

LAB TITLE:

# HOUSING THROUGH AN AUTISM LENS: A PATHWAY FROM CRISIS TO SOLUTION

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## Paradigm Shift Prototype

The current collective conceptualisation of autism is largely informed by the medical model of autism, ascertaining that disability is a deficiency or abnormality to be cured. Contrarily, the social model of disability including autism emphasizes that disability exists in the interaction between the individual and society and that society itself has a responsibility to create inclusive communities with and for people with disabilities, honouring the acclamation “nothing about us without us.” Under the later social model and in consideration of housing, we need to move away from flawed structural factors including the stigmatization of disability including autism, the conceptualisations of institutionalization, and lack of self-determination in order to create suitable and sustainable housing solutions for autistic adults.

### The purpose and core concept description

This prototype builds resources available to individuals, organisations, and policy makers to change assumptions that restrict autistic adults from participating fully in society. Topics generated in the lab included: inclusivity, identity, stigmatisation, agency, and institutionalisation, pertaining to the social, individualized, and internalized stigma, accessibility, empathy, stereotypes, and socio-cultural norms that dictate the common language around disability, in particular autism and social structures.

We intend for the prototype to improve how autistic adults are treated by society, the availability and access to services and supports, financial opportunities, and ultimately, housing options.

### Who can help bring the prototype to reality and key partners?

We are working with academic and disability advocate, Dr Yani Hamdani, and her colleagues, at the University of Toronto to develop the content of the paradigm shift prototype resources. Their specialities include Developmental Disabilities; Mental Health; Disability Studies; Gender; Qualitative Inquiry.

The prototype resources will be disseminated amongst the 80 HAL lab participants and partners, and be publicly available, informing work ranging from housing design and architecture, public health policy, autism skills development and service organisations, and families.

## Guiding questions and new ways of thinking

Shifting the narrative of what it means to be autistic, what institutionalisation means, and the importance of self-determination to facilitate the socio-cultural shifts towards a more inclusive society that empowers autistic adults to secure housing specific to their needs and enabling them to live over the long-term in accordance with their choices.

This prototype ascertains the intersectionality that determine one's ability to secure safe and suitable housing and that there are larger socio-cultural shifts necessary to address the root causes of housing insecurity for autistic adults. It emphasizes that knowledge and awareness is an important first step to shifting the collective narrative.

## Next steps and implementation

We will continue to work with Dr Yani Hamdani and her colleagues to develop this prototype. We will review the resource content with the lab advocates and determine how to best format the work to be the most useful to a variety of audiences. Once finished, this prototype comprises a key outcome of the lab and knowledge product to live beyond the Lab and can be used in presentations, media and publications, and disseminated amongst the lab participants and their networks.

## Limiting beliefs, challenges, and how could this fail?

The prototype could fail in two ways. The first, is that the content does not represent the autistic experience and does not honour “nothing about us without us.” To prevent this, we will ensure the opportunities for contribution, iteration, and validation from autistic adults. Second, this prototype could fail if it has low uptake by the community. The intended paradigm shifts require collective update, and the success depends on how our lab participants use the resources. To overcome this, we will ensure that the resources are designed with the end-user in mind and developed and distributed as soon as possible through multiple channels.

