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Community and Residential Integration, and Paid Employment Go Hand-In-Hand — A Collaborative Inquiry

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Abstract

The process of community and residential integration has been the subject of many inquiries since deinstitutionalization started becoming popular in the world's richer nations. This study involved adults with intellectual disabilities who were implicated in LiveWorkPlay's programs in Ottawa. Five adults with intellectual disabilities were recruited for this collaborative action research. For this study I used a collection of tools, which have been designed to involve participants in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. Findings show that for our participants, obtaining paid employment is a major priority in community and residential integration process. Several suggestions are made for future research, such as conducting process-driven studies and involving participants in all phases of the research process.

Résumé

Depuis que la désinstitutionalisation gagne du terrain dans les pays les plus riches du monde, les processus d'intégration communautaire et residentielle attirent l'attention de plusieurs. Dans cette étude, je me suis penchée sur le cas d'un groupe d'adultes inscrits aux programmes de l'organisme à but non-lucratif LiveWorkPlay, situé dans la capitale nationale canadienne. Cinq adultes aux prises avec une déficience intellectuelle ont participé à notre recherche-action collaborative. J'ai utilisé des outils de recherche-action collaborative élaborés et façonnés dans le but d'impliquer les participants dans la collecte, l'analyse et l'interprétation des données. Les résultats dévoilent que pour nos participants, le fait d'obtenir un travail rémunéré représente une priorité dans le processus d'intégration communautaire et résidentielle. Pour terminer, je suggère plusieurs pistes pour des recherches futures. Entre autres, il serait fort à propos de mener d'autres études qui visent le processus plutôt que le produit, en impliquant les participants à tous les stades de la recherche pour qu'ils puissent en tirer profit.

For humans, living in one's own place and getting paid employment are necessities for an emancipated adult life. These necessities are the same for adults with intellectual

disabilities (ID), who despite the challenge, feel the need to become full-fledged citizens. For over thirty years, deinstitutionalization has led researchers to study different residential and community living options. However, there are very few studies that have examined the question from an insider's perspective. Beyond living in one's own apartment and participating in community life, what exactly does it mean to go through the process of community and residential integration? This is the question I asked in this collaborative action research.

Contemporary Issues

Deinstitutionalization, Quality of Life, Support and Intervention

Although there has been a phenomenal amount of knowledge generated during more than a quarter century of research in the field of deinstitutionalization, there is still much to be done to further understand the dynamics of their community and residential integration. The intense public debates and controversies surrounding housing options for people with ID are far from resolved (Davidson, 2003). One option is "cluster housing"—segregating people with ID into clusters of houses located close together with little yard space and a large common area, rather than each house having a large yard. Even though many argue that cluster housing provides a "connected" community of people with ID, some studies show they offer a poorer quality of life than dispersed housing schemes. In a recent study, Emerson (2004) pointed out that people who lived in cluster housing in Northern England were supported by fewer staff, were exposed to greater changes and inconsistencies in living arrangements and to more restrictive management practices. These constraints led people with ID into living sedentary lives, being underweight, and participating in a restricted range of leisure, social, and friendship activities. However, several similar research studies commented on the failure of dispersed housing (living in individual houses located throughout the community rather than in housing schemes or clusters exclusively for people with ID) to offer affordable living arrangements and a better quality of life (Cox & Pearson, 1995; Cummins & Lau, 2003; Jackson, 1996). Likewise, we recall Conroy, Spreat, Tuskauskus & Elks' (2003) highly criticized conclusions that people living in community-based homes had increased skills, were more integrated with their communities, and received more services (Conroy, Spreat, Yuskaskus, & Elks, 2003). Another team that studied the meaning of homeownership for adults with developmental disabilities found that "Although the process of purchasing the home was described as lengthy and difficult and ownership brought unexpected problems, these were outweighed by the financial, social, and psychological benefits of owning one's own home" (Hagner, Snow, & Klein, 2006, p. 295). Their study also highlighted the need for individuals with ID to have trusted allies who can fill in the gaps for the decisions they cannot make on their own. As mentioned by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), these individuals need a balance between formal and informal support.

Regardless of the housing option adopted, there are still many urgent questions to examine. Among these questions, are the issues of provision of support and of approaches to interventions with these individuals (Felce, 2006).

