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Portland State University

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Perspectives of Students with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability in College
Inclusion Programs on their Preparation for Working in Competitive Integrated
Employment

by

Eva R. Blixseth

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership: Special and Counselor Education

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Portland State University
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Abstract

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have a history of being isolated, marginalized, and excluded from employment that is competitive and integrated. Policy makers, disability advocates, and self-advocates have made efforts to center inclusive education and employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disability. Employment is a valuable outcome for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities exiting college inclusion programs (Lee et al., 2022). However, from 2017 through 2021, not all students with intellectual and/or intellectual disability exiting college inclusion programs were employed. This is concerning as O'Brien et al. (2019) pointed out students' primary goal for completing college inclusion programs is to obtain competitive integrated employment.

Additionally, most students in a Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disability are not working on campus due to current employment restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic. The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives and experience of students in the Portland State University Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities college inclusion program who were preparing to work in competitive integrated employment. A qualitative study using a phenomenological approach was used to conduct semistructured personal interviews with six participants. The findings from this study indicate participants worked with their job developer on getting access to engage in career exploration activities on campus like informational interviews, employment path lessons, and career assessments. These services were coordinated through their VR counselor and supported by the job

development agency. Further findings illustrate career activities guided the individuals on making decisions about their career focused jobs. Other findings are in reference to the students' ability to adopt self-coping strategies to overcome barriers in their work environment. Lastly, students addressed their concerns with interpersonal interactions with others in the workplace.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband, Sean and my daughter, Bria.

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This work could not have been achieved without the contributions and support from several individuals. I owe a deep sense of gratitude to the members who served on my committee: Dr. Sheldon Loman, Dr. Mary Morningstar, Dr. Tina Anctil Peterman, and Dr. Laurie Powers. For my Advisor and Chair, Dr. Sheldon Loman, his mentorship, support, patience, kindness, and enthusiasm was influential to me, and helped guide me in the right direction. To Dr. Mary Morningstar, her wealth of knowledge and passion about career development, post school outcomes, transition planning, and overall inclusion for students with significant disabilities inspired me to hone my thinking around this topic.

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Chapter 1: Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) participating in a Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID). Specifically, this study focused on students' perceptions and experiences related to working in competitive integrated employment. A goal of many postsecondary education (PSE) programs is to involve students in career development and improve their employment outcomes (Scheef et al., 2018). PSE programs play a valuable role in career development and employment for students with intellectual and developmental disability (Scheef et al., 2018). The PSE-TPSID is a 5-year grant program, awarded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, which has funded 88 university PSE programs (Papay et al., 2017).

The amended Higher Education Act of 1965 provided for program development and expansion of the TPSID model projects. In 2010, the Federal Office of Postsecondary Education began awarding 5-year grants to institutions of higher education (IHEs), which enabled the TPSID model program to expand to 23 states (O'Brien et al., 2019). The purpose of these funds was to effectively support students to transition to PSE programs and to allow IHEs to create high quality, inclusive, and comprehensive transition programs for students with ID (O'Brien et al., 2019). O'Brien et al. emphasized programs must have access to inclusive education and outcomes should result in competitive employment. Responsibility for TPSID coordination was awarded to Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston in October 2010 (see https://www.umb.edu/news/detail/think_college_awarded_10_million_grant).

Think College is funded by the Federal Office of Postsecondary Education as the national coordinating center for IHEs offering inclusive higher education for students with ID, including the TPSID initiative. Think College research is dedicated to students in transition and dual enrollment (i.e., students with disability enrolled in both PSE and special education transition programs), employment, and higher education (see <https://thinkcollege.net/tpsid>). The Think College program offers a certificate, which is given on completion of the college inclusionary programs (i.e., 4-year program with obtainment of a prebaccalaureate certificate) for students with IDD in PSE.

According to the National Coordinating Center, there are a total of 38 TPSID programs at 36 colleges serving 378 students with IDD across 16 states (Grigal & Papay, 2022). Based on the Annual Report (2020–2021) The TPSID programs offer inclusive college courses and specialized courses. The inclusive courses are known as traditional college courses that are available to students with or without disabilities and the specialized courses are specifically designed for individuals with ID that focus on life skills, social skills, or career development (Grigal et al., 2022). The authors reported that out of 3,222 courses, 38% of all enrollments were in academically inclusive courses (Grigal & Paypay, 2022 p. 2).

Lee and Taylor (2022) discussed outcomes such as higher employment rates and quality of employment for students after they complete PSE programs. However, based on the TPSID Annual Reports, there are a considerable percentage of students who did not achieve employment after exiting PSE programs from 2017 through 2021. As of 2017, 61% of students were working in paid jobs within 1 year after they exited the program (Papay et al., 2017). According to the Annual Report of the TPSID Model

Demonstration Projects from years from 2019–2020, the employment rate 1 year after exit was 59% (Grigal et al., 2021). For 2021, the Annual Report indicates that 49% of students were employed at exit or within 90 days thereafter (Grigal et al., 2022).

Postsecondary Education (PSE) programs are described as one of the major vehicles to improve employment outcomes and skills (i.e., independence and interpersonal skills) for individuals with ID (Lee et al., 2018). Overall, students with IDD who participated in PSE programs have experienced improved employment outcomes (Lee et al., 2018). Individuals with IDD who participated in PSE programs have a higher competitive employment rate at 61% compared to individuals with IDD who did not participate in PSE programs at 56% (Lee et al., 2018). However, these levels remain substantially below those of students not identified with IDD who, on average, achieve employment on a higher rate. This research suggests that more progress is needed to ensure individuals with IDD participate in inclusive and competitive employment at equitable levels.

Little is known about students' perceptions and experiences in preparation for working in competitive employment; therefore, it is important these experiences are heard through voices of students. Importantly, research reviewed for this study suggested college experiences that include career related activities for students with ID are valuable in enhancing employment opportunities for students and their overall quality of life. A total of six participants comprised this study. Participants were students with IDD in the Career and Community Studies Program at Portland State University (CCS-PSU), which is a 4-year college inclusion program at Portland State University. CCS-PSU is

associated with the TPSID, which will be further discussed. Using a phenomenological approach, data from personal interviews were collected and analyzed.

Background of the Problem

Historically, students with IDD exiting secondary programs had poor outcomes resulting in unemployment because they were not offered services around employment or independent living options (Grigal & Hart, 2010). For students with IDD who were employed, they were least likely to receive an increase in wages and were less expected to attend postsecondary school (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Further, individuals with IDD were placed in segregated sheltered workshops earning subminimum wage (i.e., sheltered workshops employ people with disabilities separately from integrated environments) or day programs (i.e., day programs offer peer-focused daily activities to keep individuals with ID occupied and help them become more independent; Lee et al., 2018).

Placement of individuals with IDD in sheltered workshops and day programs are options in opposition to being placed into integrated settings where individuals contribute to their community. In reference to employment barriers for students with IDD, Sheef et al. (2018) reported students in PSE programs experienced employment barriers due to limited work experience and were unprepared to maintain employment because there were not many employment trainings offered in secondary settings for students with IDD. There are other limitations such as lack of interagency collaboration with VR agencies and staff at college inclusion programs; however, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services are valuable during the employment process for students with IDD (Smith et al., 2018). The VR process includes coordination of services for career counseling, career exploration, job outlook information, career assessments, job development, and job

coaching. Vocational Rehabilitation services and Oregon Developmental Disability Services in Oregon are becoming increasingly aligned with employment policies centering on individuals with IDD (Oregon Department of Human Services para 1).

Some students in PSE settings also experience employment challenges in the following areas: learning new tasks, motivation, behaviors, identifying realistic employment goals, attendance, change in roles and routines, and transportation to and from work (Sheef et al., 2018). Gibbons et al. (2018) found students with intellectual and developmental disability may lack career and college readiness because they were provided limited information on career decision making from transition services programs. Also, the individual education plan (IEP) is necessary to identify the needs, goals, and interests for students with disability transitioning out of high school. However, Gibbons et al. found IEPs for students transitioning out of the secondary programs lacked career-related experiences, which made it more difficult for students to make decisions based on career interests and for transition planning. It is essential for the students' IEP to address PSE goals.

In my professional experience in working as the Employment Coordinator at the CCS-PSU program, some of the students have experienced challenges in seeking competitive employment prior to their enrollment in the CCS-PSU program. They have experienced challenges identifying realistic career goals as they are often unprepared to find work. This difficulty results from having little to no employment preparation (prior to entering CCS-PSU) or career exploration opportunities at the secondary setting. Currently, CCS-PSU is supporting students on creating their pathways to career

development for CCS-PSU students, which will be instrumental in supporting students to identify career goals that meet their interests, strengths, and abilities.

Furthermore, employers are hesitant about hiring students with disabilities because they are not aware of the benefits and outcomes of doing so (Sheef et al., 2018). They also lack knowledge about students' abilities and strengths. Additionally, employers often experience seasonal layoffs, which makes it more difficult for students with disabilities to have job opportunities on campus (Sheef et al., 2018). Hours are limited for students who do find work at PSE programs. Finally, Sheef et al. (2018) identified the following common themes from online survey interviews with 75 students about barriers to facilitation of work experience for students with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) in PSE settings: "transportation issues, employer perceptions of the abilities of people with disabilities, inadequate number of staff hours to support students in the workplace and finding time in the students' schedule" (Sheef et al., 2018, p. 215).

These employment barriers align with what has for some students in CCS-PSU. One example is a campus employers offering limited hours to a CCS-PSU student due to restricted budgets. This could be problematic for students who are hoping to develop enough work experience to be employed after they complete the program. Despite most campus employers being very supportive of CCS-PSU and understanding the value of hiring students from this program, some campus employers are unaware of benefits to hiring students with disabilities.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite given the existing benefits of college inclusion programs, the problem I will examine is the employment barriers for students with IDD. For instance, not all

students exiting college inclusion programs are in integrated competitive employment. “Nearly two-thirds of individuals who completed a TPSID program (61%) had a paid job 1 year after exit” (National Core Indicators, 2017, p. 17). In addition, Papay et al. (2017) indicated 39% of individuals not working were involved in other experiences, such as unpaid career development, looking for work. Other research indicates 61% of students with IDD were in paid integrated employment after completing PSE programs (Lee et al., 2018). As noted earlier, based on the TPSID Annual Reports, there are considerable percentage of students who did not achieve employment after exiting PSE programs from 2017 through 2021. As of 2017, 61% of students were working in paid jobs within 1 year after they exited the program (Papay et al., 2017). According to the Annual Report of the TPSID Model Demonstration Projects from years from 2019–2020, that 1-year employment percentage of employment rate 1 year after exit was 59% (Grigal et al., 2021). For 2021, the Annual Report indicates that 49% of students were employed at exit or within 90 days thereafter (Grigal et al., 2022).

There are many positive outcomes to TPSID programs, including inclusive education, competitive employment opportunities, self-determination skills, and independent living; however, further research is needed for enhancement of these programs. Although there are other factors contributing to the unemployment rate of students with IDD exiting TPSID programs, this study focused on perspectives of students with IDD on their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment.

