
Supervisor's Name	Lesley Jacobs
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Supervisor's Department	Social Science
Project Title	Evolving Legal Services: Measuring Impact on Access to Justice

Description of Research Project (1500 characters maximum)

Canadian jurisdictions, including Ontario and British Columbia (BC), are increasingly exploring and relying on limited legal assistance programs as a method of providing legal services to people who cannot afford legal services. Increased rationing of publicly-funded legal services has meant that public legal education and information ("PLEI"), either on its own or in conjunction with other unbundled legal services, is required to fill an increasingly larger role in meeting the legal needs of poor people and people with modest means. Yet we know relatively little about the extent to which PLEI is an effective legal service: for what types of clients, for which kinds of legal problems, and in which circumstances, can PLEI provide the most robust assistance.

The Evolving Legal Services Research Project focuses on the experiences of 600 Canadians in Ontario and BC with family or rental housing problems who relied on legal information. The project followed these Canadians on their legal journeys over three years from the Spring of 2014 until the Autumn of 2017. The research design uses a mixed methodology and includes two subsets of participants who were involved in a randomized control trial. (This is the first RCT in legal services undertaken in Canada.) The findings are interpreted within a theoretical framework of meaningful access to justice (which is explained in terms of six important pillars.)

Undergraduate Student Responsibilities (1500 characters maximum)

The student will work with the supervisor on (a) organizing the data in each of the participant's files; (b) applying the innovative research methodology to assess each of the participant's files; (c) writing up some of the findings with the supervisor in the form of a conference or workshop paper; and (d) co-presenting with the supervisor the paper at a conference or workshop.

Qualifications Required (750 characters maximum)

The student should:

- (a) be an advanced law & society major, with a particular interest in socio-legal research methods;
 - (b) experience visiting and observing in courts and legal services
 - (c) have strong writing skills
 - (d) have a willingness to be trained in a quantitative research methods such as SPSS through the Institute for Social Research;
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