Self-Advocacy and Decision Making

Self-advocacy is challenging for any institution working with people with ID (Beart, Hardy, & Buchan, 2004; Bramley & Elkins, 1988; Jingree, Finlay, & Antaki, 2006; Wolfensberger, 1977), for many of the same reasons that deinstitutionalization has been found to be challenging. Self-advocacy involves a shift in ownership and control of information from the institution to the individuals served by the institution. Bramley and Elkins (1988) observed that because of a desire for efficiency, organizations that serve people with ID often fail to encourage or permit those with disabilities to develop the necessary skills to assert control over their own lives. Other researchers point out that advisors often lack the necessary skills to conduct self-advocacy groups (Beart, Hardy, & Buchan, 2004; Jingree, Finlay, & Antaki, 2006). This is what Antaki, Finlay, Sheridan, Jingree & Walton (2006) have described as the "short-circuiting style," (p. 340) where facilitators, in an attempt to animate the discussion and guide the participants to a desired conclusion,

pre-empt the description of possible problems, reduce the alternative solutions, and move quickly to propose and decide on actions that fitted the institutional agenda. Antaki et al. (2006) contrasted this with the "guidance style," (p. 340) in which the facilitator initiate the following decision-making cycle: statement of a problem, expression or reaction to it, expression of preference or change, and suggestions for action to bring out that change. Yet, through this style, the same authors found that "it was the facilitator who drove the proceedings, not the group member" (Antaki et al., 2006, p. 324).

Leading self-advocacy groups is not an easy task, but institutions could have more success in putting the emphasis on the process of decision-making, rather than on the outcome of decision-making. This suggests focusing the intervention on an authentic problem faced by people with ID rather than focusing on the product of decision-making emerging from a situation imposed by the facilitator.

Access to Employment

Access to paid employment is one of the most important factors for the social integration and well-being of adults with ID (EUMAP, 2009; Eggleton, Robertson, Ryan, & Kober, 1999). Over the past decade, many studies that have been conducted to understand how people with ID experience employment came to the conclusion that employment is difficult to get and to keep. For instance, Rose, Saunders, Hensel, and Kroese (2005), who studied factors affecting the likelihood that people with ID gain employment, suggested that employment agencies put a greater emphasis on motivation to increase the chances that they find work. Indeed, individuals who are intrinsically motivated to find work tend to be more successful at find employment and retaining it. Stephens, Collins, & Doddler, (2005) found that individuals with ID who had employment demonstrated better adaptive skills, which enhanced the community living success level. Likewise, Robinson (2000) found that paid employment had a positive impact on self-esteem and quality of life.

While all of these studies contributed to our knowledge base in terms of access to employment for people with ID, we were not able to find a study that looked at the thinking processes of people with ID about getting and keeping paid employment. This influenced my choice to conduct an inductive study that started with the situation in which adults with ID live in the Ottawa area.

Local Context

Despite the growing popularity of the Self-Advocacy Movement (Antaki, Finlay, Sheridan, Jingree & Walton, 2006; Blake, 2004; Goodley, 2000) and deinstitutionalization in many industrialized countries (Chenoweth, 1998; Tabatabainia, 2003), there is still much to be done to integrate persons with ID in our society. In Canada, despite many programs attempting to integrate people with ID in the community, problems still persist, particularly with respect to the housing problem we are presently facing. To address the housing problem, in 2004 the Ontario Provincial Government invested "up to $110 million over the next four years to strengthen community-based services, including nearly $70 million to create new places to live for adults with a developmental disability who will be leaving provincially-operated institutions" (Government of Ontario, 2004, p. 1). However, despite governmental efforts to invest in housing across Canada, other problems are surfacing in major cities. For example, the "City of Ottawa's public housing corporation has dozens of buildings in disrepair and total maintenance and renovation backlog estimated at $600 million" (Rupert, 2008, p. 1) and there are almost 10,000 families on a waiting list for rent-geared-to-income housing (City of Ottawa, 2008). For people living with ID who were never institutionalized, the waiting time is indefinite.

Luckily, some organizations provide programs that people can attend daily. One such organization in the Ottawa area is the LiveWorkPlay (LWP, 2009) charitable organization. LWP serves more than 50 families that include a person with mild or moderate intellectual disabilities, aiming to enhance their quality of life. Their programs serve different age groups: Self-Advocacy and More for Independent Living and Employment (SMILE) is for adults 21 and over; Active Community Experience in the Summer (ACES) is for youth from 13 to 21; and, Journeys is a Friday evening program that takes place during the school year. LWP's mission is the following: "People with

intellectual disabilities will progress as self-advocates and contributing citizens while the organization ensures a high level of financial and moral accountability, transparency, and efficiency" (LWP, 2009).

