

Family perspectives on belonging pathways for disabled young adults

A new theoretical framework

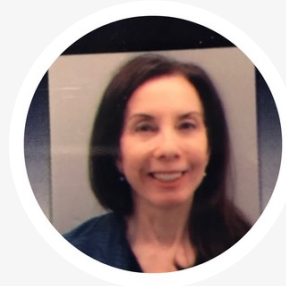
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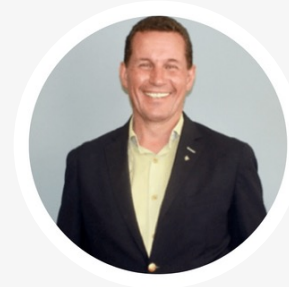
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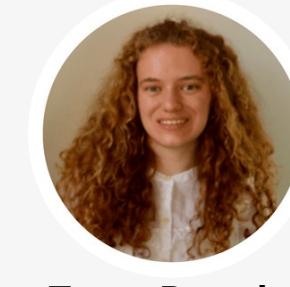
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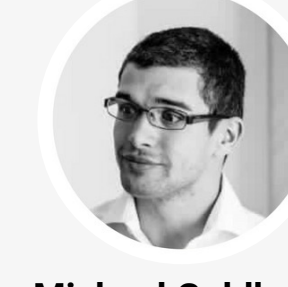
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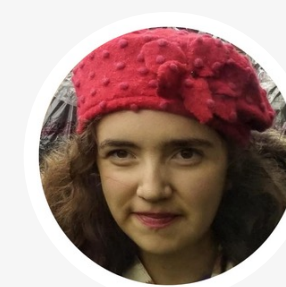
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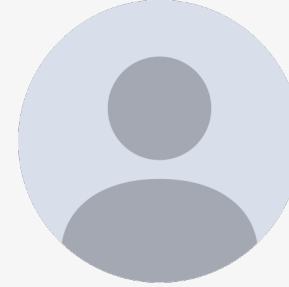
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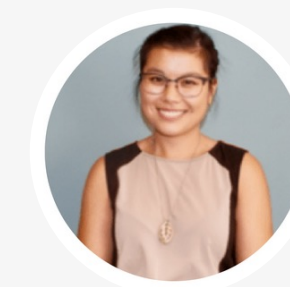
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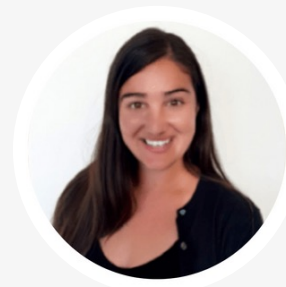
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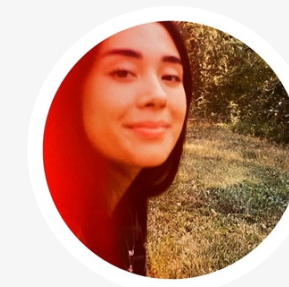
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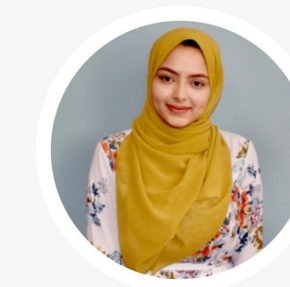
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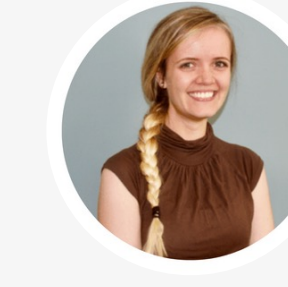
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Why study belonging?



- **Problem:** Narrow conceptualizations of social inclusion have led to young adults' physical presence in community life (Power, 2013).
- **Gap:** Research points to a sense of belonging as critical to meaningful engagement in community life (Hall, 2010; Power, 2013; Renwick et al., 2019)
- There is limited research on how belonging happens from the perspective of young adults or the people who support them.
- Family members play important roles in the lives of young adults (DuBois et al., 2020). Their perspectives can enhance or inform the development of programs and supports to foster and support belonging.



Research Question

- Focuses on partial data from a larger, grounded theory research project, Pathways to Belonging
- Focuses on how belonging happens (or not) for young adults from multiple perspectives



How does belonging happen (and/or not) for young adults **from the perspectives of family members** who support them?