Significance of the Research Problem

Many individuals with IDD have been left out of inclusive employment opportunities and placed into sheltered workshops after exiting high school transition programs (Lee et al., 2018). Historically, they have been repressed in marginalized groups (i.e., private and public establishments) and secluded in the family homes as opposed to being employed in an integrated setting and contributing to their community (Olney & Kennedy, 2001, as cited in Almalky, 2020). Further, many individuals with IDD have historically worked in segregated sheltered workshop settings that were associated with lower wages Kregel & Dean, 2002, as cited in Almalky, 2020). Given hard work from researchers, disability advocates, self-advocates, and policy makers, individuals with ID have been provided more opportunities to participate in inclusive settings like competitive integrated employment (Almalky, 2020). Despite these effective changes, there are still more steps to be taken to enhance employment outcomes for students completing the TPSID programs.

For individuals with IDD, unemployment could contribute to social isolation and poverty (Lee et al., 2018). Social engagement has been known to improve one's quality of life, academic performance, level of happiness, employment opportunities, and social support system. However, isolation could lead to depression and suicide ideation (Wilt & Morningstar, 2020). Athamanah et al. (2020) found the lack of social inclusion could affect individuals without disability; however, for individuals with IDD, it could contribute to stigmatization, marginalization, and discrimination. This could be problematic for students because the primary goal of college inclusion programs is designed for students to be competitively employed and be included in the community

once they exit the program. For students who continue to be unemployed after exiting TPSID programs, issues of equity are raised because of the program's intended purposes. This is because the program is supposed to promote equity and inclusion, but students continue to be unemployed. Importantly, individuals with disabilities have a right to work (O'Brien et al., 2019).

Presentation of Methods and Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine perspectives and experiences of students with IDD in college inclusion programs who were preparing to work in competitive integrated employment. Data were analyzed through personal semi structured interviews using a phenomenological approach. I recruited six participants in the CCS-PSU program. The goal was to capture perspectives on students' experiences with career development and preparation for working in competitive employment. This study design will be described along with proposed research questions, procedures, and data collection. A qualitative research design was chosen to better understand CCS-PSU students' perspectives and experience with preparing to work in competitive integrated employment. Open-ended questions focused on services CCS-PSU students received related to career development and preparation to work in competitive employment. The theories of INCOME (Beveridge et al., 2002) and life designing (Savickas, et al., 2009) informed the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program on their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program receiving supports on overcoming barriers while participating in career related activities?

Key Concepts and Terms

Career pathway is defined as a structured approach to career planning for individuals who wish to obtain their first job or to improve skills to fulfill their goal of an enhanced job opportunity or a different job (Dupree, 2018).

Competitive integrated employment is commonly used to define employment in an inclusive setting/environment that pays at least minimum wage.

Day programs offer services to individuals with ID in the community to participate in daily activities with their peers to keep them occupied and to help them become more independent.

Intellectual disability is a disability categorized by “significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many social and practical skills. The disability originates before the age of 18” (American Association on Intellectual Disabilities, n.d., para 1).

Intellectual and developmental disabilities is used to describe students with developmental disability or intellectual disability (Hafner et al., 2011). Further, Gibbons et al. (2018) found that “American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disability (AAIDD, 2011) and the American Psychiatric Association, define ID and DD [development disability] as limitations in both intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior” (p. 80).

Individual plan for employment is an employment plan implemented by VR counselors, which identifies individuals' strengths, employment barriers, employment goals, and state funded services.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is the mandated act of 2004 requiring schools prepare students with disability for additional education opportunities including PSE (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010). Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) amendment in 2008 provides access to higher education and federal financial aid for students with ID (O'Brien et al., 2019).

IEP is a plan designed to meet learning needs and goals of students receiving services in special education programs.

Inclusion is a term used to describe college inclusion for students with ID. It provides opportunities for students with ID to achieve their education by enrolling in undergraduate courses; reside in student housing; and to participate in student activities on the college campus jobs that include internships, and the opportunity to gain long-term employment (Hafner et al., 2011).

Interagency collaboration refers to when a group of individuals from local education agencies and adult agencies, family members, and students all meet and discuss needs and goals for students' transition goals, students' responsibilities through defined goals and activities (Grigal & Hart, 2010).

A *job* is outlined as a cluster of related positions in a single business and an occupation is summarized as a group of comparable jobs in numerous businesses (Brown, 2012).

Job coach is a service typically funded by VR agencies that provides individuals with disabilities customized training, which promotes sustainability in the workplace.

Job development is a service usually funded by VR agencies that assists individuals with disabilities to obtain employment. It involves collaboration between the job developer and employer, in which the job is customized to meet the individual's strengths and abilities.

Customized Integrated Employment – is designed for individuals with significant disabilities who would benefit from jobs that require customized tasks and responsibilities based on the individuals' strengths, interests, and preferences (Wheman, et al., 2018).

Person centered planning is a meeting that assists students in developing a plan for their future goals and chosen outcomes in PSE education, work, social relationships, community, and leisure (Grigal & Hart, 2010).

A position is defined as “a group of tasks performed by one individual” (Brown, 2012, p. 14).

Postsecondary Education Preprograms (PSE) will be used throughout the paper to address PSE opportunities for students with ID (i.e., same as college inclusion programs; Cook et al., 2015).

Secondary transition is a process of preparing students with ID exiting public high schools to attend PSE (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010).

Self-determination is a theoretical framework for people's belief in their ability to complete tasks and manage goal achievement. Primarily, this will affect the outcomes and expectations on what individuals believe will happen and achieve once they pursue a

goal (Gibbons et al., 2018). Additionally, self-determination is expressed through four characteristics: (a) self-realization, (b) self-autonomy, (c) self-regulation, and (d) psychological empowerment (Ju et al., 2017).

Wehymeyer, (1995) described for people with disabilities, self-determination is not just, “a set of behaviors that show assertiveness, self-advocacy, or problem solving” (p. 158), but also represents gaining access to basic human rights (e.g., freedom of speech, equal employment opportunity, equal protection from cruel and unusual punishment, to marry, procreate, raise children, and vote).

TPSID is a 5-year grant that is awarded by the Office of Postsecondary Education in the U.S. Department of Education; another interchangeable term commonly used is college inclusion programs, which is another term for identifying TPSID programs.

Transition is identified as “the process students and their families use to think about life after high school, to identify their desired outcomes, and to plan their community and school experiences to assure the students acquire the knowledge and skills to achieve their goals” (Virginia Department of Education January 21, 2021).

Vocational rehabilitation services are a state agency that provides vocational services for individuals with disabilities who experience impediments to obtaining or maintaining employment.

Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act is policy associated with students with ID working in competitive integrated employment. This act mandates students with disability under the age of 24 should be provided with the opportunity to work in competitive integrated employment after they transition out of high school programs.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed for this proposal documents the meanings of common key terms associated with employment, benefits to college inclusion programs for students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, and how college inclusion programs could result in increased self-esteem, employment, and better quality of life for students with Intellectual and/or developmental disability. Additional literature included in this review point out common reasons for employment barriers for students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) and suggests the importance of interagency collaboration. This section will also introduce the theoretical framework of career development theories used for this study. Theories of INCOME and life design guided the research questions as stages of the theories are closely aligned with the stages to career path lessons at the Career and Community Studies Program (CCS-PSU).

O'Brien et al. (2019) stated, "Employment is a fundamental right of citizenship" (p. 255). The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities both acknowledge individuals with disabilities have a right to work equally to others and have the right to earn a living and be accepted into a working environment that provides inclusion and accessibility (O'Brien et al., 2019). For individuals with disabilities, employment is known to improve their quality of life (both physical and mental), improve independence, social inclusion, increased satisfaction, self-confidence, and wellbeing (O'Brien et al., 2019). Further, O'Brien et al. (2019) noted people with ID working in inclusive settings developed an increased self-esteem because "they no longer felt disabled" (p. 255).

Distinguished Terms of Position, Job, Occupation, and Career

Given the purpose of this study, which was to observe perspectives of students with IDD preparing to work in competitive employment, it is necessary for this section to cover the meanings and differences of the following terms: position, job, occupation, career, career development, career intervention, and career pathways. Some of these terms are similar; however, there are important nuances in their definitions as stated in the key terms section, a position is defined as “a group of tasks performed by one individual” (Brown, 2012, p. 14). A job is a cluster of related positions in a single business, and an occupation is a group of comparable jobs in numerous businesses (Brown, 2012).

A career is classified as a sequence of “paid or unpaid occupations or jobs that a person holds throughout their life” (Sears, 1982, as cited in Brown, 2012, p. 14). Career development is a lifetime journey involving psychological, sociological, educational, economic, and physical factors (Brown, 2012). Career intervention is designed to improve an individual’s career development and to guide their career decision making process. Career intervention involves career guidance, career development programs, career education, career counseling, career information, and career coaching (Brown, 2012). Career pathways “are small groups of occupations with a career cluster; occupations within a pathway share common skills, knowledge, and interests” (Minnesota State Careerwise, n.d.).

Brown (2012) delivered a clear and concise description of these terms, but Lawrence (2018) offered a broader description of the key terms of occupation, job, and career. Occupation is a general term that includes one’s employment sector or the group

of jobs into which one's job experiences fit. A job is a temporary step to build a career. Jobs result in a paycheck and employment experience that could lead to the next job. "The series of jobs becomes your career. If your ultimate goal is to become an attorney, you may benefit from working as a legal assistant to gain knowledge and experience to meet your career goals" (Lawrence, 2018, para. 3). Career is described as more than just receiving a paycheck. It is a lifelong process that shapes one's specific skills, knowledge, and experience. Careers are based on one's success, and individuals are usually content with their careers.

A career pathway is a structured approach to career planning for individuals who wish to obtain their first job or improve skills to fulfill their goal of an enhanced job opportunity or a different job. This also means individuals could learn about occupational interests based on understanding requirements and skills needed to reach their career goals (Dupree, 2018).

Students in CCS-PSU program work on career related activities intended to prepare them for pursuing their long-term career goals. The idea is for students to work in a suitable job that measures their career interests and long-term career goals; therefore, there is not a goal of individuals working in any job. Students could work in jobs that are meaningful to them, which could be a steppingstone to their long-term career goals.

Job Development Services

The students in the CCS-PSU program receive job development supports coordinated through CCS-PSU staff and the Job Developer and Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling intern, so it is imperative for this section to discuss and define the steps connected with job development services. Supportive employment services are a critical

approach for people with ID receiving employment supports (Carlson et al., 2019). The intervention of supportive employment services values the need for continuing supports for people with disabilities to obtain and maintain competitive employment (Carlson et al., 2019). Supportive employment involves job development, including placement, job site training and advocacy, ongoing assessment, and employment services (Wehman, 2012, as cited in Carlson et al., 2019).

Customized integrated employment (CIE), as noted in Chapter 1, is designed for individuals with significant disabilities who would benefit from jobs that require customized tasks and responsibilities based on the individuals' strengths, interests, and preferences (Wehman, et al., 2018). CIE is also known as customized employment and is described as "a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both" (Parent, 2004, as cited in Carlson et al., 2019, p. 2). CIE involves a cluster of job development steps:

- *Job carving is using* some elements of a job description, but not all responsibilities.
- *Job negotiation is combining* tasks from multiple job descriptions within a business into a new job description.
- *Job creation is creating* a new description from unmet business needs identified during discussions between employer and employment specialist.

- *Self-employment is creating and operating a self-owned business with or without the help of paid (e.g., service agencies) or unpaid (e.g., family members) support* (Wehman, et al., 2018, p. 135).