In response to the housing problem for their clients, LWP decided to by-pass the government-sponsored subsidized housing route and proceeded with their own Housing project. In 2003 and 2004, the organization announced the "On Our Own Together" (OOOT and OOOT2) pilot projects. During the OOOT project ten adults with ID were able to live in a university residence for one month with 24 hours supervision. Following this successful experience, 14 young adults participated to a second project, named OOOT2, in the same residence for a period of two months, this time with minimal supervision. While both pilot projects were successful in many respects, certain problems suggested that the individuals required structured accompaniment. For example, some participants watched TV excessively or talked on the phone for countless hours, while others had problems with personal hygiene and basic daily living skills (Davidson, Leblanc, Leno, Clément, Godbout, Moldoveannu, Payeur, & Turcotte, 2004). Some overconfident participants refused to ask or receive help; nevertheless, it was found that these problems could have been overcome by learning problem solving processes (Davidson et al., 2004). Inspired by the success of these pilot projects, and aware of possible problems, LWP decided to move on with a full-fledged housing project. This project would provide condo units in which participants could live in pairs. The housing project also included a transitional suite for new participants in need of learning what the OOOT project had to offer. These transitional suites could accommodate two participants who wanted to live on their own for a trial period of two months.

At the beginning of this study, 14 adults moved out of their family homes, into their condos. Therefore, this study comes within the scope of the "Housing" project, during which participants are going through a residential and community integration process. This study aimed to empower participants by giving them the control and ownership of the information they generated, while also building meaning through interpreting the analysis they did. Therefore, I used a process-oriented method rather than a product-oriented protocol. This project was approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee

Method

I have shadowed LWP residential integration projects since 2004. The knowledge gained from the challenges participants face in the community and residential integration process justified the use of a collaborative action research model. This approach fosters a balance between action, research and training that could generate better outcomes than any other approach to research.

The values underlying this study required a protocol that would enable the participants to learn through the research process. Participants had to be actively involved not only in elaborating the problems studied, but also in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. This methodological challenge required a paradigmatic shift so that I could report it as a collaborative research, and experience it as a collaborative action research.

Action research is defined as research in which the validity and value of research are tested through collaborative insider-professional researcher knowledge generation and application processes in projects of social change that aim to increase fairness, wellness, and self-determination (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Action research practices involve collaborative dialogue, participatory decision-making, inclusive democratic deliberation, and the maximal participation and representation of all relevant parties (Ryan & Destefano, 2000). During the research process, the action researcher helps transform inquiry into action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Thus, in collaborative action research, participants must become stakeholders, while the research strives to solve real problems and promotes positive social change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

To be true to this purpose, I used a collection of tools and software tools from the Social Analysis Systems[2] (Chevalier & Buckles, 2008). SAS[2] tools have been specifically designed to broaden and deepen diagnostic thinking about

real-life situations so that the people involved may creatively solve problems and increase the effectiveness of decision-making. Moreover, SAS² tools facilitate collaborative thinking as well as collective diagnostic activities and group decision-making. I needed a non-linear research design so I could conduct this inquiry within the evolving context in which the adults with ID were living. I also needed an iterative research design to clarify the purpose of the inquiry within the long-term goal of residential integration. For more information on SAS² tools, see Davidson (2009) in the previous issue of this journal. In order to understand how results were obtained using a collaborative approach, many methodological details are included in the results section.

The following section presents the participants, the data collection settings, and the instruments used for this inquiry.

Participants

For this collaborative action research, I recruited adults with ID as co-researchers. The participants attended the SMILE (self-advocacy and more for independent living and employment) adult services program. All the participants had a diagnosis of mild or moderate ID before the age of 18. I recruited participants by inviting them to voluntarily sign-up for a problem solving session with me, whom they already knew from the OOOT projects. The session was presented as one option among others that would be part of the regular SMILE program and weekly activities. The findings reported in this article correspond to the first month of my study.

A total of five participants signed up for the problem solving session, in which they were to act as co-researchers on problems they were experiencing in their daily lives. The group was composed of two women and three men, with a median age of 24 years. Among those who participated in the sessions three lived with their parents, one lived in a group home and another lived in a condo. Regarding their employment, one participant did not have outside work, one did volunteer work, two had part-time remunerated jobs and one had part-time and volunteer work. Participants' characteristics are displayed in the table below.

Instruments

Basic SAS² tools (Chevalier & Buckles, 2008), such as Freelisting, Sorting, Rating, and Ranking were used. Essentially, all these methods have one goal: to organize elements. The Freelisting technique "helps you create and organize the elements of a list, identify those that are the most important (using your own criteria), and compare results of different lists" (Chevalier & Buckles, 2008). The Sorting technique "allows you to organize the elements of a list into categories by looking at the similarities between elements" (Chevalier & Buckles, 2008). The Rating technique "helps you organize elements in a hierarchy, using one or several criteria and giving scores or values that may be the same for some elements" (Chevalier & Buckles, 2008). The Ranking technique "helps you develop order within a hierarchy, from first to last, using one or several criteria and giving scores or values that are different for each option" (Chevalier & Buckles, 2008). I also employed an Activity Map (see Chevalier & Buckles, 2008) and a repertory

