameworks that real significant change can be gained.

There are three overarching themes that guide the research activities at ARMS including a focus on **past and future research on mental health, current events and social issues related to mental health and interdisciplinary collaborations within and across institutions.**

OUR PRIORITIES

ARMS brings together the expertise of researchers in the social sciences, health sciences, and the community to advance mental health research in five priority areas:

1

**MENTAL
HEALTH & LIFE
TRANSITIONS**

2

**STUDENT
MENTAL
HEALTH**

3

**SOCIAL
INEQUALITY
& MENTAL
HEALTH**

4

**WORK &
WELL-BEING**

5

**HEALTHY &
SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES**

Pillar projects in each of these areas are discussed later in the report.

CENTRE LEADERSHIP & STAFF

CENTRE LEADERSHIP & STAFF



Marisa Young, Director

myoung@mcmaster.ca

Marisa Young is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University and a Canadian Research Chair in Mental Health and Work-Life Transitions. She is currently the Director for the McMaster University Centre for Advanced Research on Mental Health and Society (ARMS); the Associate Director for the McMaster Institute of Health Equity (MIHE), and the Graduate Chair for the McMaster Department of Sociology. Dr. Young's research investigates the intersection between work, family, and residential contexts to bring a greater understanding to social inequalities in mental health for parents and children.

TBA, Associate Director

We are seeking an *Associate Director* from either the Faculty of Social Sciences or Health Sciences. This position entails several key responsibilities, including assisting with membership recruitment, disseminating information about ARMS' events and programs, and advising the Director on recommended endeavours in which the Centre should engage. The estimated time may include approximately three to five hours per month.

CENTRE LEADERSHIP & STAFF

Diana Singh, Executive Director

singhd22@mcmaster.ca

Dr. Diana Singh received her PhD in Sociology at McMaster University in 2019. In addition to her ED role, Dr. Singh has an active research program. Her work focuses on emotional labour and examines the health consequences of emotion management for service workers. She currently leads a community-engaged project in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, and the Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford, and Grimsby Public Libraries on a project entitled, “Emotions Matter: Skill Building, Emotional Resilience and Social Support for Care Workers”. Funded by SSHRC and MITACS, this research examines the experiences and consequences of emotional labour among human service workers in emotionally laborious roles.



Loa Gordon, Assistant Executive Director

gordol8@mcmaster.ca

Loa Gordon is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at McMaster University. She is a qualitative researcher whose program focuses on matters of care, embodiment, the imagination, and datafication in lived experiences of social suffering. Loa’s current ethnographic project examines phenomenologies of self-care to uncover how people embody their social and more-than-human worlds in ways that impact their well-being. In her interdisciplinary research collaborations, Loa explores how formal mental health treatment and community support systems are constituted, reliant upon, and knit together by care practices that become invisibilized.



Kaitlyn Mah, Lead Research Assistant

mahk5@mcmaster.ca

Kaitlyn Mah is an undergraduate student in the Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour program at McMaster University. She is actively involved across multiple domains within ARMS, including communications, branding, website design, community event planning, and the Youth Engagement Project. Kaitlyn looks forward to continuing her work with ARMS to promote awareness of mental health and research within both the university and broader community.



ARMS MEMBERS

The success of ARMS is deeply rooted in the active and multifaceted contributions of its members.

Core Member Roles:

- **Active Participation in Centre Programs:** contribute to the Centre's programs, fostering a collaborative environment where ideas and perspectives converge to advance mental health research.
- **Independent Research Projects:** aligned with the vision of ARMS, Core Members undertake independent research projects on mental health, wellness, and society. These projects serve as key "Pillar" initiatives, publicly connecting their endeavors to the overarching goals of ARMS.
- **Contribution to Grant Writing:** may be involved in grant writing efforts, seeking external funding to sustain the Centre's research activities and advance its mission.
- **Knowledge Exchange and Dissemination:** to enhance the impact of research findings, Core Members engage in knowledge exchange, mobilization, translation, and dissemination. These efforts are promoted through various channels, including the ARMS website, social media outlets, and newsletter.
- **Pedagogical Involvement:** may aid in pedagogical efforts, contributing to teaching, mentorship, and advising. This commitment extends ARMS' influence beyond research and into educational realms.
- **Collaboration with Peers:** collaborative endeavours are a cornerstone of ARMS, and Core Members actively collaborate with their peers in grant writing efforts, for example. This collaborative spirit fosters a rich and dynamic research environment.
- **Reporting and Evaluation:** provide brief reports and updated CVs annually, which helps provide a comprehensive overview of their contributions.