Theoretical Framework: Super's Life Span Theories

According to Brown (2012), Super contributed extensive writings (i.e., 200 articles, chapters, book chapters, monographs, and other publications) and has been instrumental in understanding career development. Super's theoretical statements were influenced by psychology, developmental psychology, sociology, and personality theory (Brown, 2012). There are five major lifespan stages:

1. *Growth stage* is from birth to 14 years of age and refers to physical and psychological growth. During this phase, individuals form attitudes and behaviors that could shape their viewpoints about their self-concept and work options.
2. *Exploratory stage* is from ages 15–24. This is described as the early fantasy phase when career choices are unrealistic, like “movie star, pilot, and astronaut” (Brown, 2012, p. 43).”
3. *Establishment stage* is from ages 25–44. This is indicated as the experimental phase. During this stage, individuals may try a job with the exception they will consider resigning from their position if it is not satisfying to them.
4. *Maintenance stage* is from ages 45–64 and is defined as the stage when individuals have some fluidity with their job; therefore, they continue to improve and adjust in their career.

5. *Decline stage* is from ages 65 and older and is referred to preretirement phase.

This is when individuals are interested in maintaining their position rather than enhancing it. They prefer to meet minimum requirements of the job (Brown, 2012).

Super's theory has been used as the framework for several career development programs associated with pre-kindergarten to middle school settings for children and adolescents (Brown, 2012). Individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation (VR) services could receive job development services (i.e., career assessments, career exploration, job outlook information) modeled after the Career Development Inventory (CDI) instrument. Career activities identified in CCS-PSU career pathways are very similar to categories of CDI. Brown described CDI, in the following six categories:

- Career planning is where career-mature individuals engage in the planning process.
- Career exploration is where career-mature individuals engage in exploring careers.
- Decision making is where career-mature individuals know how to make career choices and are confident about their choices.
- World-of-work information is having correct information about work.
- Knowledge of preferred occupations is when people answer 20 questions about jobs of interest.
- Career orientation is a measure of career maturity, in which people are ready to make appropriate career decisions.

Brown (2012) stated CDI “measures the readiness to make a career decision and the amount of knowledge needed to make that decision” (p. 48). The career decision-making process is an essential component to career counseling.

Limitations

Although Brown, (2012) pointed out that Super’s theory is highly regarded in career development programs, there are some limitations to his lifespan theories. The lifespan theory assumes individuals reach different phases in the same vocation. For instance, Wehmeyer et al. (2019) discussed that, while Super’s theory, served its purpose during it’s time in terms of vocational identity and development, the theory includes an expectation of long-term employment in the same career, “Workers entered into a career in an entry-level position provided evidence of their competence, were justly rewarded with promotions and advancements, and assumed greater responsibilities until it was time to wind down and retire” (Wehmeyer et al., 2019, p. 181). However, in today’s economy, people entering the workforce are more likely to switch careers frequently in their lifetime (Wehmeyer et al., 2019).

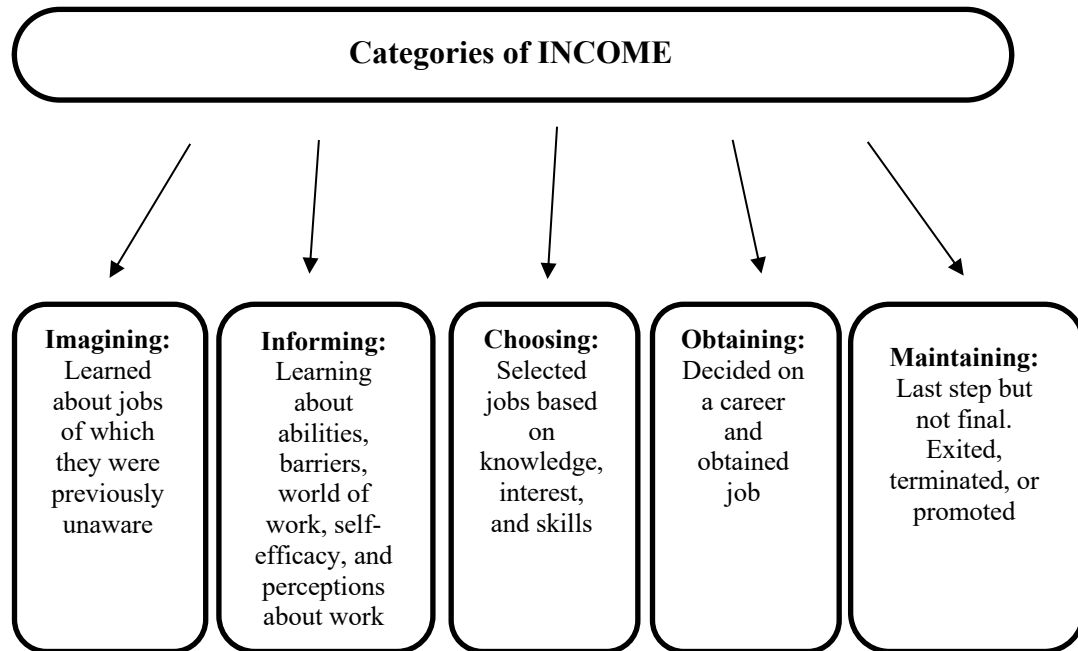
Further, individuals with IDD may take longer to reach some phases of the lifespan chart. An individual with IDD at the age of 25 may not be ready to experiment with jobs in a competitive setting. For example, in my experience working as a VR Counselor, this would especially be the case if they were not provided with job development services like career exploration from VR and other professionals (e.g., case managers, transition specialists, and postsecondary education [PSE] vocational specialists) in their support team. Likewise, Super’s theory is an early theory, and it may not cater to individuals who come from unique, diverse backgrounds as Brown (2012)

suggests, “It was and is a ‘white bread’ theory because it was formulated based on research with white subjects” (p. 49).

Brown (2012) suggested counselors examine career maturity by assisting with clients on occupational self-concept, which could be effective for most groups. Although individuals with IDD have come a long way entering the workforce, Super’s propositions were developed during a time when most people with IDD were not working in inclusive settings, rather they were employed in sheltered workshops and receiving low wages.

INCOME: A Framework of Career Development

Although existing theories of career development are still applicable in career counseling, Beveridge et al. (2002) pointed out there has been some criticism of such theories in the rehabilitation field. This is especially true for individuals with “pre-career onset disability” (Beveridge et al., 2002, p. 205) due to limitations in early career exploratory experience; limited opportunities in career choice activities; and “negative self-concept resulting from societal attitudes toward persons with disability” (p. 195). Beveridge et al. (2002) proposed the framework INCOME: imagining, informing, choosing, obtaining, maintaining, and exiting, which is applicable to individuals with disabilities. Beveridge et al. (2002) suggested this framework could be an inclusive, alternative model that could help resolve employment barriers for individuals with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services. Figure 1 shows the six categories of INCOME.

Figure 1.*Chart of Income Framework*

- *Imagining* refers to when the individual realizes certain jobs exist. Basically, they have learned about jobs they of which they were previously unaware.
- *Informing* refers to when the individual learns about their abilities, barriers, world of work, self-efficacy, and perceptions about work.
- *Choosing* refers to when the individual selects the type of job they would like to work in based on knowledge about occupations, job interests, and needs.
- *Obtaining* refers to when the individual has decided on a career and obtained a job.
- *Maintaining* refers to when the individual has adapted to their job role and sustained their position. This is like Super's (1994) maintenance stage.

- *Exiting* refers to when the individual has reached the last step of the INCOME model; however, this does not imply it is the final stage. This could mean the individual was terminated, promoted, or has left their current position: “worker satisfaction influences work goals, and work goals influence worker satisfaction” (Beveridge et al., 2002, p. 203).

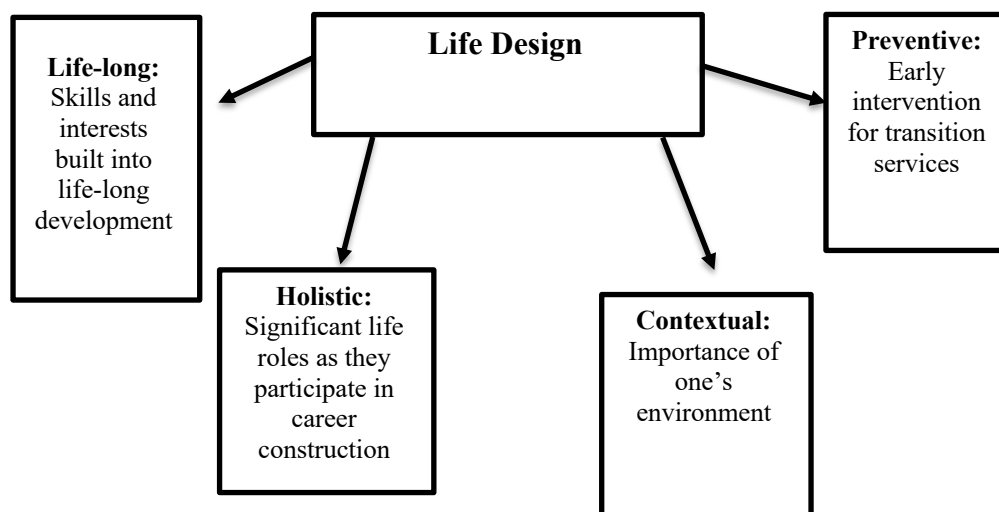
Beveridge et al. (2002) modeled their work after other theorists, like Super, and their intent was to make their framework applicable to people with disabilities. The INCOME framework is used to “guide the application of various career development theories based on the individual’s context, needs, values, interests, skills, abilities, aptitudes, and culture” (Beveridge et al., 2002, p. 205). Beveridge et al. advised counselors should work with the client as opposed to working for the client to encourage them to become empowered with selecting their career goals. The categories of INCOME are comparable to the five steps of the CCS-PSU career pathways in terms of exploring and learning about career related jobs, making career decisions, and maintaining and sustaining employment. The five steps of CCS-PSU career pathways will be further discussed in a later section.

Life Design Theory

This section will discuss the life design theory developed by Savickas et al. (2009). The authors proposed that a newer approach to career theories is needed in the postmodern economy. They stressed current approaches are inadequate because theories are based on assumptions about individuals’ phases in the work environment and are classified by a set of specific stages. Specifically, Savickas et al. (2009) indicated,

“Concepts such as vocational identity, career planning, career development, and care stages are used to predict people’s adjustment to work environments assuming a relatively high stability of the environments and people’s behavior” (p. 240). The authors suggested ideas for a theoretical model grounded on human flexibility, adaptability, and life-long learning (Savickas et al., 2009): “Professional identity should be formed by individuals’ experiences and shared stories as opposed to an “abstract or an oversimplified profile of test scores” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 242). The authors reported people generally change their jobs every 2 years and there is a false notion that one should hold a single occupation for years.

Interventions on a life-designing model consist of five prospects about people: (a) contextual possibilities, (b) dynamic processes, (c) nonlinear progression, (d) multiple realities, and (e) personal patterns (Savickas et al., 2009). Additionally, “The life design counseling framework implements the theories of self-constructing and career construction that describes vocational behavior and its development” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 244). The framework is designed to be life-long, holistic, contextual, and preventive. These terms are briefly defined as the following:

Figure 2.*Framework of Life Design*

- Life-long: Skills and interests are built into their life-long development,
- Holistic: Significant life roles as they participate in career construction,
- Contextual: Importance of individual's environment, and
- Preventive: Early intervention for transition services (Savickas et al., 2009).