Method

Approaches

- Inclusive research
- Constructivist grounded theory

Data collection

- Community organizations in the Greater Toronto Area
- Individual in-depth interviews (in-person/online)

Data analysis

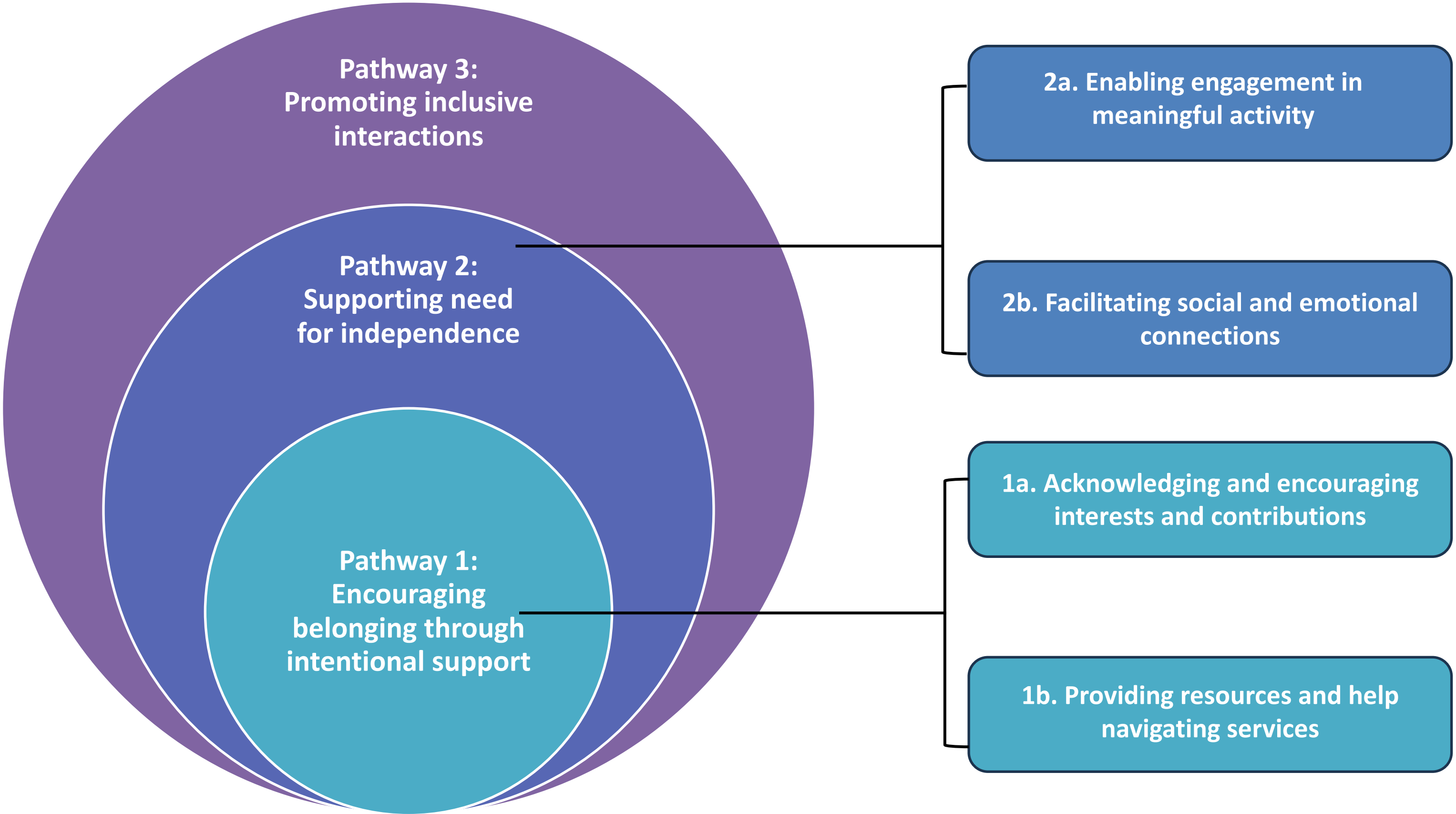
- Constant comparison
- Iterative coding
- Co-created categories and sub-categories identified