OUR CORE MEMBERS

Paul Glavin

Associate Professor
*Department of Sociology,
Faculty of Social Sciences*

Ameil Joseph

Associate Professor
*Social Work, Faculty of
Social Sciences*

Tara Marshall

Associate Professor
*Department of Health,
Aging & Society, Faculty of
Social Sciences*

James Gillett

Associate Professor
*Department of Health,
Aging & Society, Faculty of
Social Sciences*

Leora Sas van der Linden

Program Manager
*Community Research Platform,
Faculty of Social Sciences*

Amanda Sim

Assistant Professor
*Department of Psychiatry &
Behavioural Neurosciences,
Faculty of Health Sciences*

Jessica Maxwell

Assistant Professor
*Department of Health Aging
& Society, Faculty of Social
Sciences*

Associate Member Roles:

- **Collaboration on Pillar Projects:** collaborate closely with Core Members on their "Pillar" projects, fostering a sense of shared purpose and expanding the reach and impact of ARMS' research initiatives.
- **Reporting and Evaluation:** provide brief reports and updated CVs annually, contributing to the comprehensive assessment of the Centre's collective efforts.
- **Participation in Pedagogical Efforts:** may engage in pedagogical activities, participating in training programs and community internships, for example. This involvement nurtures a culture of learning and mentorship within ARMS.

OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Anne Fuller

Assistant Professor
*Department of Pediatrics,
Faculty of Health Sciences*

Kathy Georgiades

Professor
*Department of Psychiatry &
Behavioural Neurosciences,
Faculty of Health Sciences*

Andrea Gonzalez

Associate Professor
*Department of Psychiatry &
Behavioural Neurosciences,
Faculty of Health Sciences*

Isabela Granic

Industry Professor
*Department of Health,
Aging & Society, Faculty of
Social Sciences*



OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Magdalena Janus

Professor
*Department of Psychiatry &
Behavioural Neurosciences,
Faculty of Health Sciences*

Mat Savelli

Associate Professor
*Department of Health,
Aging & Society, Faculty of
Social Sciences*

Allison Van

Executive Director
*SPARK, Faculty of
Social Sciences*

Casey Scheibling

Adjunct Assistant Professor
*Department of Sociology,
Faculty of Social Sciences*

Ruth Repchuck

Research Coordinator
*Department of Sociology,
Faculty of Social Sciences*

Affiliate Member Roles:

- **Network with Mental Health Leaders:** gain valuable opportunities to network with mental health leaders. This connection provides a platform for sharing insights, exchanging ideas, and staying aware of the latest developments in the mental health research landscape.
- **Early Access to Events through Listservs:** receive early access to events through dedicated Listservs. This exclusive communication channel ensures that partners are among the first to receive information about upcoming events, conferences, and research activities.
- **Annual Feedback on ARMS Progress:** Affiliate members play a vital role in shaping the trajectory of ARMS by providing annual feedback on the Centre's progress. This feedback mechanism ensures that the perspectives and insights of partners are integral to the ongoing evolution of ARMS.

OUR AFFILIATE MEMBERS

**Julia
Woodhall-Melnik**

Associate Professor
*Department of Sociology,
University of New Brunswick*

Blair Wheaton

Professor
*Department of Sociology,
University of Toronto*

Scott Schieman

Professor
*Department of Sociology,
University of Toronto*

Shirin Montazer

Associate Professor
*Department of Sociology,
Wayne State University*



OUR AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Melissa Milkie

Professor
*Department of Sociology,
University of Toronto*

Jinette Comeau

Associate Professor
*Department of Sociology,
Western University*

Atsushi Narisada

Assistant Professor
*Department of Sociology,
Memorial University*

Naomi Lightman

Associate Professor
*Department of Sociology,
Toronto Metro University*

Paul Takata

Chief Executive
Officer, *Hamilton
Public Library*

Sue Phipps

Chief Executive Officer
*Canadian Mental
Health Association
Hamilton Branch*

Lita Barrie

Chief Executive Officer,
*Burlington Public
Library*



Research Team Roles:

- **Support the Centre's Pillar Projects:** engages regularly with our Core/Associate members and are provided valuable opportunities to collaborate with Affiliate members. These tasks include everything from project coordination and data collection to knowledge dissemination.
- **Coordinate Networking Opportunities:** supports networking between members both within and outside the Centre. The research team coordinates meetings and ensures effective communication among all members of the Centre.
- **Outreach and Communication:** works with ARMS members to create and manage content for the centre's website and social media channels, prepare press releases, organize public engagement events like seminars or workshops, and networking with other researchers and institutions.

**ALL MEMBERS BY
CATEGORY ARE
LISTED ON THE
CENTRE'S WEBSITE**

**CLICK HERE
TO VIEW**



CENTRE GOVERNANCE

Governing Board Members
 Drs. Jeremiah Hurley (FSS Dean), Tina Fetner (Sociology Chair), Michel Gringon, (HASChair), Catharine Munn (PBN Chair Delegate)

Advisory Committee
 Drs. Jim Dunn (FSS ADR), Tara Marshall, (FSS SP, Director), Julia Woodhall-Melnik (Director, UNB, Housing, Mobilization & Research Lab), TBD (PBN)

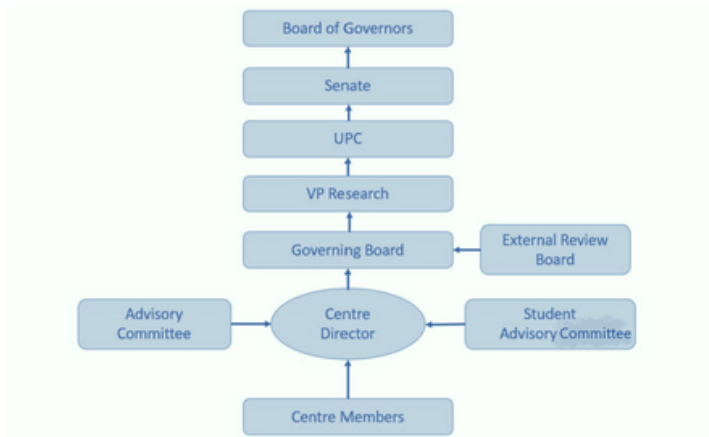


Figure 1: Governing Structure for ARMS

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The purpose of the ARMS **Student Advisory Committee** (ARMS-SAC) is to include student representation and perspective in mental health research and activities at McMaster University. By advising on research, community, and programming activities, the group seeks to make an impact by improving the landscape of mental health for students at McMaster and in the wider community. As a Centre, ARMS is committed to involving students across stages of their education, faculty researchers, and community partners in guiding mental health research in the social sciences. The ARMS-SAC is an effort that intentionally advances student involvement in cooperative decision-making within the Centre.