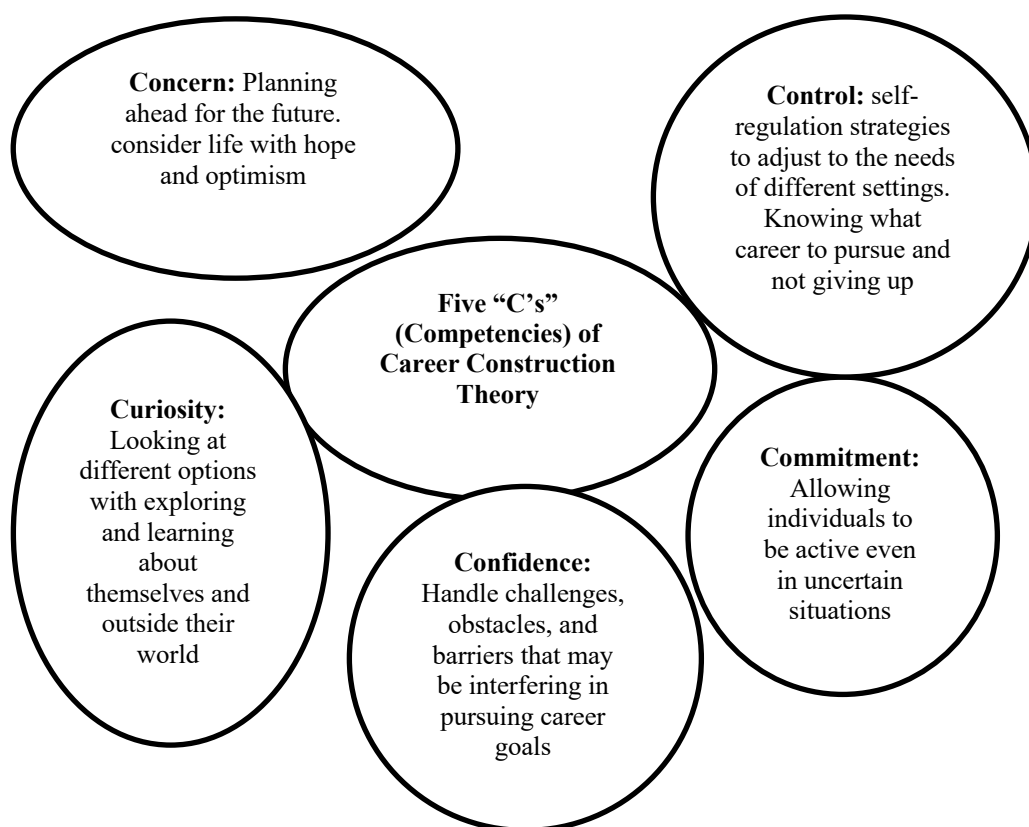
Career Adaptability

Career adaptability is an extension of Super's career maturity that emerged from Super's lifespan theory (Chen et al., 2020). Adaptability is described as a life-designing model that helps individuals describe a career story that "supports adaptive and flexible responses to developmental tasks, vocational traumas, and occupational transitions" (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 245). It assists individuals in preparing for changes and transitions for their future and in coping with their involvement, including expectations throughout the process of transition (Savickas et al., 2009). Chen et al. (2020) described

that career adaptability helps individuals maintain their ability to work in their career positions, which positively impacts their psychological resources for career development and helps them “achieve more meaning in life” (p. 1). This paradigm aims to “increase the five Cs of career construction theory: concern, control, curiosity, confidence, and commitment” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 245). Savickas et al. (2009) noted some significant factors for adaptability, including individuals confronting their concerns by increasing their confidence levels and by considering new possibilities and experimentations.

Figure 3.

Five Competencies of Career Adaptability Intervention Model



Career adaptability will help individuals become more resistant to challenges and barriers associated with careers decisions. The intervention model for life designing involves stories and activities instead of test scores and profile interpretations. The first approach of the life design model from vocational professionals is to assist the individual in identifying the problem and to learn what the client wishes to gain from receiving services (Savickas et al., 2009). Chen et al. (2020) found over the past 10 years, the life design paradigm has become a highly considered theoretical framework for career adaptability. Career adaptability has been applied and practiced in several studies (Chen et al., 2020).

For people with disabilities, life design approach in career counseling appears to have resulted in positive life outcomes, and studies have shown people with disabilities hold values that shape their career decisions just as much as their peers without disabilities (Wehmeyer et al., 2019). Further, Wehmeyer et al. (2019) found career adaptability may be more prevailing for people with disabilities who are trying to overcome employment barriers concerning transition and changes. For people with and without disabilities, career adaptability resulted in better future outcomes leading to a better quality of life (Nota & Soresi, 2012, as cited in Wehmeyer et al., 2019).

Limitations

Savickas (2016) outlined that life design interventions began by focusing on clients in terms of “their perceptions, confusion, indecision, and feelings about their career concern” (p. 85). However, Savickas (2016) advised counselors should communicate with clients about how interventions of career construction counseling and life design works, and they will not be able to solve every problem involving career

concerns. Life design uses a narrative counseling approach rather than vocational guidance, academic advising, or occupational placement. Therefore, some clients may be disappointed and discouraged with life-design intervention because they were expecting to receive guidance or advice (Savickas, 2016). For example, a counselor using this approach might begin the process by asking, “How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?” (Savickas, 2016, p. 85). Counselors should strive to sympathize with the client and help them understand they will have to do most of the work when it comes to thinking about their concerns with careers (Savickas, 2016).

Life Design Instrument for People with Disabilities

Savickas (2019) pointed out life design and career construction were originally written for children, adults, or elderly individuals going through a transition. Savickas’ (1993) self-directed workbook, *Career Construction Interview*, did not include an inclusive instrument for people with disabilities. An updated workbook titled *My Career Story-Universal* (MCS-U) was designed to be more inclusive. The reading level is arranged at a 4th grade cognitive level. The MCS-U is modeled after Holland’s self-directed search and was designed to be simple, more inclusive, and to diminish the idea of power differential (Savickas, 2019).

The MCS-U can be administered by a practitioner who works with individuals with disabilities. Using this workbook, the practitioner will ask: “*What was your first dream when you were little?*” Next, the practitioner will ask: “*What was your favorite toy?*” (Savickas, 2019, p. 1). The expectation is the individual might respond to questions based on their interests related to their vocational personality. The individual with a disability who is considered realistic and social might report they enjoy building things with peers

(Savickas, 2019). Savickas (2019) supposed the practitioner would work with the individual on coming up with other ideas, like a role model, if they are not able to recall a favorite toy.

The purpose of these questions is for the practitioner to learn about the individual's work experience. If the individual does not have any work experience, the practitioner will shift the questions to focus on the individual's leisure interests and abilities to measure their vocational interests (Savickas, 2019). The career practitioner communicates with the individual about their abilities rather than disabilities (Savickas, 2019). The questions in the workbook are organized to be repetitive and acquire themes. Individuals have the option to use objects if they experience any challenges identifying a human for questions that refer to the individual's hero or role model.

Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act of 2014

In this section, I will continue to examine issues around the unemployment rate for students with IDD exiting PSE programs by exploring policies associated with education and competitive employment for this population. This section will also discuss collaboration between VR and the Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID). The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 was the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Gamel-McCormick, 2016). VR programs receive funding and support from WIOA and have improved support for individuals with ID who are in PSE with the goal to obtain a career-focused job. Further, a major component of WIOA is competitive integrated employment, which is an inclusive work setting for people with or without disability (Gamel-McCormick, 2016). VR programs, schools, and PSE are

expected to collaborate as a partnership that involves preparing young people with disabilities to work in competitive integrated employment.

VR programs are expected to budget 15% of their federal dollars to provide employment services to individuals with ID transitioning from secondary programs to PSE and competitive employment (Gamel-McCormick, 2016). Despite this expectation, VR agencies may be denying services to students in PSE programs (Gamel-McCormick, 2016). Lee et al. (2018) outlined language in the preamble of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) clarifying that IDEA funds may be used to support these students and that language in the WIOA regulatory preamble confirms that VR funds may be used to support students in these programs. “However, subsequent guidance or interpretations of guidance are leading to denial of special education and VR services for many students in postsecondary education programs” (Lee et al., 2018, p. 5).

Some VR agencies are attempting to discourage students with ID from participating in PSE programs by not offering funding for services, and they do not recognize the PSE certificate as valid credential (Lee et al., 2018). Specifically, “Students with intellectual disability who are enrolled in these programs are being told they are not eligible for VR services, let alone pre-ETS services under WIOA, because they are not seeking a ‘recognized postsecondary credential’ as defined in WIOA” (Lee et al., 2018, p. 16).

Per WIOA guidelines, there is a strong need for collaboration between PSE programs and VR programs. This collaboration is a critical component of assisting students in college inclusion programs with their preparations for competitive employment. At CCS-PSU, students entering their final year will have already begun the

process of receiving employment services through VR and Oregon Department of Developmental Disability Services for exploring and obtaining off-campus jobs and this is an effective result of interagency collaboration.

IDEA 2004

IDEA 2004 is a federal policy that requires support for students with disabilities transitioning from high school to PSE. IDEA 2004 may require interagency collaboration, including students and their families, to work together on transition services for the student (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010). PSE professionals and other advocates can offer approaches from IDEA 2004 when working with students with disabilities (Eidelman, 2011). For example, IDEA 2004 formalized what advocates and policy makers had learned about education outcomes for students with disability (Eidelman, 2011).

IDEA 2004 requires an individual education plan or students aged 16 and older and requires monitoring and reporting of students' transition plan progress. Individual education plans must have measurable transition goals around competitive employment or enrollment in postsecondary programs, which will be monitored and changed annually, if needed (Eidelman, 2011). Eidelman (2011) stated, "Strengthening the implementation of practices that are reflected by these indicators will lead to greater inclusion of youth with ID in postsecondary settings" (p. 2). Furthermore, according to Lee et al. (2018), IDEA-funded services provided by VR agencies for students with ID in PSE settings could lead to competitive employment outcomes.

Both IDEA and WIOA stress the need for interagency collaboration between college programs and VR agencies. Currently VR counselors and staff at CCS-PSU have

a strong partnership with students, which includes coordinating services to obtain and maintain employment. The VR counselor is typically involved in the employment process for students' on- and off-campus jobs. Benefits of interagency collaboration will be further discussed.

Lane v. Brown

According to the Center for Public Representation (n.d.), Lane v. Brown is identified as the first-class action in the nation filed in 2012 that confronted segregated sheltered workshops as a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As previously mentioned, individuals with IDD working in sheltered workshops were working in noninclusive settings earning subminimum wage. Several of these individuals spent years stuck in these settings (Center for Public Representation, n.d.). Janice M. Stewart's decision indicates, "that the integration mandate of the ADA applies to employment settings as well as to residential settings." (Center for Public Representation, n.d.). Therefore, people with I/DD must receive employment services in integrated settings as opposed to sheltered workshops.

The settlement agreement negotiated that the state is mandated to offer competitive integrated jobs that pay at least minimum wage for approximately 1,100 individuals with IDD in sheltered workshops (Center for Public Representation, n.d.). It also guarantees that thousands of people with IDD can have access to vocational services with obtaining competitive employment. This was approved by the Court on December 29, 2015 (Center for Public Representation, n.d.).