Table 1. Participant characteristics

*Name**	*Age*	*Gender*	*Current living conditions*	*Employment*
Matt	21	M	Lives with parents	None
Chloe	22	F	Lives with parents	Volunteer
Peter	30	M	Lives with parents	Part time remunerated job
Judy	24	F	Lives in a group home	Part time remunerated job
Charles	29	M	Owns a condo with brother	Volunteer and part time remunerated job

**pseudonyms*

grid for a Domain Analysis (see Chevalier & Buckles, 2008). These two more advanced techniques rely on SAS² basic tools and are used to identify and characterize priorities with people with ID as co-researchers.

SAS² tools were used for several reasons. First, they provided dialogue tools for our participants who were not used to giving their point of view. Second, because these tools required all participants to write or draw elements of their experience on index cards during the data collection process, they fostered a democratic dialogue within the group where everyone had an equal opportunity to talk. Third, these tools provided participants with the means to list, organize and prioritize their experiences. To reflect the highly collaborative nature of this study, several methodological precisions are given in the findings section, as they were presented to the participants. In addition, because of the nature of this research, techniques were not preselected. We had to wait until problems emerged before making decisions about which technique to use. One technique led to another by following the evolution of the research, as problems emerged and participants learned about the technique during the data collection process.

Researcher Bias

It is important to point out that I knew some of the LWP clients from my previous experience in the On Our Own Together project. My previous knowledge helped understand their problems better and to choose collaborative tools that would be useful to work in conjunction with the LWP current goals of self-advocacy and residential and community integration.

Findings

The following section presents the data that emerged from the use of SAS² tools in the context of the "Housing" project with SMILE participants, voiced in a first person narrative to reflect the highly collaborative nature of this study.

Elaboration of an Activity Map

We initiated our study by discussing the LWP Housing project with my co-researchers. In a brainstorming session, they listed activities by writing or drawing activities they participated in at LWP on index cards (see the Freelisting technique), and placing them in the middle of the table. Once we completed 15 activities, I asked my co-researchers if they were able to organize the activities they listed into sets and subsets (see the Sorting technique). Once the initial list was elaborated, we grouped activities, gave them titles, and made level 1, 2 and 3 bubbles (see Figure 1). The co-researchers were impressed with the number of activities they did. The group then prioritized their activities as either level 1 (very high importance), level 2 (high importance) or level 3 priorities (moderate importance) (see Figure 1). The group identified four level 1 priorities: how to get a job; how to get used to a new job; how to budget and how to get up on time. After the map was completed, I informed my co-researchers that activities could be added to the map at any given time if ever they thought of future relevant information.

The highlight of the discussion was about acquiring paid employment, yet knowing how to keep their job was also very important. Charles said "You know, everything we learn here is to be able to live on our own, but living on your own without a job doesn't feel right. And you know, once you have a good job, you have to do it right so you keep it." Charles, Peter and Judy all had paid work, while Chloe volunteered at OC Transpo and Meals on Wheels. Matt did not have a job, but mentioned he would like to have one. Over all, the critical priority was to work on a strategy to obtain, adapt and keep paid jobs. Charles stated "Working for a pay-check is not like volunteering. You can't sit on your arse waiting for somebody to tell you what to do." He then added "Matt, you're what? 22 almost? I think it's about time you get a job. Remember you said you had a hard time waking up? That'll kick you out of bed in the morning"! Charles was referring to Matt's comment on his work placement while still in high school. Matt had said "he didn't do well because he couldn't wake up in the morning." Given these arguments, the issue surrounding paid employment became our collaborative research question.