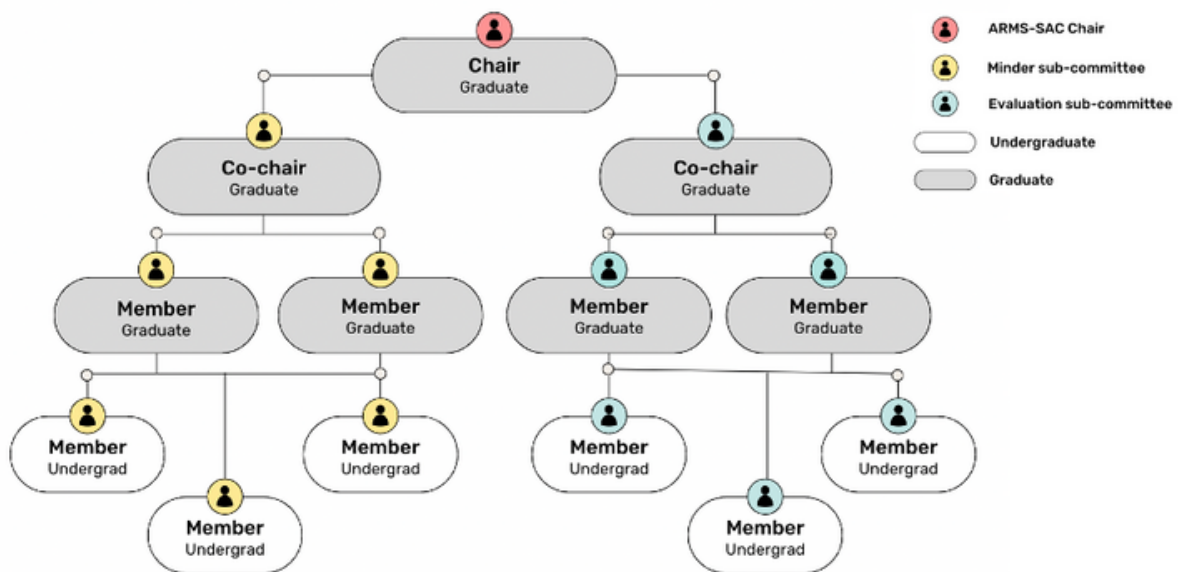


Figure 2: Organizational Structure of ARMS-SAC



ARMS-SAC Member Roles:

- **Research Advising:** guide Pillar Projects by providing peer review and offering expertise, especially around projects that are consequential to student mental health. This will include ethical advising, stakeholder advising, and strategic advising.
- **Event Advising:** assist in decision-making around events and activities organized by the Centre, including how to make events useful, accessible, appealing, and relevant to student populations at McMaster.
- **Problem Solving:** participate in problem solving and troubleshooting involved in ARMS projects, expanding their critical thinking skills. For example, in creating mental health surveys and interview guides, researchers must consider issues around inclusivity and accessibility, which are discussions that students can contribute to and offer insight on.
- **Evaluation:** oversee the implementation of their recommendations and assess the impact of these recommendations over time. In doing so, members can provide ongoing feedback and suggest adjustments as needed.
- **Advocacy:** may be positioned to advocate for policies, causes, or issues related to their expertise or lived experiences. They can help raise awareness, including among researchers.
- **Strategic Planning:** participate in strategic planning sessions, specifically helping to identify long term goals and objectives for ARMS and the steps or processes needed to most effectively achieve them.
- **Innovation:** contribute to the generation of new ideas, programs, events, or strategies that ARMS can adopt to propel the innovative impact of the Centre.

OPEN ARMS STUDENT JOURNAL

In the pursuit of advancing mental health research and nurturing the next generation of scholars, we are proud to present a significant milestone achieved during the past year. ARMS established 'Open ARMS' - a Student Journal for Interdisciplinary Mental Health Research. This journal is organized and supported by members of ARMS-SAC.

Empowering Student Voices

We have taken a step forward with our commitment to student engagement with the establishment of this student-led journal called, 'Open ARMS'. This publication serves as a platform for students to voice their perspectives and contribute meaningfully to the field of mental health research. By encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration among students, we have created an environment where diverse academic backgrounds converge to explore the complexities of mental health.

Diverse Contributions

The journal includes original research articles, thought-provoking opinion pieces, and creative expressions that illuminate the social determinants of mental health. Through this diversity of content, we aim to foster a holistic understanding of mental health from the McMaster student perspective, acknowledging its multifaceted nature and the importance of interdisciplinary insights.

Peer Review Excellence

We are equally excited about our commitment to instilling the principles of rigorous scholarship within our student community. As part of the journal's development, we have extended opportunities for students to actively participate in the peer review process. Our dedicated peer review board, comprised of aspiring scholars from various disciplines, embodies the spirit of peer collaboration, as they critically evaluate submissions and provide valuable feedback to authors. This hands-on experience in the peer review process not only enhances the quality of published work but also equips our students with essential skills for their academic and professional journeys.

RESEARCH AREAS OF FOCUS

In its inaugural year, ARMS has been committed to laying a strong foundation for research in our priority areas, emphasizing collaboration, interdisciplinary engagement, and community-building among its members. These five priority research areas demonstrate ARMS' commitment to addressing complex mental health issues from various angles and perspectives, reflecting the center's interdisciplinary approach to advancing our understanding of mental health and its social and structural influences.