Employment First Oregon

Oregon Department of Human Services (n.d.) explained that stakeholders and advocates created Oregon's Employment First in 2008. "Employment First is both a philosophy and an Oregon State Policy." (Oregon Department of Human Services, n.d.) The policy states community jobs should be the first option when coordinating services for adults and youth with I/DD (Oregon Department of Human Services, n.d.). Oregon's Employment First collaborates with Office of Developmental Disabilities Services, VR, Oregon Department of Education, and with stakeholders and local teams to "establish a successful plan for implementation". (Oregon Department of Human Services, n.d., para 2).

Oregon was one of the first states to implement an Employment First Policy in 2008. This was done by advocates to provide more employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD (Oregon Department of Human Services, n.d.). From 2010 to 2012, Department of Human Services organized a statement to address the policy:

1. Everyone can work and there is a job for everyone. Our job is to be creative and tenacious in providing support.
2. Not working should be the exception. All individuals, schools, families, and business must raise their expectations.
3. People will be hired because of their ability not because they have a disability.
4. Communities embrace people who contribute.
5. Everyone has something to contribute and needs to contribute.
6. People are healthier, safer, and happiest with meaningful work.

7. True employment is not a social service.
8. Employment is a win/win for everybody. (Oregon Department of Human Services, n.d., para 6).

Application to CCS-PSU

According to the Portland State University Career and Community Studies (CCS-PSU) website (<https://www.pdx.edu/education/ccs>), the Career and Community Studies Program, offers a Portland State University approved certificate to students who have completed the 4-year program, leading to obtainment of a prebaccalaureate certificate. Currently, CCS-PSU supports approximately 15 students with IDD, with the first cohort of five students who started in Fall 2016 completed the program in Spring 2020. The second cohort of six who graduated in Spring 2021 and the third cohort of three will graduate in Spring 2022.

This section will discuss employment services for CCS-PSU students. However, students receive individualized support for their academic coursework through the full time Academic Coordinator as well as a team of Academic Coaches who are PSU Graduate Students in the dual licensure programs in the College of Education). Students align their coursework toward an established career pathway, and each year identify career related goals. The students are required to enroll in fully inclusive coursework totaling nine credits per term (27 credits per year). The students are guided through Individuals Learning Plan using the syllabus and in collaboration with the academic coordinator, instructors, with ongoing support for implementing the ILP from the team of academic coaches.

For campus engagement, students are involved with campus activities and organizations with support from a Peer Navigator who are PSU undergraduate students providing one-on-one peer support for learning about and navigating the array of social activities such as sports, student clubs, and other campus organizations. The peer navigators support students to make connections to campus activities and organizations and then fade their support. Lastly, the CCS-PSU program supports students who wish to live on campus. These experiences enhance independence, increase social engagement, and self-determination. Further, the primary goal of CCS-PSU is for students to be employed in competitive, integrated employment in their identified and desired career pathway upon graduation from the program.

With respect to career development at CCS-PSU, the categories of the CDI instrument, drawn from Super's (1990) theory and the INCOME model, align with activities specified on the CCS-PSU Career Pathways. Furthermore, the life design theory is life-long and focuses on individuals' career issues, perceptions, confusion, and feelings about career concerns (Savickas, 2009). These theories helped frame the research questions pertaining to the CCS-PSU students' perspectives. A 5-step career planning guide was created by CCS-PSU in 2019 as an initial framework for career development. It was based upon the existing CCS-PSU Career Center approach to supporting all undergraduates and modified to address unique aspects and supports within CCS-PSU. The CCS-PSU clinical rehabilitation counseling intern and employment specialist provide individual supports to students as they develop the skills, experiences and interests leading to a specific career pathway and competitive integrated employment. The five steps to the initial program development included:

1. *Discover who you are: Career awareness:* This is consistent with student self-assessments that refine student interests, knowledge, and attitudes by determining transferable skills, aptitude, and interests. The career assessment process focuses on career interest inventories, career values and skills assessments in order to gather information confirming career interests, values and strengths that are incorporated into the annual person-centered planning (PCP) process.
2. *Identify and explore careers: Career and work-based learning.* This involves learning about different career pathways, exploring job sites, and completing informational interviews both on and off campus. Other activities include career workshops, mock interviewing, job development, job shadowing, and understanding labor market information.
3. *Make decisions: Career self-determination:* In this phase, students participate in employment path lessons focused on job-seeking skills (e.g., introduction to interviewing, resume building etc.). Students are continuously enrolled in SPED 410: Career development and employment seminars each term, which provides individualized supports and engagement. In addition, student PCP meetings are held and during these meetings students identify their long-term career goals. PCP meetings allow student to identify their career strengths, interests, and develop an action plan for the upcoming year, the upcoming 4 years, and upon graduation. . During PCP meetings, CCS-PSU staff promote self-advocacy instruction to students by identifying their needs, challenges, and supports while working with their support team.

4. *Get experience: Work-based learning/career experiences.* This phase involves exploring integrated employment that is on and off Portland State University's campus. Essentially, students collaborate with the employment specialist to explore career-focused pathway, participate in job development and job coaching once employment is found. It is expected that all students are employed during all four years in the program. In addition, students can be supported in summer internships during the sophomore and junior years. Students also create an online portfolio (LinkedIn) that specifies their experiences aligned with career goals and skills.
5. *Launch your career-focused pathway:* This phase occurs when students are seniors. By this time, they have been actively supported by, VR, Job Development Agency, and ODDS services specifically pertaining to employment services during all 4 years of their participation in the program. Students' PCP and action planning will focus directly on their career-focused pathways, along with services offered through VR and ODDS. Students participate in a range of events: Career fairs and workshops, informational interviews in career-focused jobs of interest, job search skills, and collaboration and coordination with employment agencies for post-program job development and long-term support. Once students are employed off campus, they will receive employment support to maintain and sustain their job through ODDS. (CSS PowerPoint Presentation, 2019)

During 2020, the development of employment path lessons occurred, funded by Oregon Developmental Disability Services that were put in place because of COVID-19 and the limited access students had to engage in community-based work experiences. The

students in the CCS-PSU program engage in employment activities and career counseling through support from the employment specialist and the CRC intern. Employment path lessons involve a variety of student-centered employment activities including learning skills and role playing. While there was uncertainty during COVID-19 restrictions, once job opportunities were opened back up at PSU, students were able to maintain campus employment if they chose.

The CCS-PSU Program is implementing services associated with policies of Workforce Innovations Opportunities Act and Vocational Rehabilitation with respect to interagency collaboration including their ongoing partnership with VR and Oregon Developmental Disabilities Services. These partnerships are centered around coordination of employment services to assist students to engage in career development and employment leading to career focused employment upon graduation. For students graduating from the CCS-PSU program, VR services are provided, which focuses on short term employment (timeframe is individualized but typically around six months). These services involve job development including job coaching support. Once the individual has reached stability in their job, the funding for job coaching is handed off to Oregon Developmental Disabilities Services as they provide long term support.

Benefits to College Inclusion Programs

In this section, I describe the significance of PSE programs for students with IDD. Some educators have false notions about students with IDD in PSE settings. Cook et al. (2015) wrote, “Educators believe that encouraging students with intellectual disability to pursue PSE is setting them up for failure” (p. 42). These misconceptions are held due to educators’ focus on individuals’ barriers rather than their abilities (Cook et al., 2015).

Cook et al. (2015) strongly suggested teachers, counselors, and other community partners collaborate to support transition students in PSE programs. Cook et al. also suggested that, despite the benefits to Think College programs, students could still face college barriers if they are unprepared for PSE.

However, students with IDD who transition into PSE settings significantly improve their quality of life as they have more opportunities of being integrated into the community (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010). IDEA 2004 is one federal policy that provides support for students with IDD transitioning from high school to PSE: “IDEA of 2004 ensures that teachers, parents, and young persons with disabilities are involved in planning the education and transition to postsecondary education for these individuals” (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010, p. 132).

In terms of transition planning, Stodden and Mruzek (2010) suggested transition planning offers students with IDD the opportunity to participate in regular academic courses in preparation for college programs. Further, family members of students with ID have shown a lot of interest and have been very supportive to students with ID in PSE settings. Family members, youth, and community agencies have collaborated to develop a variety of PSE models leading to successful employment outcomes for students (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010). Furthermore, the authors suggested students with ID should be a part of general education classes so they will be better prepared for college and have experiences and options like those without disabilities (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010).

Federal legislation through the WIOA has made it easier for students with intellectual and development disability (IDD) to enter university programs through inclusive postsecondary transition models (transition services to assist students with

disabilities from secondary programs to adult life). Students with IDD benefit from college inclusionary programs for students with IDD in terms of obtaining employment, gaining independence, and with community involvement (Giust & Riestra, 2017). “This nondegree certificate program allows students with ID the flexibility to select and enroll in university courses in a variety of program areas (e.g., public speaking, computing, and music) and access and participate in university campus life” (Giust & Riestra, 2017, p. 146). Lastly, Sheef et al. (2018) described increased paid work experience for students with IDD in PSE programs can lead to valuable employment outcomes in this “underemployed population” (p. 219). They went on further to say, “Doing so not only benefits individuals with IDD, but also provides an opportunity for the greater society to be even better through integration” (Sheef et al., 2018, p. 219).

Furthermore, Lee et al. (2022) focused on studies relating to the impacts and benefits of students with IDD in PSE programs. In seven studies, they found primary benefits were defined as adaptive behavior (i.e., communication, socialization, and daily living skills), employment, independence, and healthy lifestyle. Specifically for adaptive behaviors, Lee et al. (2022) reported students with IDD discussed how they made friends, had positive relationships with others and felt more independent, and were motivated to ask others for help.

Interagency Collaboration

This section introduces the seamless transition and will describe the significance of interagency collaboration between VR agencies, Oregon Developmental Disability Services, and PSE programs, including their roles in coordinating support for individuals with IDD. According to Domin & Sulewski (2019), they proposed that, based on

evidence, seamless transition programs should begin in high school settings and/or enrolled in college programs for students with ID. VR agencies are usually involved with this process as they hold a strong partnership with this program in terms of job placement and ongoing supports (Domin & Sulewski, 2019). Domin & Sulewski explained the idea of a seamless transition from high school to work engages, “a sequential delivery of specific transition services designed to result in uninterrupted, or seamless, transition from public education to employment and/or postsecondary education” (Luecking & Luecking, 2015 as cited in Domin & Sulewski, 2019, p. 2).

The student, VR Agency, and postsecondary education institution necessitates a mutual agreement that employment is the key goal for students after completing high school and/or postsecondary program (Domin & Sulewski, 2019). In conclusion, the purpose of students with ID transitioning from college to career involves detailed supports coordinated by community partners that are involved with the students (Domin & Sulewski, 2019). The authors emphasize the importance of community partners (VR and PSE programs) collaborating to support career development while the students are in college and to have a clear focus for the students as they begin to transition with continuing supports (or as needed). Once all these steps are in place and the student has moved on to their career focused goals, it is then considered a seamless transition (Domin & Sulewski, 2019).

There are other factors including challenges with COVID-19 that contribute to the employment rates (rates are reported in Chapter 2) of students with IDD exiting the Think College programs; on the one hand, it is unknown if all Think College Programs are geared toward employment goals for their students. According to the National Think

College Library, there is no data available to indicate the mission statement and employment goals for each college program. However, O'Brien et al. (2019) found employment is a desirable outcome by most graduates from college inclusion programs, and yet, they are more likely to be unemployed compared to their peers without disability. There are effective outcomes for students with IDD completing PSE programs, but there is not enough research about the outcomes of students receiving VR services, as Smith et al., 2018 addressed: "But less is known about the impact of how the general vocational rehabilitation (VR) system supports youth with intellectual disability to access PSE" (p. 1).