Demographics



- **15 family members** living in a large metropolitan area in Ontario, Canada
 - Mother - 11
 - Father - 1
 - Sibling - 2
 - Aunt - 1
- **Family members age range:** 35 to 70
- **10 family members live with their young adult.**
- **Range of racial and cultural backgrounds** (e.g., White, Canadian Chinese, East Indian, Italian, Dominican, etc.)
- **Annual household income:**
 - over at least 100,000 CAD/year (n = 6)
 - Between 60,000 and 90,000 CAD/year (n = 3)
 - between 30,000 and 60,000 CAD/year (n = 5)
- **Young adults age range:** 21 to 33
- **Range of diagnostic labels** in terms of young adult they support (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, trisomy disorders)

Pathways to Belonging



Pathway 3:
Promoting inclusive interactions

Pathway 2:
Supporting need for independence

Pathway 1:
Encouraging belonging through intentional support

2a. Enabling engagement in meaningful activity

2b. Facilitating social and emotional connections

1a. Acknowledging and encouraging interests and contributions

1b. Providing resources and help navigating services

Pathway 1: Encouraging belonging through intentional support

1a. Acknowledging and encouraging interests and contributions



“[...] and the other point that he feels [that he really belongs] is let’s say like on a weekend, his father turns 70 and he did a whole video [...] on his own. I supported him here and there and so he’s sharing that video with his cousins and with my sister and my brothers, and everyone is saying, ‘Oh this is marvelous,’ that he feels like he belongs and that he’s valued.” – FMF6

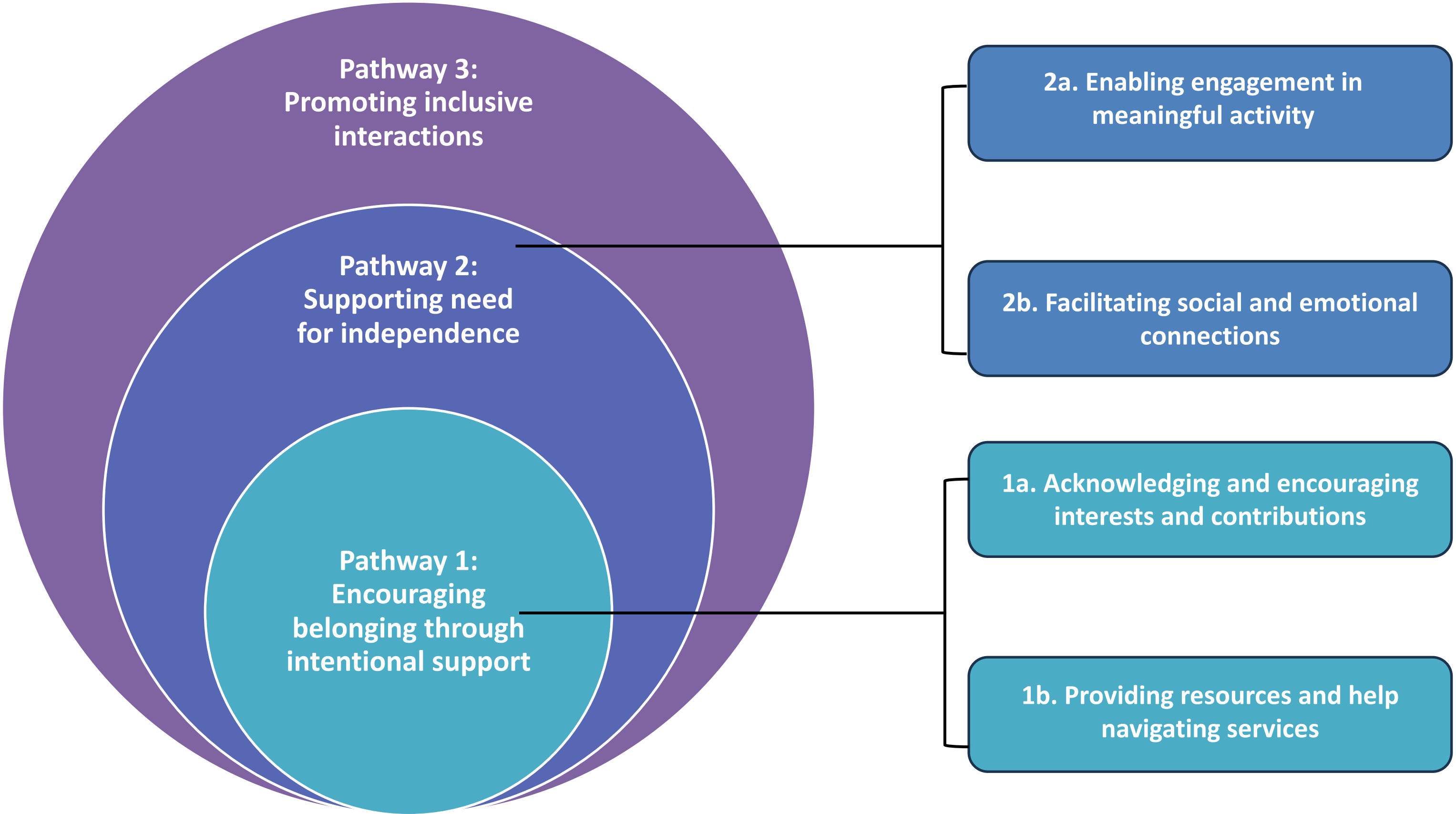
Pathway 1: Encouraging belonging through intentional support