1

MENTAL HEALTH AND LIFE TRANSITIONS

ARMS recognizes that mental health is deeply intertwined with life transitions. The Centre's core researchers within this priority area explore how various life stages and major life changes impact mental well-being, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for mental health support during crucial transitions.

OLDER ADULTS' SEXUAL MINDSETS

Dr. Jessica Maxwell

Assistant Professor, Department of Health, Aging & Society

PROMOTING HEALTHY FAMILIES: AN EVALUATION OF PARENTING PROGRAMS USING COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS

Dr. Andrea Gonzalez

Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences

2

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Recognizing the unique mental health challenges faced by students, ARMS is committed to investigating and addressing student mental health issues. This priority area delves into the factors affecting students' psychological well-being and seeks innovative solutions to support their mental health needs.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION WORLD MENTAL HEALTH INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENT SURVEY INITIATIVE (WMH-ICS)

Dr. Marisa Young

Director, ARMS, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

3

SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

At ARMS, researchers are dedicated to uncovering the complex relationship between social inequality and mental health outcomes. This priority area focuses on understanding how societal disparities, such as economic, racial, and gender inequalities, influence mental health and seeks to identify strategies for mitigating these disparities.

THRIVING TOGETHER: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF NEWCOMER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN HAMILTON

Dr. Amanda Sim

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences

A WAY THROUGH

Dr. Ameil Joseph

Associate Professor, School of Social Work

4

WORK AND WELL-BEING

Work occupies a significant portion of people’s lives, and its impact on mental health is profound. ARMS researchers delve into the dynamics of the workplace, exploring the connections between employment, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. This research informs strategies for promoting mental health in work settings.

EMOTIONS MATTER

Dr. Diana Singh

*Executive Director, ARMS, Adjunct Assistant Professor,
Department of Sociology*

WORK STRESSORS & WELL-BEING

Dr. Paul Glavin

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

5

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

ARMS recognizes the importance of community environments in shaping mental health. This priority area is dedicated to researching how communities can be designed and maintained to promote mental well-being and sustainability. It seeks to identify best practices for creating supportive, thriving, and resilient communities.

THE FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PROJECT (FFCR-BHW)

Dr. Marisa Young

Director, ARMS, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

The development of a robust community-engaged component within ARMS has been a cornerstone of our efforts over the past year. Collaborating closely with the McMaster Faculty of Social Sciences Community Research Platform, and SPARK: a Centre for Social Innovation, has been integral to this process. We see community-engagement at ARMS as essential because it brings real-world relevance to our research and ensures that the impact of our work extends beyond academic boundaries.

By actively involving the community, we gain valuable perspectives, tap into local knowledge, and better understand the practical challenges and needs of those affected by mental health challenges.

Our collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and co-creation, empowering the community to be a part of the solution. Together, we believe we can develop research that is not only academically rigorous but also socially meaningful, and in doing so, contribute to a more holistic and effective approach to enhancing mental health and well-being within our communities.

OUR CORE COMMUNITY PARTNERS AT ARMS



Canadian Mental Health Association, Hamilton Branch

The CMHA Hamilton is a non-profit community organization providing mental health services to adults with serious mental illness. CMHA supports the wellbeing of close to 12,000 Hamiltonians each year through a variety of services including primary health care, intensive case management, court support, housing support, crisis counselling, social and recreational programming, and mental health promotion. CMHA collaborates with local hospitals, health networks and a diverse range of community partners to coordinate care, facilitate cross-referrals and provide holistic support to address mental health challenges. CMHA Hamilton belongs to a broad provincial and Canada-wide mental health network through its affiliation with CMHA Ontario and CMHA National.



The Hamilton Public Library

The HPL serves the communities of Hamilton, Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook and Stoney Creek with 22 branches and 2 bookmobiles. We serve a diverse group of library users from a range of cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. Our customers rely on us for a variety of services, such as for borrowing books, accessing computers, Wi-Fi, and other advanced technologies, utilizing spaces for study, and acquiring new knowledge and skills through programs and informational events. We engage in research to ensure these services and programs are relevant and meaningful for our community, resources are being leveraged effectively, and that we operate in full capacity.