Every state has a VR agency that provides counseling and guidance to individuals with disabilities who experience impediments to obtaining or maintaining employment. VR services can be very valuable for students with IDD completing PSE programs because help students gain positive outcomes for employment (Smith et al., 2018). VR services typically assist students with accessing on-campus or summer jobs and provide support and training on the job (Plotner et al., 2016). VR counselors coordinate services for individuals based on their employment needs, such as career exploration, job development, job coaching, labor market information, and assistive technology (i.e., hearing aids or other adaptive equipment to assist with job tasks).

Despite involvement with VR agencies, VR professionals are not fully knowledgeable on how to serve students in PSE programs because the programs are new, and—like VR professionals—PSE professionals are not completely informed about the process of using VR services (Plotner et al., 2016). There could be a lack of VR involvement with PSE programs and both VR and PSE programs are unaware of

expectations and support to enhance collaboration and adult employment outcomes (Plotner et al., 2016). Plotner et al. (2016) conducted a survey that examined collaboration between VR and PSE programs and found although VR is a valuable resource for employment outcomes only one-third of PSE professionals are collaborating with VR service providers. The authors suggested the reason for this could be lack of collaboration, awareness, and community involvement between the partners. They suggested VR professionals be invited to PSE program planning outcome teams: “If they (staff at PSE programs) are unfamiliar with the importance of the VR counselor in both creating and maintaining adult outcomes, particularly employment opportunities, these necessary initiations will not take place” (Plotner et al., 2016, p. 200).

Grigal and Whaley (2016) described VR partnerships as essential to implementation of the TPSID model; however, collaboration is not consistent throughout all programs as VR professionals appear to struggle with understanding benefits of students with ID attending PSE programs. The authors suggested more work needs to be done for clarification about VR professionals and how inclusive higher education is associated with VR goals for students in college programs. The authors also recommended the two partners (VR and PSE programs) collaborate on objectives of the inclusive higher education program and their alignment with objectives of VR (Grigal & Whaley, 2016).

Furthermore, Lee et al. (2022) noted parents of students with IDD in postsecondary education programs reported collaboration is a hindrance because supports in employment and independent living were not sustained after graduation. Lee et al. (2022) suggested there must be connections between community agencies to sustain

supports in employment; they stated, “After students finish the program, collaboration between PSE-IDD personnel and service agencies (e.g., vocational rehabilitation) can translate to long-term independence and employment success” (Lee et al., 2022 p. 243). This collaboration must also include ensuring job placement supports are put in place for students once they move home after completing the program because some programs are in a different geographical area (Lee et al., 2022).

Kohler & Field (2003, as cited in O’Brien et al., 2019) identified evidence-based transition practices for students with IDD transitioning from university to employment, which includes the need for interagency collaboration and involves the following major categories:

- Student-focused/person-centered: Transition plan development, student participation in the planning process, and planning strategies.
- Student development: Life skills instruction, employment skills instruction, structured work experience, career and vocational curricula, assessment, self-determination training.
- Family involvement: Family participation in transition planning, family training and empowerment
- Program structure: Policy, philosophy, strategic planning, program evaluation, resource allocation, and human resource development.
- Interagency collaboration: Collaborative service delivery and interorganizational frameworks (p. 258).

Research has proven that this approach is evidenced based practice for post school outcomes in education and employment (O'Brien et al., 2019). This model is very similar with what is happening in the CCS-PSU program for students transitioning from the college to competitive employment.

In Oregon, VR agencies and Oregon Developmental Disability Services have an essential partnership with respect to interagency collaboration per the Employment First guidelines (Oregon Department of Human Services (n.d.). The CCS-PSU program also works in partnership with Oregon Department of Human Services and with VR agencies.

Impacts of COVID-19

Grigal et al. (2022) addressed the employment impacts of COVID-19 on employment. There were no impacts in terms of pre-employment preparation services, which includes career awareness and exploration, 85% of the college programs reported collaboration with VR to provide pre-employment transition services as defined in WIOA guidelines (Grigal et al., 2022). Only 31% of students were engaged in paid employment while enrolled in courses during 2019–2020.

Synthesis

The common themes that emerged from the literature review indicates the values and benefits of students with IDD participating in inclusive college programs as they are provided with the opportunity to have the college experience while working in competitive jobs. Most benefits to college inclusion programs identified in the literature relate to increased self-esteem, better quality of life, and community integration. Additional themes describe the importance of interagency collaboration that involves the support of students with IDD working in competitive employment. The literature

indicated individuals with IDD are more likely to be underemployed and unprepared to participate in PSE programs if they were not receiving support through VR agencies and other community partners.

All legal policies (WIOA, IDEA, and Employment First Oregon) identified in this chapter address the need for interagency collaboration when supporting inclusion of individuals with ID in the workplace and educational settings. Employment First Oregon specifically includes the partnership with Oregon Developmental Disability Services as they provide funding for long-term employment support. Lastly, findings from literature revealed the instrument of CDI and INCOME appear to have a lot of commonalities and seem more appropriate to use when providing career development services to students with ID in PSE programs. The categories of INCOME framed the research questions because they are well suited to CSS career CCS-PSU identified earlier in this manuscript.

INCOME, modeled after Super's theory, contains steps that involve students in learning, exploring, choosing, and maintaining the types of jobs they would like to work in. Similarly, CCS-PSU career pathways include the steps: (a) discover who you are, (b) identify and explore careers, and (c) make decisions, which are very similar to exploring, choosing, and maintaining employment. Life design theory helped frame the research questions in terms of students' perspectives about their experiences and concerns relating to their participation in career-related activities and with job preparation.

Critique

As mentioned in the limitations section, Super's life span theories (1990) assume phases of individuals based on their age, which would most likely not apply to individuals with ID as they experience phases at different times in their lives.

Additionally, Beveridge et al. (2002) mentioned existing career development theories have received criticism due to limitations for individuals in early career exploratory experience. The INCOME framework appears to be valuable for career development services in PSE settings because the categories pertain to career exploration, choosing, maintaining, and sustaining employment, in which some of these categories are aligned with career development activities for students in the CCS-PSU program. However, more research is needed about career outcomes and there is not enough evidence to support the outcomes because it is a framework that was formed in 2002.

Review of Methodological Literature

Phenomenological research designs have been recently used in studies centering inclusive opportunities for students with ID. O'Brien et al. (2019) used a phenomenological approach while conducting personal interviews with students with ID in college inclusion programs; the study is titled the "Lived Experiences of Being and Becoming a University Student". O'Brien et al. collected qualitative data from personal interviews with participants and each participant was asked to identify their experiences of being and becoming a university student, which included their journey and pathways. Lectures (2019) perspectives were also involved with the study. Some qualitative data that emerged from interviews were focused on career related opportunities.

Another study by Athamanah et al. (2020) used a phenomenological research design to explore perceptions and experiences of college peer mentors interacting with students with IDD. A phenomenology research design was selected because the researchers wanted to focus on the full meaning of participants' (peer mentors) mentoring experiences as shared in their own words (Athamanah et al., 2020). Data were collected

from semistructured interviews and focus groups and analyzed using phenomenological methods. Questions were based on perspectives of students with IDD working and socializing in the community. Thirteen peer mentors were selected for the study and some experiences described in the study discussed transition students working in competitive employment.

Further first-person qualitative research is needed about students' perspectives of working in competitive integrated employment. For this study, a phenomenological approach will be primarily focused on students' perspectives on career related experience in CCS-PSU. A phenomenological research design was selected for this study to help readers understand students' experience and perceptions about preparation for working in competitive employment. There have been limited qualitative studies focused on students with ID in PSE programs working in competitive employment.

Also, the reduced unemployment rate for students exiting PSE programs support the need to further explore perspectives of students with ID working in career focused jobs. Brantlinger et al. (2005) indicated students in special education have a history of being marginalized and left out of qualitative studies. Therefore, for this study, students with ID will have an opportunity to have their voices heard. Studies focused on this topic provide valuable insights about students' perspectives on their inclusion. Also, there is much to be learned about students' perspectives in PSE settings.

Summary of the Research Literature

The literature reviewed for this dissertation presents benefits and outcomes of college inclusion programs for students with ID and how these programs could result in an increase of self-esteem, employment, and better quality of life. Additionally, the

literature emphasized that employment barriers for students with ID in college inclusion programs could prevent them from living more independently and being fully integrated into their community. Unemployment for students with ID leads to isolation and feelings of loneliness. This is concerning given the main goal of college inclusion programs is for students to be competitively employed and included into their community once they exit the program. If students with ID continue to be unemployed after completing TPSID programs issues of equity should be considered. For example, in CCS-PSU, students spend a considerable amount of time preparing for employment by working one-on-one with their job developer, which involves activities in the CCS-PSU 5-step career pathways. Also, the literature review implied benefits to college inclusion programs could result in increased self-esteem, better quality of life, and community integration (Grigal & Whaley, 2016; Sheef et al., 2018; Stodden & Mruzek, 2010).

Other literature points out some barriers that result in unemployment for students with ID and highlights the significance and benefits of interagency collaboration. As noted previously, the literature established the frameworks of life design and INCOME as more appropriate to use when providing career development services to students with ID in PSE programs. The frameworks fit well with career pathways to CCS-PSU. Life design will be a solid framework for students with ID in PSE programs as the research is focused on students' experiences and perceptions about their career pathways, including their career concerns. The framework INCOME contains steps that involve students in learning, exploring, choosing, and maintaining the types of jobs of interest to them.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) preparing to work in competitive integrated employment in the Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID). Through voices of students, this research will contribute to literature for stakeholders in college inclusion programs, VR agencies, and IDD Services across to better understand perspectives of students with IDD preparing to work in competitive employment. In my role as researcher, with assistance from the Career and Community Studies Program at Portland State University (CCS-PSU) codirector, I recruited six participants for the study. The participants were in the second cohort in the CCS-PSU program who graduated in Spring 2021. The following table identifies the demographics of each participant:

Table 1.

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Grade Level
Michael	23	Male	Senior
Jeremy	22	Male	Senior
Jessica	24	Female	Senior
Gayla	22	Female	Senior
Luke	22	Male	Senior
Robert	21	Male	Junior

A phenomenological research design was chosen to capture perspectives and experiences with career development and preparation for students with IDD in college inclusion programs working in competitive employment. The methods for this study will

be described along with proposed research questions, procedures, and data collection decisions that were informed by theories on career development. Open-ended interview questions focused on CCS-PSU students' perspectives and experiences with services they received related to development and preparation while working or preparing to work on their campus jobs. The theories of INCOME (Beveridge et al., 2002) and life design (Savickas et al., 2009) framed the study's research questions.

Research Methods

In terms of my positionality, I am first generation Iraqi/Jordanian nondisabled woman who is very passionate about supporting the inclusion, self-advocacy, community integration for people with disabilities as I believe that everyone can work. I was the former Employment Coordinator for the Career & Community Studies Program at Portland State University (CCS-PSU). I worked with the students who participated in this study during Winter, Spring, and Summer Term of 2019. During my time at CCS-PSU, I supported the students with their engagement of pre-employment activities and with obtaining and maintaining their campus jobs. I had some involvement with their PCPs during 2019. However, I had not involvement with the PCPs that were collected in this study, which is between Winter 2020 and Spring 2021 as I was no longer working for CCS-PSU.