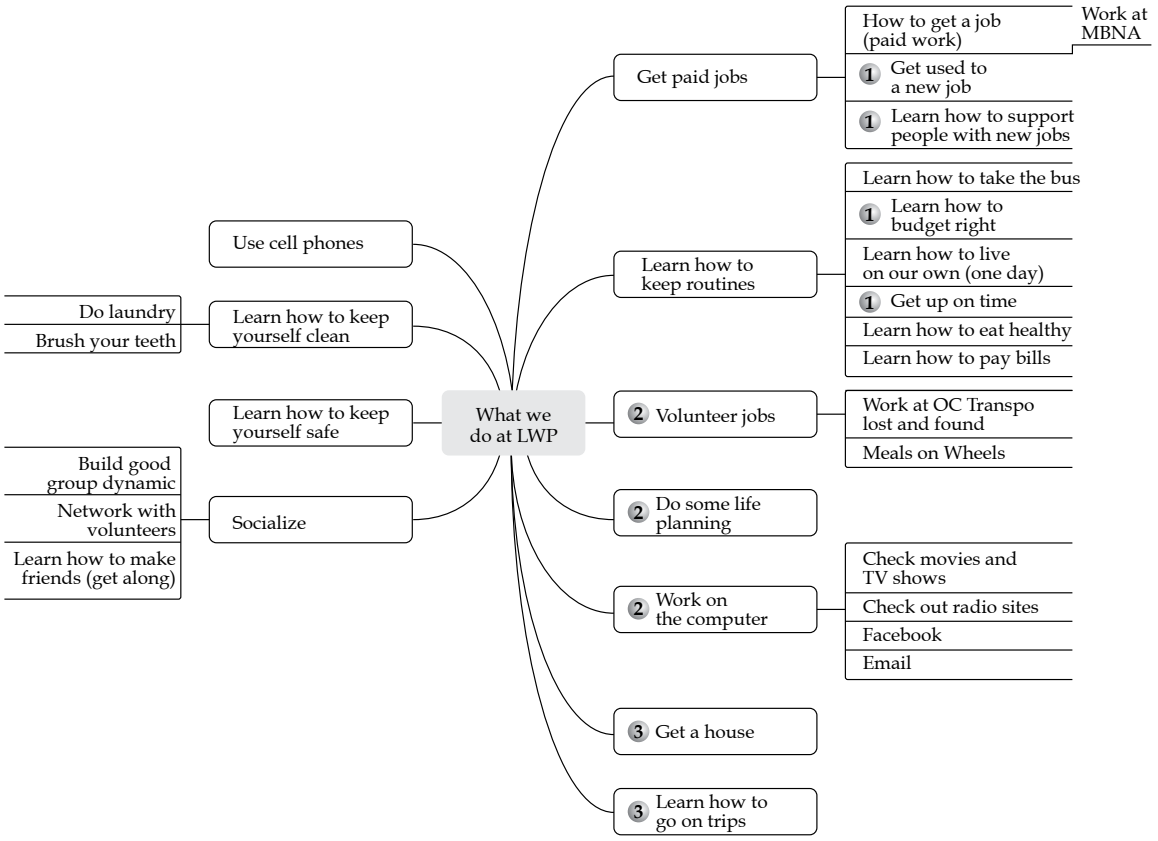

Figure 1. Activity Map

Ranking

Losing a job was a major concern for participants and many felt like job loss often came as a surprise. I asked them if they could identify causes for losing a job. They vaguely pointed out they could steal money or be impolite with the customers. I explained that these were good "sabotage strategies," and to keep a job they simply had to do the opposite. This led us to generate a list of things to do to keep our jobs (see Table 2). The group brainstormed ideas on what to do to keep their jobs and wrote them down on index cards. We tried to identify the most important thing to do to keep jobs, but could not reach a consensus. To identify differences in the group, I laid the cards in a row and wrote everyone's name in the first column on the left. I asked everyone to rate the cards by using a numeric value in the following manner: 1 = very important; 2 = more or less important; 3 = not really important.

Once we finished elaborating the rating grid, we counted the columns and put the cards in order by rating. We then spent some time grasping the meaning of the rating grid. When I asked the group to interpret the grid, Chloe said "I think that keeping your cool and keeping clean are the most important things." Everybody agreed, but Charles stated "Well, it depends where you are! For me, I have to clean toilets because I have a building maintenance job, but for someone who doesn't clean toilets, that doesn't matter." Charles then pointed out how Matt rated the card "Set an alarm clock" and said "Matt, you know, if you don't wake up on time, you'll never keep your job. You have problems with that. That's why you put a 1 there and the others didn't." We concluded our analysis and interpretation by stating that the first four cards were the most important: keep your cool; keep clean; be discreet; help the customer." However, the group added that depending on the personality and on what kind of work one had, the order could change. Peter asked Matt

Table 2. What we have to do to keep our jobs.

Names	*Keep your cool*	*Keep clean*	*Be discreet*	*Help the customer*	*Be honest*	*Set an alarm clock*	*Have basic knowledge*	*Clean washrooms*	*Say you're interested and your want to do your job right*
Charles	1	2	1	2	3	2	3	1	3
Matt	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	3	3
Judy	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	3
Chloe	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3
Peter	1	1	3	1	3	2	2	3	2
Total	**5**	**6**	**9**	**9**	**11**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**

and Chloe what kind of jobs they would like to have. Matt had no idea and although Chloe wanted to work with computers, she did not really know what she could do in a paid job.