The Burlington Public Library

Burlington Public Library (BPL) participated in and has benefited from the Emotions Matter project, which has unfolded over the past two years. Their work demonstrates excellence in community-campus research initiatives and is well-deserving of this nomination. BPL has seven branches serving the community. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to offer welcoming spaces, where visitors can explore, discover, reflect, learn, improve, create, and connect with others. We also saw throughout the pandemic that staff can experience elevated levels of anxiety and stress as they manage their professional work and wellbeing during this difficult time. For this reason, Dr. Singh Emotions Matter project was particularly timely. BPL joined this community-engaged research initiative in June 2021.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR ONGOING COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PROJECTS

Self-Care for Students: Community-Engaged Research for Better Well-Being

This project qualitatively investigates the self-care practices used by post-secondary students at McMaster to manage their mental health and well-being with the aim of addressing a critical gap between mental health care needs and services for this population. Evidence shows that a high proportion of post-secondary students in Canada struggling with their mental health do not access services and instead indicate a preference for self-reliance. The Hamilton branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) crucially wants to learn more about the subjective self-care practices of students and young people in Ontario so they can best serve the Hamilton and McMaster community. This project addresses the urgent need to understand how students are caring for themselves using non-clinical self-management practices. This work contributes to evidence-based understandings of self-care so that 1) students can strengthen their emotional resilience when professional care is inaccessible, and 2) we can help reduce the burden for overrun campus wellness services.



The Development of a Dynamic Model of Evaluation for Suicide Prevention Programs (DME-SPP)

This project aims to support the Means Safety Training Program led by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Hamilton. Focused on community engagement, this project integrates evidence-based practices into training modules by incorporating findings from current research in the area. Suicide, a critical public health issue in Canada, prompts the necessity for comprehensive prevention strategies. While means safety, limiting access to suicide methods, is recognized as a crucial preventive measure, it is often overlooked in training interventions and mental health education. To address this gap, the project will conduct a systematic review of suicide prevention literature, emphasizing means safety, and will employ inclusive searches in academic and grey literature databases. The expected outcomes involve offering evidence-based strategies to fortify suicide prevention training, benefiting stakeholders across the Greater Hamilton Area. By collaborating with CMHA and employing rigorous research methodologies, this study also aims to create a dynamic evaluation model for suicide prevention programs, facilitating future program enhancements and broader advancements in mental health research.



Advanced Research on
Mental Health and Society



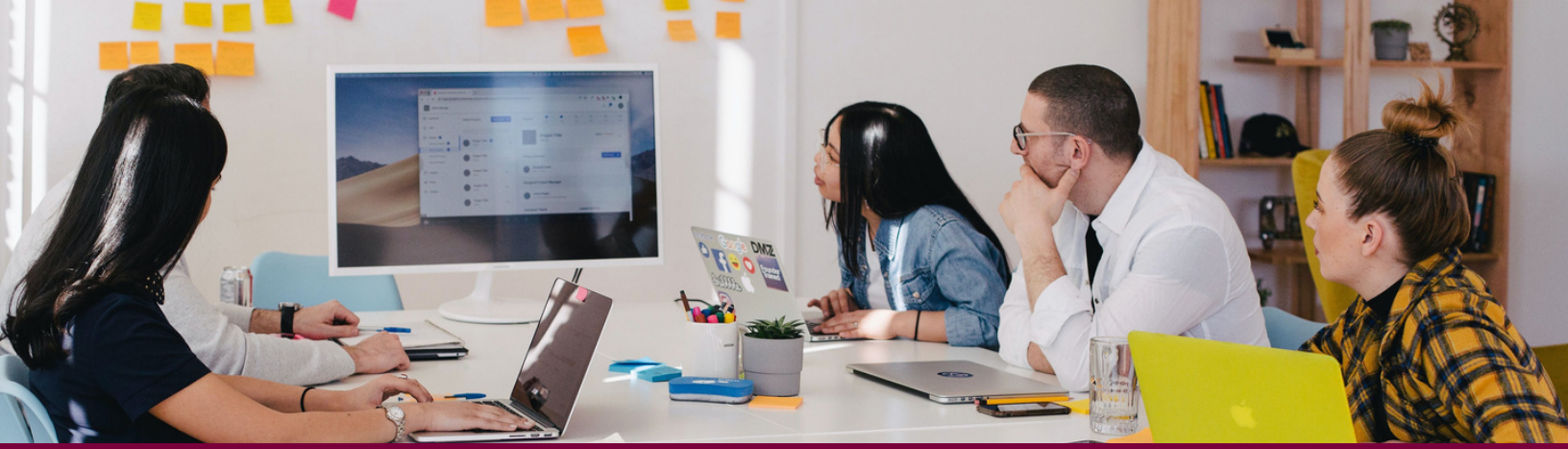
Canadian Mental
Health Association
Hamilton
Mental health for all