Currently, I am working as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with experience in case management, services coordination, and job development services, for individuals with disabilities. At VR, I maintain a caseload of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by working with their support team on fulfilling their goals for working in integrated and meaningful jobs.

I chose to conduct a qualitative study because I believe it is important to consider views and perspectives of individuals with IDD preparing to work in competitive integrated employment, especially because they have been previously left out of inclusive employment settings. In qualitative studies in special education, Brantlinger et al. (2005) specified, “Qualitative studies typically include an emic (insider to phenomenon) in contrast to quantitative studies’ etic (outsider) perspective. By focusing on participants’ personal meanings, qualitative research ‘gives voice’ to people who have been historically silenced or marginalized” (p. 199). My hope is students’ voices will be heard in this study with respect to their views and perspectives about their preparation to work in competitive employment and with their views on overcoming employment related barriers.

Further, qualitative research is needed to find reasoning from participants’ personal experiences and to document what is happening for readers (i.e., researchers and stakeholders in postsecondary education college settings and VR programs) and for researchers to discover a phenomenon (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Personal interviews will be used to ensure participants’ voices are heard (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Seidman (2013) described this process as participants telling their stories and researchers making sense of the stories, which makes stories “a meaningful-making experience” (p. 7).

Ultimately, I sought to understand participants’ experience and views about their involvement in career-related activities and their preparation to work in jobs on campus. In addition, my goal is for readers to recognize the importance of students with IDD preparing to work in competitive employment through voices of students, their vocational counseling intern, and their job developer. Both the vocational counseling intern and job

developer play a significant role in assisting students with career development activities and could provide rich data explaining their views about students' preparing to work in meaningful, career-related jobs.

Data collected for this study could help inform stakeholders at college inclusion programs to consider the importance and process required for building a strong partnership with VR programs, particularly for college programs that do not have a partnership with VR. Essentially, this work may help college programs ensure they are preparing students with IDD for competitive integrated employment. This study used a phenomenological design to investigate students' viewpoints and experiences of preparing to work in competitive integrated employment through their lived experiences. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe phenomenologists who are curious about individuals' lived experience. The authors delineate "such a focus requires us to go directly 'to the things themselves' to turn upward phenomena which had been blocked from sight by the theoretical patterns in front of them" (Spigelberg, 1965, p. 658, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 26).

Phenomenology is also defined as the study of people's experience of their everyday life actions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose to use a phenomenological research design because it is important to consider participants' viewpoints through their lived experiences. This was done in this study through semistructured interviews focused on their career pathways. The interviews were recorded, and I transcribed the data and entered the data in Dedoose software version 8.0.35. Dedoose has been previously used in qualitative studies and is used to "identify, organize, extract, and code-specific results.

This online qualitative analysis system can identify frequencies, patterns, and themes across all data” (Wilt & Morningstar, 2020, p. 5).

Setting

Career and Community Studies is a college inclusion program, which is associated with TPSID programs that provide a 4-year college experience for students with IDD. Career and Community Studies values are inclusion, self-determination, academic achievement, gainful employment, and community engagement. At the time of this study, there were approximately 15 students enrolled in CCS-PSU program. The first cohort completed the program in spring 2020. Students exiting the program are offered a PSU approved prebaccalaureate, certificate in Career and Community Studies. Due to mandatory social distancing guidelines resulting from COVID-19, all interviews were recorded through Zoom Video Communications, Inc. (i.e., Zoom), which is a software for video face-to-face conferencing and chat. Each interview included audio and video recording via Zoom with consent by the participants. The interviews were held with all six participants from March 2021 through June 2021.

Due to challenges from the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were temporary changes to CCS-PSU that aligned with the PSU COVID-19 guidelines. Beginning in March 2020 all classes on campus were held remotely via Zoom. CCS-PSU students participated in the program virtually via Zoom, which included classes and individual meetings with CCS-PSU staff and peer navigators. Given these circumstances, CCS-PSU students had limited options for obtaining career related jobs on campus. At the time of this study, students were receiving employment services remotely through an outside agency, their Job Developer, and Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling intern. These

services focus on helping students prepare to work in their career-related jobs and include participation in CCS-PSU career pathways steps that do not require in-person activities. At least one question in the interview protocol asked about students' views on participating virtually in career related activities and how it benefited or impacted them based on their career goals, career concerns, and interests.

Ethical Recruitment of Participants

I informed participants they were not obligated to participate in the study and could drop out anytime and for any reason during the study. Seidman (2013) indicated the eight major parts of informed consent (i.e., invitation, risks, rights, possible benefits, confidentiality records, dissemination, special conditions for children, and contact information and copies of the form), which was followed with all participants interested in the study. I also obtained institutional review board approval from PSU before conducting this research.

There are other concerns associated with qualitative research, particularly with personal interviews, including that research is typically conducted by people in positions of power and there can be an assumption that interviewees' words benefit the researcher (Seidman, 2013). For instance, to avoid the appearance that I am looking for biased responses I carefully worded my questions to ensure wording did not lead to biased questions. I also ensured the interviewing process was done ethically by probing participants whenever necessary to ensure they understood what was being asked and to remind participants their responses should be based on their views and experiences. Seidman (2013) noted interviewing is a "powerful way to gain insight into educational

and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues” (p. 13).

Participants

All students in the CCS-PSU program were recruited for this study: total of four cohorts (Freshman, Sophomore, Juniors, and Seniors). There were six (out of possible 15) participants in this study. Each participant was asked open-ended questions about their perspectives and experiences as students with IDD in college inclusion programs preparing to work in competitive integrated employment. In this section, I will briefly discuss requirements for students interested in enrolling in CCS-PSU as there are several steps to the application process. First, potential CCS-PSU students are required to fill out an online application on the PSU website. The CCS-PSU interview committee team then reviews application materials from interested applicants and comes to agreement on which students to select for interviews. This includes the eligibility process; the eligibility requirement for CCS-PSU enrollment is for the students to have a diagnosis of an intellectual and/or developmental disability.

Intellectual and developmental disabilities is used to describe students with developmental disability or ID (Hafner et al., 2011). Further, Gibbons et al. (2018) found that “American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disability (AAIDD, 2011) and the American Psychiatric Association, define ID and DD [development disability] as limitations in both intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior” (p. 80).

Second, students interested in the program are confirmed eligible once CCS-PSU staff receive and review documents, with the students’ consent, from the students’

medical doctor or from secondary schools (i.e., diagnosis is usually indicated on the Individual Learning Plan), which indicates the individuals have a diagnosis of an IDD along with limitations they experience. Third, selected students are usually contacted via email and by phone to schedule an interview with CCS-PSU staff.

Typically, the student is interviewed by CCS-PSU staff and the academic coordinator. During interviews, students are usually asked to give a presentation introducing themselves with support from interviewers, if needed. After the presentation, interviewees are asked open-ended questions about their interest in the program, what they wish to get out of the program, and about their views on taking courses and working in jobs on campus. CCS-PSU staff will spend additional time probing interviewees, if needed. Given steps taken to make students eligible for CCS-PSU, all CCS-PSU students are eligible to participate in this study; no further steps are needed by me to make them eligible.

Table 2 provides a brief description from the Person-Centered Planning information that was collected from the participants prior to the personal interviews in Winter 2021 and Spring 2021. Table 2 does not include all data from the PCP; it only incorporates data that focused on the student's career information. The names identified are Pseudonyms of their choosing.

Table 2.*Person-Centered Planning Information*

<i>Participant Portfolios</i>						
Pseudonym & Timeframe of PCP	Grade level	Career activities	Learned job skills	What works	What does not work	Next steps for obtaining career focused job
Michael (Winter, 2020)	Senior	With CRC intern learning about job and career ideas, working on his plan toward a career-focused job, getting supports in place, obtained campus job at PSU Athletics. Identified career focused job working in athletics.	Customer service, payroll, event set up, office work.	Nice people being flexible, let others know when he needs a break or over-whelmed, participating in weekly activities.	Mean people, feeling rushed and over-whelmed, being told at last minute about changes in schedule.	Not indicated in this PCP as it was not the final PCP, final PCP was completed in Spring, 2021.
Jeremy (Winter, 2020)	Senior	Job shadow on campus, obtained campus job at the PSU Library.	General clean up, cash register, money handling, data entry, professionalism, and communication.	Texting, calendar invites, writing and talking when learning, having a routine, scheduling hangouts, work first, play later, feeling comfortable talking to people if he knows them.	Loud noises, too many emails, too many people talking at once, and vague instructions.	Not indicated in this PCP as it was not the final PCP, final PCP was completed in Spring, 2021.
Jessica (Spring, 2021)	Senior	Working on campus job at the Rec Center, learning about career	Food prep general cleaning services.	Being organized, knowing schedule, being prompt, clear expectations,	Mean people, distractions, being worried and rushed.	Pursuing employment plan, work assessment, and job development

<i>Participant Portfolios</i>						
Pseudonym & Timeframe of PCP	Grade level	Career activities	Learned job skills	What works	What does not work	Next steps for obtaining career focused job
		exploration with Job Developer, job shadows, informational interviews. Identified career focused job working for job for Jama Juice or Starbucks,		having someone to reach out to, being part of a team, having time to process, knowing next steps.		with employment Provider.
Gayla (Spring, 2021)	Senior	Job shadows, volunteer job, obtained campus job at PSU Little Vikings Daycare, and identified career-focused job working in the Container Store or Target when exiting program.	Childcare tasks	Information by email, busy schedule, quick responses to emails, being included/ accepted, having time to think about next steps, structure, clear direction, having time to think about goals, and clear instructions.	Feeling rushed, inconsistent work schedule, falling behind, tech issues, feeling stressed.	Planning review career exploration report and developing a career portfolio; job development w/ employment Provider.
Luke (Spring, 2021)	Senior	Worked on campus job at the Rec Center, career exploration and informational interviews at the Zoo and Nike, employment paths with Job Developer, and identified career-focused job	Listening to others talk before taking notes, receive coaching first, then work in tasks alone, routine schedule, clear expectations, time to process info, going one step at a time.	Communication and organization skills.	Being rushed, sudden schedule change, and lack of transportation options.	Planning to work on Career Exploration and job development services with VR Counselor and Job Developer.

<i>Participant Portfolios</i>						
Pseudonym & Timeframe of PCP	Grade level	Career activities	Learned job skills	What works	What does not work	Next steps for obtaining career focused job
		working gat the Oregon Zoo or Oregon Historical Society when exiting program				
Robert (Winter, 2021)	Junior	Worked on campus job at the Rec Center. identified career-focused job in broadcasting or athletics when exiting program.	Reminders for tasks, sharing worries with allies, using calendar to remember events, teamwork, talks through learning tasks, good support, and people who honor promises.	Teamwork, sales money handling social skills, making connections, gardening general cleaning services entertaining, stocking items.	Feeling rushed, anxious people, too many reminders, and not enough time to complete tasks.	Completed Career Exploration and career counseling with CRC intern; pursuing internship opportunity with Job Developer.

Note. Data from Table 2 obtained from Winter 2021 through Spring 2021 prior to the interviews.