Listing

Following this discussion, in a further meeting, we searched the Internet and identified 21 jobs that people with ID can aspire to and we wrote them on index cards. These included retail jobs (sales personnel, store clerk, grocery attendant, baker, store attendant); administrative jobs (mail clerk, photocopy operator, data entry clerk, library assistant); cleaning jobs (cleaning tables and trays at the cafeteria, housekeeper, laundry worker); service jobs (hospital attendant, animal caretaker, messengers, kitchen work); and industry jobs (manufacturing, factory worker, assembler).

Once we had this list, I spread the cards on a table and asked if the group knew what these jobs were and if they wanted such jobs. We went through the list and eliminated all manufacturing and assembly jobs such as factory worker, because of a lack of factories in Ottawa. Charles commented "Assemble what? This is an office town." As for the other jobs, we eliminated kitchen work and library assistant. In their words, the group said these were not "nice jobs" and nobody wanted to "work in a place where they didn't get treated right." Many mentioned that they knew about people who had "crazy" experiences working in the restaurant business. As for being library assistants, one could infer that they were adverse to the idea because they did not enjoy reading. This analysis led to reducing the list to 15 jobs in retail (sales personnel, store clerk, grocery attendant, baker, store attendant); administration (mail clerk, photocopy operator, data entry clerk, library assistant); cleaning (cleaning tables and trays at the cafeteria, housekeeper, laundry worker); and service (hospital attendant, animal caretaker, messengers, kitchen work).

Sorting

Following the listing exercise, I asked the group if they knew what it meant to be employed as sales personnel. They said it was "like working in stores, selling stuff," so we decided to put these two jobs together. They also said "being hospital attendants was not really doing hospital work like healing people, but it had to do with cleaning work so it should go under building maintenance." The same phenomenon occurred when I asked my co-researchers about laundry work and housekeeping. I asked them if these cards should be called "cleaning work," but they preferred the term "building maintenance" because it sounded better. For the remainder, they said "grocery clerk and cafeteria work weren't the same because when they referred to a grocery clerk, it was someone working in the bakery for example, and cafeteria work was about cleaning trays and tables."

Construct Analysis

Following the sorting exercise, we were left with eight jobs people with ID could aspire to. I placed those cards down on the floor and used the construct analysis procedure. Through the process of triadic elicitation, (choosing three cards randomly, uncovering similarities between two cards and asking why the third is different) we were able to find out the group's underlying polarized characterizations of these jobs. The characterizations, called constructs, emerged as follows: food work vs. office work; working with people vs. working with computers; moving around vs. meeting new people; like it for the people vs. like it for the money; cleaning jobs vs. delivery jobs. We then elaborated a repertory grid by using the two poles of each construct in a semantic differentiation scale by giving a score to each card ranging from 1 to 5. Figure 2 shows that some ratings could not be placed in the repertory grid because some jobs did not fit with identified constructs. Briefly, this grid has three parts. At the bottom, it shows the jobs listed while on both sides of the grid, we see both poles of the constructs. The middle of the grid shows the ratings that were given to each job, with regards to the corresponding constructs.

A principal component analysis generated through the RepGrid software reveals that the variance between jobs and job characteristics suggest four clusters. In Figure 3 we see four distinct clusters emerging. Cluster A groups *Grocery clerks* as jobs where you would go *Meet new people* and do *Food work*. Cluster B groups jobs as *Messengers* and *Data entry clerical work* as jobs you *Like for the money*, and jobs that mean *Working with computers* and doing *Delivery*. Cluster C groups *Cafeteria* and *Building maintenance* as jobs that mean *Cleaning, Working with people* and that are *Liked for the people*. Cluster D groups together *Animal caretaker*, *Mail clerks* and *Sales personnel* and characterizes them as jobs requiring *Moving around*.

Discussing this graphic with the participants, they interpreted clusters B and C using their own experiences. Regarding cluster B, Chloe said "It's true, I would really like to be a data entry clerk because I like working with computers and it pays well." Similarly, Judy said "I want to be a messenger because I like making cash to buy things I like." Regarding cluster C, Charles and Peter both said that "they liked their jobs because they were people oriented." Charles added "You meet really crazy people sometimes"! As for clusters A and D, the group was only able to comment on some friends' experiences since they had never

