

## Proposal for Roger S. Smith Undergraduate Award

February 11, 2019

Submitted by: Rhonda Breitzkreuz

Project Title: Are mothers opting out? Exploring underemployment among mothers with preschool children

### **Introduction**

I am requesting funding to hire a research assistant to work on my current maternal employment research project. For this project, we plan to conduct approximately five focus groups and 20 interviews with mothers of pre-school children to explore their experiences of paid work and unpaid work in Alberta. This project has SSHRC funding. The research team includes Dr Breitzkreuz and a part-time research manager, Kerry Colen. A research assistant on this project would gain experience in multiple phases of the project, including conducting literature reviews and policy analysis, collecting data, and analyzing data.

### **Project Description**

Although the Canadian employment rate for mothers of children under 16 has more than doubled since the 1970s, mothers continue to be underemployed in Canada. Mothers consistently have lower labour-force attachment rates than women without children, fathers, and their counterparts in other OECD countries. In addition, they comprise over three-quarters of the part-time labour pool in Canada. Within this context, we have begun a new research initiative examining the nuance of mothers' experiences of employment in Alberta, and reasons for truncated paid work hours. We are examining mothers' experiences of employment, the nexus of paid and unpaid work, and the accommodations that mothers make to address child care and other family responsibilities.

### **Expected work for student**

For this project, the undergraduate research assistant will conduct the following activities:

- Learn about the research process and qualitative analysis techniques
- Review policy documents
- Review, summarize, organize, and synthesize scholarly literature relevant to maternal employment, work-family integration, and child care
- Assist with organizing and conducting focus groups, interviews, preliminary coding and analysis on interview transcripts
- Enter references and annotated bibliographies into End Note

### **Skills/experience to be gained**

By participating in this research project, the student can expect to learn many new skills related to the research process and knowledge about family policy and programs. These include: 1) greater understanding of families with preschool children and the resources they require to assist them; 2) skill development in qualitative descriptive analysis; 3) experience working on a well-functioning and active research team; 4) greater insight into the importance of policy development that will enhance the wellbeing of mothers and families.