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The ARMS Centre is committed to supporting the involvement and mentorship of students interested in mental health research across the university. This year we have been working towards engaging students at all levels of study across the university through three core ARMS initiatives:

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The student advisory committee is led by the Assistant Director of ARMS and was officially formed in the Fall of 2023. The purpose of the ARMS Student Advisory Committee (ARMS-SAC) is to include student representation and perspective in mental health research and activities at McMaster University. By advising on research, community, and programming activities, the group seeks to make an impact by improving the landscape of mental health for students at McMaster and in the wider community. As a Centre, ARMS is committed to involving students across stages of their education, faculty researchers, and community partners in guiding mental health research in the social sciences. The ARMS-SAC is an effort that will intentionally advance student involvement in cooperative decision-making within the Centre. As we enter Winter 2024, a group of highly dedicated and impassioned undergraduate and graduate students across departments will begin consulting on two concrete projects – a student mental health e-intervention and a student-run peer reviewed mental health journal. The ARMS-SAC exemplifies McMaster’s student body as deeply engaged in their communities and committed toward equitable landscapes of well-being, qualities that ARMS views as central to academic excellence.



COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH INTERNSHIPS

In our inaugural year, we have collaborated with the McMaster Community Research Platform (CRP) to supervise two research internships with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Hamilton Branch. The first study included the development and evaluation of a peer support pilot program offered to clinical staff at various CMHA branches. The second project, entitled 'Means Safety' is an educational program offered to members living and working in the Hamilton community that includes training on suicide prevention and creating suicide safer homes. An ARMS graduate student is collaborating with CMHA and the CRP to conduct research related to the implementation and evaluation of the Means Safety initiative.

During our first year of operation, we collaborated with the McMaster Community Research Platform (CRP) to oversee two research internships in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Hamilton Branch.

The initial project involved formulating and assessing the effectiveness of a peer support pilot program targeted at clinical staff across diverse CMHA branches. The project was successfully completed in June 2023.

The second endeavour, named 'Means Safety,' encompasses an educational program designed for residents and professionals in the Hamilton community, offering training in suicide prevention and the establishment of suicide-safe living environments. The project is ongoing with the expected end-date of June 2024.

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

Knowledge dissemination remains at the forefront of ARMS' commitment to ensuring that the insights gained from our research contribute meaningfully to the well-being of the community. In the past year, our initiatives have spanned diverse channels reaching various stakeholders and fostering dialogue on mental health. Here are some key highlights from our knowledge dissemination activities:

University Student E-Mental Health Stakeholder Report

In collaboration with eight McMaster stakeholders, we crafted a comprehensive report synthesizing key findings from the McMaster site of the World Mental Health International College Student Initiative (WMH-ICS). This report delved into 12-month symptomology and recent stressors experienced by students, stratifying results across levels of study, gender, and ethnicity where applicable. By summarizing findings in terms of barriers and resources for the McMaster student population, we ensured that the stakeholder report laid the foundation for meaningful service recommendations.

Resilience and Connections: Art Event

In a joint effort with Student Wellness Center Peer Educators, the McMaster Museum of Art, and CMHA Hamilton, we organized an art event on May 5, 2023. The event showcased student art pieces, providing a platform for open conversations about subjective experiences of mental health. The unveiling Gala celebrated student artwork and resilience, drawing over 30 attendees, including community representatives from CMHA. By extending the event to the broader community through collaboration with CMHA Hamilton and Centre [3] Hamilton, we facilitated additional engagement with over 30 drop-in attendees.