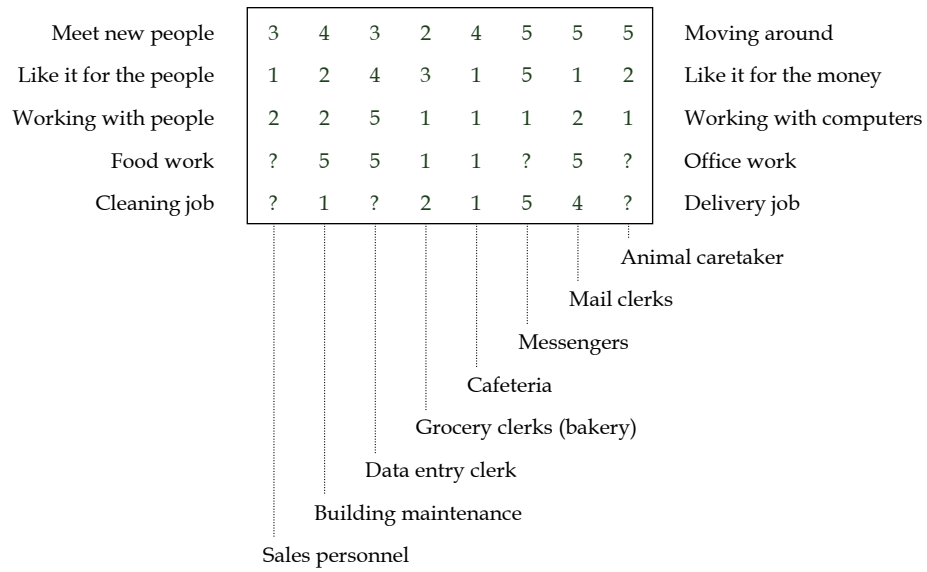

Figure 2. Repertory grid of job characteristics

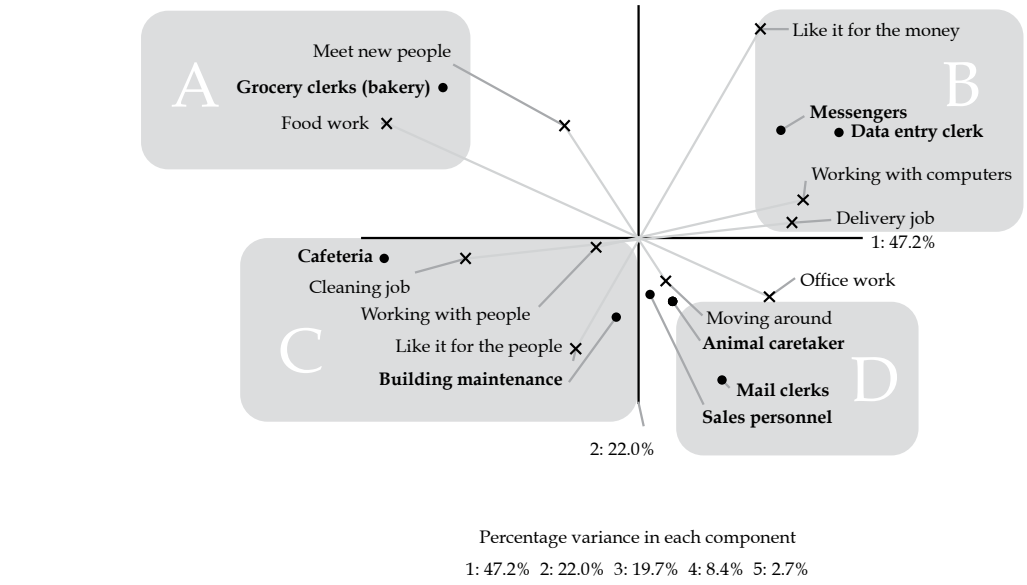

Figure 3. Cluster analysis of job characteristics

had these types of jobs. Chloe mentioned that some guys she knew worked in a mailroom and it paid really good money.

In light of this analysis, I asked my co-researchers if they thought it was possible for them to apply for these jobs. Most of them said that one either had to know someone to get a job or it had to be an organization with which LWP could establish an agreement. When I asked if anyone knew how to get a job even if they didn't know anybody, Charles said: "You have to have a CV." Peter added: "Yes. You have to write M.A. or B.A. on it. That's the best way to get a job." However, most of them did not feel like they could write anything relevant on it and the discussion created a high level of anxiety. I asked the group if they could think of an alternative to writing a CV and they said that they could make "videos of what we can do and [show] the videos. But we have to ask the staff for help." Learning how to make a video appeared to be an avenue to pursue. They were all very enthusiastic about this option.

Discussion and Conclusions

During the early stages of this collaborative action research, participants described the activities they did at LWP and identified one priority: to get and keep paid jobs. For them, the meaning of community and residential integration had evolved into the need to obtain remunerated employment. In fact, the parallel was so prominent that I wondered if the two concepts should not go together hand-in-hand. On numerous occasions, I told my co-researchers that they could modify the initial priority they had identified in the Activity Map. However, they never changed their mind. Of course, they agreed that there were many things to think about when living outside their parents' home or preparing to do so, but the most important and most pressing need was to obtain a job and make money.

