

PhD Trainee (Qualitative Research) - University of Toronto

Closing Date for Applications: Until the position is filled

Start Date: As early as October 13, 2020

Location: Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University of Toronto, based at 500 University Avenue in downtown Toronto

Hours: Variable; average of 12 to 15 hours per week

Length of Employment: 12 months, with possible extension

Compensation: Stipend (with T4A); currently under review, amount TBA

The Project: *Moving Beyond Inclusion: Pathways to Belonging for Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* (Short Titles: *Pathways to Belonging* or *P2B*). Please see the project website: www.pathwaystobelonging.ca

Social inclusion is a major goal for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Yet, recent research indicates that policies and programs aimed at inclusion have not had the desired or expected outcomes for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Researchers and policymakers have begun to recognize that *belonging* may be a more useful concept to consider, particularly for young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities who are leaving the education system and progressing through young adulthood, often supported primarily by family and community-based organizations. Accordingly, **the objectives of this ongoing inclusive research study are to examine: (a) how they achieve belonging or not) and; (b) how particular contexts and conditions (e.g., people, places, activities, strategies) foster and support belonging (and/or not) from the perspective of young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities themselves, family members, and community organizations.**

Previous research, the Voices of Youths project conducted by the current research team identified a theoretical framework comprising four aspects of belonging. This framework provides a foundation to build on and expand theoretical and practical knowledge about how young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities achieve belonging as well as the conditions and resources that support it from multiple perspectives. Community living for Canadian young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities currently presents several challenges for which an expanded, multi-perspective framework will provide theoretical guidance. Specifically, aging parental carers, a growing population of these young adults, and longer lifespans with complex disabilities for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities, combined with a community residential system in crisis indicate the need to better understand pathways to belonging for young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities living with their families. Research on belonging for this group, however, is quite sparse.

Existing research is limited by the use of proxy-report measures/surveys with: (a) underdeveloped and narrow conceptualizations of belonging; (b) minimal perspectives from young adults with

intellectual/developmental disabilities; and (c) measures/tools created for other populations. This body of research has also focused primarily on adults with who live in group homes, rarely including those living with family. Yet currently, most live with their families well into adulthood. **This study takes a collaborative, inclusive approach by: (a) including young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities, family members, and partners from community organizations as members of the research team, and (b) using innovative methods to ensure accessibility and active involvement for all research team members and study participants (e.g., video-recorded community-based interviews, socio-spatial mapping).** Up to forty-five participants will be recruited, 15 participants (or to saturation) from three groups: young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities (a (18-35 years) living with family, (b) family members; and (c) service providers from community organizations supporting. young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Groups (b) and (c) participate in individual, voice-recorded interviews. Young adults participate in two video-recorded sessions allowing those who communicate in different ways to respond, and also draw a personal socio-spatial map showing key people/relationships/places they associate with belonging. **The multimodal data for the three participant groups will be analyzed, using constructivist grounded theory methods, to produce a theoretical framework of pathways to belonging.**

The framework revealed by this analysis will guide/inform how to approach practical challenges for these young adults and their families. Specifically, findings will have implications for (a) researchers focused on inclusion and belonging, policymakers, community organizations, and families; (b) new community-based approaches/programs for these young adults; (c) developing inclusive research methodologies; and (d) potential applications with other marginalized groups; and (e) foregrounding the voices of young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Funding: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada (2018-2022)

Trainee Position Description and Responsibilities:

This training opportunity is intended to complement the nature of the PhD trainee's thesis research and augment courses taken in theory and methods and specialized courses (e.g., related to young adulthood, disability studies). Ongoing training will make a valuable contribution to their PhD work and help prepare the trainee for postdoctoral work and an academic career through development of qualitative research skills, participation in multiple stages of research under supervision, and experience with innovative and inclusive methods.

The PhD trainee will:

- have ongoing training related to the research as well as meet regularly with and be supervised by the principal investigator throughout the project.
- be oriented in detail to the research and its specific methods and read literature related to the research
- participate in recruitment, arranging appointments and collecting data from participants; make field notes; and qualitative data analysis supported by NVivo software
- participate in regular project and team meetings
- participate in knowledge mobilization/dissemination, for example through: national/international conference presentations; writing manuscript(s) (with authorship) for

peer-reviewed journal(s); preparation of project reports; creating a short film/video and graphic novella on findings; involvement in a public forum

PhD Trainee Qualifications:

- Must be registered full-time in a PhD program (e.g., disability studies, equity studies, social justice, rehabilitation sciences, occupational science, bioethics, nursing, social work, psychology, education or other related disciplines).
- Preferably engaged in doctoral work related to individuals with intellectual/ developmental disabilities or other disabilities
- Have a strong interest in and experience (e.g., through paid or voluntary work or other sustained experience) with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Have a good understanding of qualitative methodology and hands-on experience with qualitative data analysis
- Be familiar with inclusive and participatory methods and critical disability theory.
- Be willing to engage in all stages of the research process, including REB submissions, literature reviews, interviewing (virtual only, at present) and data collection, data analysis using NVivo software), and knowledge mobilization/dissemination

Length of traineeship: The trainee will have an initial 12-month contract beginning as early as October 2020, with the possible extension (length of time TBD).

To Apply: Please contact Dr. Rebecca Renwick, Principal Investigator, at r.renwick@utoronto.ca
Please attach a cover letter, current cv, and names of and contact information for three academic and professional references.