How do people survive the mental healthcare system? Something greater – transcendent beyond quantitative research methods and qualitative approaches to clinical care concept – is needed. As such, it is my contention that ‘hope’ is the critical paradigm that binds these pillars together:

- a) it is what they will lead towards individually and collectively;
- b) without it they cannot exist;
- c) none of those pillars would be sufficient for recovery in and of themselves.

Although Spitzer and Coutinho (2014) believe that music can be a very sure token of specific emotions, Cospedes-Guevara and Erola (2018) currently offer the greatest challenge to the easy idea that perceptions of musical stimuli can actually become equable with actual emotive states. There is an enormous amount of work to be done in this area, and part of my intended research future is to bring music perception into dialogue with philosophy of mind and language as well as a more rigorous approach to aesthetics. But it is my contention (after Adorno) that the making of music can be a more truthful account of the making of a self (and the realisation of one’s agency).

These four pillars are also crucial to musical formation in any culture and context – a drum circle, a choir, a school recorder group, a professional jazz quartet, a symphony orchestra, a Balinese gamelan, an Indian classical music ensemble – all need to offer safe spaces, exercise of agency, interperson-al relationships and the opportunity for people to change their minds about who they want to be musically. So for those suffering from mental distress, music-making is not only ‘part of’ recovery – it is a spiritual (but not necessarily religious) act of recovery – and thus a critical part of the journey from an imagined reality to a reality-in-itself where agency is restored and hope is more than a fantasy.

African, African-Caribbean and African-American men represent the largest demographic amongst statutory mental health service users in the English-speaking West. Between 2016-2018 researchers from the universities of Royal Holloway and Leeds Beckett undertook an AHRC-funded study investigating the prospects for leveraging social/community concepts/processes specifically for Black men in recovery from mental distress using an ‘eco-production’ model. From the data, four pillars of recovery emerged:

- Relationships
- Re(Re)negotiating Identity
- Agency
- Safe Spaces

Thinking beyond gender, culture and race: these pillars are in fact genuinely universal. The specific problems in minority communities regarding the concept of music that is not linguistically validated could well enable hope to be expressed in ways which connect cognition and emotion without the deceptive freight of language validated could well enable hope to be expressed in ways which connect cognition and emotion without the deceptive freight of language.