Coherence With Previous Research

After decades of studying the process of deinstitutionalization, researchers have explored several problems, which emerged during such initiatives. During the pilot housing projects with LWP, we identified several problems such as the overconfidence of many participants, the lack of problem solving procedures, the excessive time spent watching TV and the dependency on telecommunication technologies (Davidson et al., 2004). These problems persist. However, in a collaborative reflection, participants identified more pressing problems in dealing with their

community and residential integration, such as the need to make money instead of doing only voluntary work. To them, getting a job legitimizes them as successful and contributing citizens.

Bearing this in mind, the co-researchers confirmed their need for support in solving ongoing issues arising from daily challenges. They need support from professionals, but also from other members of the community such as friends, colleagues, employers and family. This supports Felce's conclusion according to which "Developing a greater understanding of which factors within which types of provision arrangements promote which quality of life outcomes is essential if people with ID are to have the opportunity to lead more fulfilling and desirable lives than they do currently" (Felce, 2006, p. 381). It is also coherent with Turnbull and Turnbull's (2001) conclusion regarding a need for proper balance between formal and informal support.

Implications for Practice

The aim of this study was not an argument in favour of community and residential integration, nor was it to argue that LWP's approach to the housing project allowed participants to receive more services and develop more skills. The intent was strictly to promote problem solving on daily issues in a collaborative manner. The conduct of this study also gave us an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the insiders' experiences of going through a community and residential integration process. With this in mind, I would recommend that organizations, professionals and staff learn to take advantage of collaborative action research tools when facilitating self-advocacy groups and offering support to their clients. Along with other conventional research instruments, the use of such methods could help provide their perspectives on any issue together with a more accurate diagnosis of their support needs. This would not only be a step forward in terms of self-advocacy group facilitation, but could also contribute to constructing a better dialogue between university researchers and community organizations.

In retrospect, people with ID who participated in this study claimed to have enjoyed working with index cards, as they felt they all had their say in the process. To some extent, it supported a more symmetrical research relationship between the co-researchers and helped the principal researcher anchor the sessions in real problems. Antaki, Finlay, Sheridan, Jingree and Walton (2006) found that facilitators tend to either guide too much by driving the proceedings or short-circuit the conversations by reducing the amount of decisions participants can take so they fit the institutional agenda. In the face of such challenge, the use of collaborative action research tools elaborated by SAS² offered facilitation mechanisms that favour a more democratic dialogue between the researcher and participants.

Limitations

The participants of this study were recruited at LWP and were specifically people who attended the SMILE program, and who either experienced a process of community and residential integration, or prepared to do so. Living in Canada's capital involves contextual constraints due to the cost of living, the scarcity of affordable housing and the administrative/governmental nature of the city. The city's workforce context greatly influenced the findings of our study and thus they are not fully transferable. However, Ottawa is not an isolated case and we see similar conditions in many cities across the world's richer nations. It is likely that people with light to moderate ID going through community and residential integration processes are facing similar problems.

Another limitation of this study was the difficulty participants had in voicing their problems and challenges. It took over a month of weekly meetings to put the issue of paid employment into words. However, more importantly, the constraints stemming from their actual disabilities, often related to linguistic issues, lack of confidence and self-assurance, lasted only one week as they became progressively familiar with the process of brainstorming with index cards.

Each technique used had its strengths and limitations in terms of its application with ID adults as co-researchers. On one hand, the basic SAS² tools, such as Freelisting, Sorting, Rating and Ranking, were easily understood. On the other hand, more advanced techniques

such as the Activity Mapping and the Domain Analysis required more guidance on the part of the researcher.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research using tools involving participants in the analysis and interpretation of findings in order to get first-person narratives is warranted. The collaborative action research methods used in this study also offered grounds for real collaboration in making use of the people's own language and local knowledge structures.

While I am not arguing against traditional approaches to methods, I am emphasizing that process-based research yields very different findings than product-based research, because process-based research requires continuous planning and adjustment. Therefore, as evidenced in this study, key methodological decisions such as what tools to apply, and how and when to apply them, cannot be made in advance. Thus, specific activities have to be planned as emerging problems and questions arise. Researchers who wish to conduct such collaborative action research should become familiar with the collections of tools, which have been designed for these purposes. People with ID greatly benefit from such experiences with researchers. As Chloe says: "Problem solving is not as hard as it seems. You just have to take it step-by step and when we don't know what step to take, you can figure it out with us."

Researchers dealing with deinstitutionalization should also investigate the uses of information and communication technology (ICT) in the research process to help solve problems people with ID are facing in their lives. More precisely, my future research will assess the impact of the creation of videos with the outcomes of the process of creating the videos and the impact of the videos themselves. I am aware that there are many more ICT applications than the creation of videos for self-modeling, but this is a good start on the needs identified by people with ID who are in search of a better life.

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