1b. Providing resources and help navigating services



Well, my role as I see it is, I'm the one who cuts through all of the red tape [...] to access services for her. So it would be to find the best, most suitable service for her that's out there, and right now I don't know what it is. So it will just be to keep looking for whatever it is that suits her needs right now. - FMF12

Pathways to Belonging



Pathway 2: Supporting need for independence

2a. Enabling engagement in meaningful activity



I think [...] he does feel like he belongs there. He knows the routine, he goes in there [...] he does his music, and then at the end, one of the staff brings their own little dogs to work every day. So, he'll ask to [...] feed some snacks to the dog and he'll do that, you know, maybe for, like, two or three minutes, and then we leave, and then that's it, right? [...] I guess these are places that he does feel like he belongs, 'cause he knows what the expectation is - FMF3

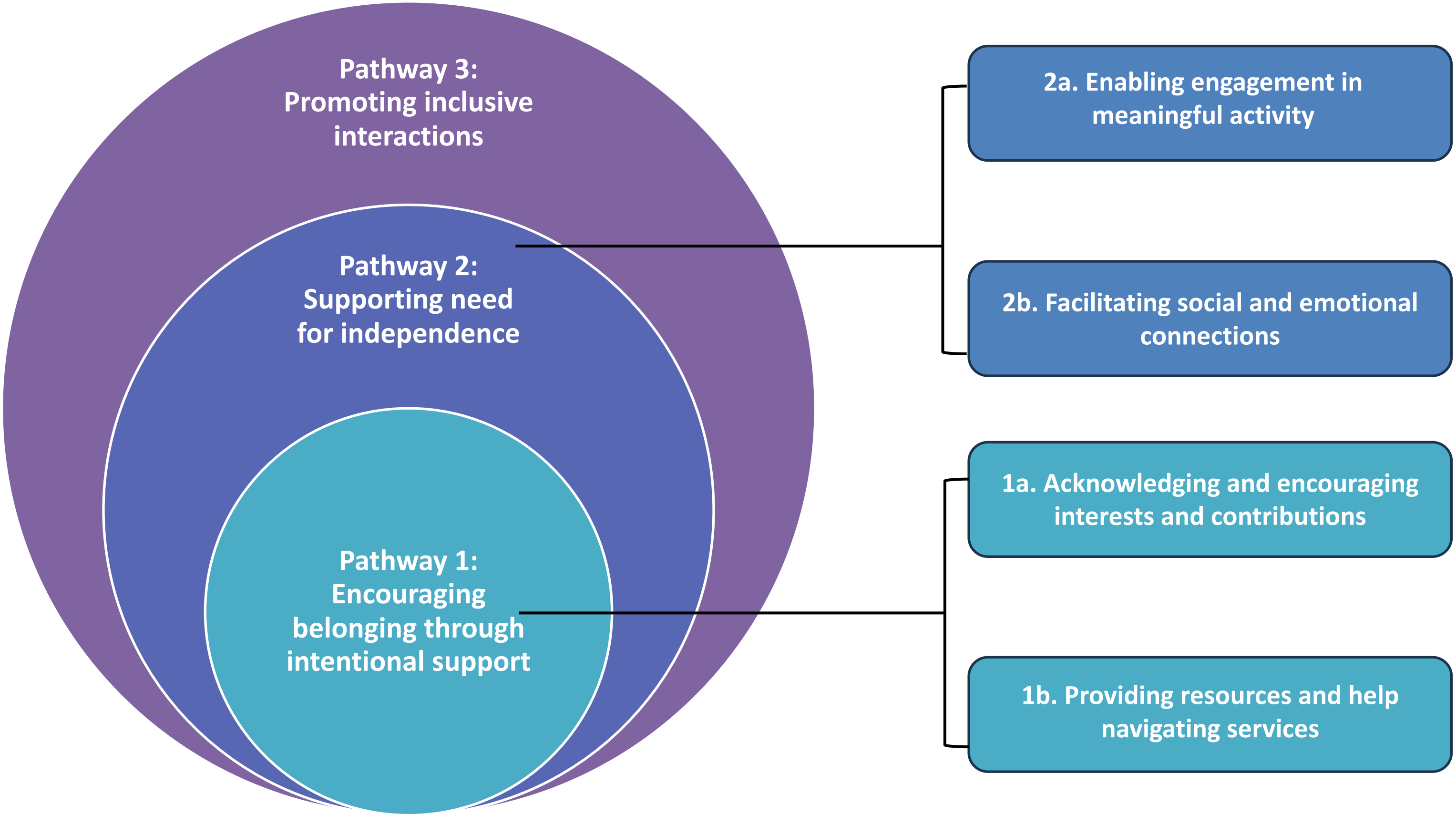
Pathway 2: Supporting need for independence