Fulbright Research Chair & MIHE Speaker Series

Our Fulbright Research Chair Speaker Series brought renowned experts to discuss crucial aspects of mental healthcare. Dr. Ann Garland (University of San Diego) addressed bridging the gap between research and practice, drawing an audience of over 30. Dr. Imani Scott (Middlebury College) explored self-care and mental health needs for Black and Indigenous Human Rights Advocates, with over 40 attendees. In 2023, we hosted a from Dr. Yudan Chen Wang (North Carolina A&T College of Education) on Poverty, Parenting Stress, and Adolescent Mental Health. Additionally, we co-hosted the MIHE Seminar Series, providing a sociological perspective on mental health. ARMS organized Dr. Jane McLeod (Indiana University) to present in this series on autism, mental health, and college success to an audience of over 40 faculty and students.

The Other Side: Film Screening

A screening of "The Other Side" on April 14, 2022, sparked discussions on the sociological understanding of mental health portrayed in media. Attended by 50 people, the event, featuring Director Joey Klein, celebrated sociological voices in media with refreshments and appetizers, fostering a sense of community engagement.



ARMS Symposium: Mental Health Beyond the Vacuum

Our virtual symposium, "Mental Health Beyond the Vacuum," featured key speakers Dr. Jason Schnittker (University of Pennsylvania) and Dr. Blair Wheaton (University of Toronto) on October 18, 2021, attracting over 100 registrants. The symposium included community panelists from McMaster, the Hamilton Public Library, and Burlington Public Library, shedding light on the importance of community-engaged research. We also provided a platform for students and recent graduates to share their thesis projects and ongoing research, fostering valuable collaborations between ARMS and the Proactive Wellness Study.

In these endeavours, we continue to bridge the gap between research and practice, fostering a community-driven approach to mental health that transcends academic boundaries.

GRANTS

ARMS proudly acknowledges a series of significant triumphs in securing funding through successful tri-council applications and internal university grant opportunities. These accomplishments not only underscore the strength and relevance of our research initiatives but also serve as a testament to the dedication and expertise of our team.

Successfully Awarded

- CIHR Planning Grant: “A Student Placement Program for Community-Engaged Research” – notice of award, May 2023
- SSHRC Connection Grant: “Community Engaged Research & Mental Health Symposium” - notice of award early June 2023

Funding Applications Pending Approval

- John R. Evans Leaders Fund Canadian Foundation for Innovation: “Advanced Research on Mental Health and Society Lab” – anticipated notice of award, February 2024
- SSHRC Partnership Development Grant: “The MindMeld Partnership for Mental Health and Community-Engaged Research” – anticipated notice of award, June 2024

Internal Funding Successfully Awarded

- McMaster Arts & Research Board: “Unpacking The Dynamic Experience of Mental Health” – notice of award, January 2023
- RCI, Office of VP Research Conference Award – notice of award, April 2023
- RCI, Office of VP Research Summer Student Award – notice of award, June 2023



UPCOMING EVENTS & THE YEAR AHEAD

Mental Health Symposium

In the upcoming year, ARMS endeavors to host the inaugural Mental Health Symposium on Community Engaged Research, an innovative platform uniting interdisciplinary social science researchers and community mental health experts. This networking and knowledge-sharing event aims to break traditional silos by championing Community-Engaged Research as the driving force, fostering equitable partnerships from research planning through practical implementation. Through the Symposium, we aim to explore local mental health needs, talk about effective ways to mobilize research findings into actionable insights and cultivate a pragmatic understanding of lived experiences. By uniting diverse expertise, this initiative will promote best practices in community-engaged mental health research.

GOALS FOR THE NEXT YEAR

In Year 2, ARMS plans to develop and introduce a fellowship program, titled the “Social Resilience and Mental Health Fellowship.” This two-year fellowship will enable one recent equity-deserving doctoral graduate from McMaster University to participate in high-impact research, scholarship, and pedagogy that promotes EDI perspectives in societal mental health. This initiative will be interdisciplinary and jointly housed within ARMS and Spark: *A Centre for Social Research Innovation*. The fellow will receive advanced training that spans research, pedagogy, and leadership activities and attract highly qualified personnel from equity-deserving groups to affirm ARMS’ commitment to EDI as central to academic excellence and addressing the systemic roots of mental health.

Other goals are to be determined and depend upon suggestions and aspirations of members, throughout meetings in the first quarter year.

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Advanced Research on
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