2b. Facilitating social and emotional connections



[...] He feels comfortable with them and [...] they make him happy for instance, right? The support worker will do something with him [...] he enjoys the work, the tutoring most of the time, right? There are times that he gets frustrated, you know, has issues, but yeah, that's part of his life he enjoys, right? [...] And for [YA's name] [...] there might be a sense of – because of his, [...] literary understanding, communication issues, he doesn't understand the world as much as his peers do, right? So there's always maybe a sense of danger. A danger is something big in his head. So for [him], [these] people, they're not dangerous. I think for him, [they are] safe. – FMF9

Pathways to Belonging



Pathway 3: Promoting inclusive interactions



[...] when he did the personal shopping, the [employer] took [YA's name] around and introduced him to the stores that he'd knew he'd send [YA's name] to. So, he'd go to [...] the vegetable place, [YA's name] always went to the same vegetable place, so then the people [there where like], [YA's name] is here on behalf of [employer], because there were those introductions made. [...]

If they figured out how bad [YA's name] was at math he could have given them a ten-dollar bill and never got any change back [...] But it was like no, that's who [employer] is sending so, they were always giving him like, Ok, here's a good mango, or he's the right change back, so it was like that for every market place. They knew [YA's name] represented [employer], so that was like [...] set up for success." – FMF8

Implications for occupational therapy

1

This new theoretical framework of belonging from family members' perspectives **can inform development and/or enrichments of OT programs and services for young adults.** Occupational therapists can **assess and intervene so that each pathway in the framework is facilitated.**

2

Parents are often expected to foster and support belonging for their young adults. The findings serve as a **potential guide for gradually shifting supports for inclusive interactions for young adults towards increasing levels of support by community members** (e.g., peer-based mentorship programs).

Implications for occupational therapy

3

Navigation support, education, and advocacy within the community can be challenging for families. **Occupational therapists should assess the need for these supports, such as connecting families to resources, empowering them to request accommodations, and educating community members (e.g., employers),** and incorporate them into assessment and treatment for young adults.

4

This new theoretical framework of belonging **can be strengthened by future research examining families' experiences of belonging and not belonging in diverse national contexts** where cultural norms, resources, service systems, and policy environments differ.

Thank you!

Questions?



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