Procedures

To avoid coercion and respect anonymity and autonomy of students, I did not recruit students to participate in the study. Students were recruited for the study by one of the codirectors who presented a video I created that explained the purpose of the study. Students interested in the study were asked to email me. Convenience sampling was adopted for this study; Maxwell (2013) justified convenience sampling may be the best way to proceed when trying to learn about a group that is challenging to access or a group of individuals who are somewhat rare in the population. Convenience sampling was a reasonable approach for this study given data were collected through personal interviews

and the small number of students (i.e., 15) in CCS-PSU. During convenience sampling, “respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 150). Additionally, convenience sampling was chosen due to the challenges of COVID-19; it was unknown if students were going to be interested in participating in this study because the CCS-PSU changes and transitions that were a result of the Pandemic. These changes related to limited job opportunities for paid jobs and with the program being available virtually.

I collaborated with CCS-PSU staff, with participants’ consent, to obtain some background information about the students including their person-centered planning (i.e., PCP) document. This helped me learn more about the students in terms of their career interests, strengths, career goals, and potential work barriers. CCS-PSU students who participated in the study were asked open ended questions (see Appendix E) about their observations and experiences revolving around making career related decisions and participating in activities. They were asked about their perspectives and experiences on campus activities relating to their career related goals.

Acquiring PCP information ensured I was equipped with contextual information I could use to clarify questions, helped me understand the student better, and helped ensure participants’ responses were comprehensible. Each PCP included information about students’ interests in career activities and career goals. The interviews lasted between 30–50 minutes. This included time spent on introductions (i.e., meet and greet) between me and participants.

The meet and greet process with participants was conversational, which allowed me to establish trust. Next, personal interviews (see Appendix E) were conducted with

each of the participants. The interview protocol included 14 open ended questions that were asked of the CCS-PSU used with students. The participants were also provided with information on their PCP to help participants better understand, recall information, and respond to interview questions. Participants were encouraged but not required to invite an informed individual to attend the interview to assist with probing when needed because some participants might need assistance recalling some answers to questions. This informed person could be a friend, family member, the vocational counseling intern, or the job developer. If necessary, additional time probing participants was done by me or the informed person. For example, follow up questions were asked after questions pertaining to career activities, they participated in with the vocational counseling intern and the job developer. Personal interviews took place via Zoom and were recorded with participants' consent.

Due to mandatory social distancing guidelines resulting from COVID-19, all interviews were recorded through Zoom Video Communications, Inc. (i.e., Zoom), (which is a software for video face-to-face conferencing and chat) Each interview included audio and video recording via Zoom with consent by the participants. Participants were reminded the recording (i.e., audio and video) could be turned off anytime at their request. Interviews focused on their views and experiences and about their preparation to work in competitive integrated employment. Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and available in transcripts via Zoom. To ensure anonymity, all recorded videos were destroyed after they are transcribed. Names were replaced with pseudonyms and no specific job information, or any other identifiable information, was specified on the transcripts.

Data credibility and trustworthiness was established by having data member checked by participants who confirmed the transcribed information was correct and accurate. For member checking, participants received a copy of the transcript via email, and I followed up with participants via email to ensure they understood the transcript. Each participant confirmed via email the data were accurate. The purpose of member checking was for participants to have an opportunity to clarify or correct any data that were incorrect. Given the limitations individuals with IDD may experience with comprehending a long transcript, a more effective approach to member checking and trustworthiness would have been to condense the transcript into a shorter version by indicating the coded data (rather than the whole script). The next step would have been to follow up with each participant via Zoom to engage in a discussion about the data, which would give the participants to have a chance correct and/or clarify any data that seemed inaccurate to them.

An in vivo coding approach was adopted when coding data, which is also known as inductive coding, verbatim coding, literal coding, and indigenous coding (Saldana, 2016). In vivo coding is applicable for most qualitative research but especially for new qualitative researchers (Saldana, 2016). In vivo coding is particularly common for research practitioners as the researcher's intent is to follow the "*verbatim principle*" (Saldana, 2016, p. 106) by using terms and concepts drawn from the worlds of participants. Within this approach, researchers capture the meaning of people's voices, and each line of data has its own codes (Saldana, 2016). Using this approach, the researcher forms codes based on data and a theory could emerge from data collected from interviews.

This study used two forms of triangulation to promote credibility. The first was data triangulation. I collected PCP information by CCS-PSU staff with students' consent for each CCS-PSU student participating in the study during March 2021 through June 2021. PCP information provided me a chance to learn more about each prior to their interview. This information helped if the student recalled events already located in the PCP; it ensured I already had knowledge about those events. The second was investigator triangulation, which ensures data is analyzed and coded by multiple researchers to avoid any bias (Lindstrom et al., 2014). There were two coders (i.e., intercoder agreement), I was the primary coder and another doctoral student agreed to be the second coder. We analyzed the data and considered multiple perspectives during Fall 2021, and reached agreement on codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Prior to the coding process, we met via Zoom to discuss the coding process. Together we practiced scoring data and used a set of the qualitative data to reach consensus scoring of codes that emerged from the data. All names and other identifying information were redacted from each transcript by me before it was accessible to the second coder.

During the masked phase, the second coder did not have access the codes from the primary coder. For example, the primary coder uploaded an uncoded set of transcripts into Dedoose as a new project for the second coder to use for coding. Coders documented emerging themes along with disconfirming evidence as individuals with ID might provide anecdotal evidence leading to meaningful, unique experiences relating to career related activities (Saldana, 2016). Coders met via Zoom to discuss data scores for each participant and to come to unanimous agreement on coding themes. The coders collaborated about how each line of data got its own codes and those additional codes

will be generated for disconfirming evidence. For instance, the coders agreed on coding the data under three major categories that emerged from the interview protocol questions, which were job preparation, career activities, and career barriers. Two additional codes (i.e., COVID-19 and emotional support) were created to summarize data that did not fall under the research questions. the coders decided it might be important data to consider during analysis. This phase occurred late Fall 2021 and Winter 2022.

Instruments and Measures

Students in CCS-PSU were provided with a video demonstration about the purpose of the study that included a brief description of roles between the researcher and participants. Students who expressed interest in participating in the study were encouraged to notify me via email. I then collaborated with CCS-PSU staff, with students' consent, about collecting PCP information for each of the interested students. For the coding process, an in vivo coding approach was implemented. I formed codes based on raw data.

Semi Structured Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What are some of the career activities that you have been participating in with the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling intern?
3. What career activities have you explored with your Job Developer?
4. Give me an example on how you made a decision about the types of career related jobs you wanted to work in?
5. Did you ever complete any career related job interest assessments?
6. What did you learn about yourself from these career related job assessments?

7. Were you able to learn more about the career focused jobs you wanted to work in?
8. Give me an example of what you learned about the job role?
9. Did you enroll in any classes that relate to your career related job interests?
10. Were you ever provided with opportunities to practice your interviewing skills? If so, tell me about it?
11. What challenges have you experienced with any of the career-related activities you have participated in? In other words, what has not worked for you in terms of the career activities? How were you able to overcome these challenges?
12. What concerns or worries do you have about working in a career-related job?
13. Do you feel prepared to work in a career related job? If so, what are your next steps?
14. Lastly, tell me about your experience with participating in CCS-PSU activities remotely? How has this impacted you with participating in career related activities?

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from six personal semistructured interviews with students in CCS-PSU. Due to mandatory social distancing guidelines resulting from COVID-19, all interviews were recorded and transcribed through Zoom. I listened to each recording while matching them with the transcripts to confirm the data were accurate. To avoid threats to validity and bias, the data was member-checked by participants, which allowed them to review interview data and confirm data were correct or not. I then coded all of

data line by line using Dedoose and I identified some categories that were originally drawn from the research questions. I looked for emerging themes and disconfirming evidence as individuals with ID may have provided anecdotal evidence leading to meaningful, unique experiences relating to career activities. All names were changed to pseudonyms of their choosing and no distinguishable information was addressed on transcripts. To protect the privacy of the participants all recorded data and transcripts were destroyed once the study was completed.

The interviews were recorded, and data were transcribed via Zoom and entered in Dedoose software version 8.0.35. Each interview lasted for approximately 30–45 minutes. The interviews were casual; I started and ended each interview with small talk to establish trust from the participants. In vivo coding was employed for coding the data it is mostly suitable for educational practitioners, new researchers, and it offers a deeper understanding about the participants' views and perspectives (Saldana, 2016).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the viewpoints and experiences of students with ID preparing to work in competitive integrated and meaningful employment while in CCS-PSU. This research included personal semistructured interviews that explored perspectives of students with ID preparing to work in competitive employment. With signed consent from participants, data were collected from personal semistructured interviews via Zoom with six students from CCS-PSU. The following research questions, guided by the theoretical framework of INCOME and life design, were explored:

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program on their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program receiving supports on overcoming barriers while participating in career related activities?

Interview protocol questions (see Appendix E and Table 2) were drawn from these research questions.

Table 3.*Summary of the Research Questions*

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program with regard to their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment?
Individual Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the career activities that you have been participating in with the vocational counseling intern? • What career activities have you explored with your Job Developer? • Give me an example on how you made a decision about the types of jobs you wanted to work in? • Did you ever complete any job interest assessments? • What did you learn about yourself from these job assessments? • Were you able to learn more about the jobs you wanted to work in? • Give me an example of what you learned about the job role? • Did you enroll in any classes that relate to your job interests? • Were you ever provided with opportunities to practice your interviewing skills? If so, tell me about it? • Do you feel prepared to work in a career related job? If so, what are your next steps?
Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in college inclusive program with receiving support for overcoming barriers while participating in career related activities?
Individual Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What challenges have you experienced with any of the career-related activities you have participated in? How were you able to overcome these challenges? • What concerns or worries do you have about working in a career-related job? • Lastly, tell me about your experience with participating in CCS-PSU activities remotely? How has this impacted your participating in career related activities?

Theoretical and Practical Significance

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions and experiences of students with ID in college inclusion programs preparing to work in competitive

integrated employment. Individuals with ID have a history of being isolated from integrated communities and marginalized into groups. Because of hard work from policy makers, students with ID are being provided with competitive employment opportunities. Despite these positive changes, students with ID are still experiencing employment barriers and more research is needed to measure employment outcomes for students with ID in college inclusion programs. As previously noted, approximately 34% of students exiting Think College programs are not in paid employment. This is a concern given competitive employment is one of the major outcomes for TPSID programs. Recommendations that emerged from this study's data may be helpful for Think College programs statewide.

Role of the Researcher

I collected data from qualitative interviews with each participant. A second trained coder coded data with me, and we reached agreement on coding themes. Participants had an opportunity to review data that were coded, once data were transcribed, to ensure data were correct. I have over 3 years of professional experience providing vocational counseling and case management services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disability. I am a strong advocate of supporting inclusion and accessibility in the workplace for individuals with disabilities.

I was vigilant while gathering information to ensure participants' voices were heard and to avoid any possible bias while conducting interviews. My professional background in advocating for individuals with disabilities informs my sensitivity to certain topics. For instance, participants might have described barriers they experienced during their involvement with career-related activities or about their concerns working in

competitive integrated employment. While gathering sensitive data from participants relating to these topics, I was sure to carefully word questions by asking about challenges they experience in career related activities as opposed to asking directly about their barriers or impediments to employment.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives and experience of students in the Portland State University Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disability college inclusion program who were preparing to work in competitive integrated employment. As mentioned earlier, Employment is a valuable outcome for students with ID exiting college inclusion programs (Lee et al., 2022). In my role as the researcher, with assistance from the Career and Community Studies Program (CCS-PSU) codirector, I recruited six participants for the study. A qualitative study using a phenomenological approach was used to conduct semistructured personal interviews with six participants. The data gathered for this study addressed the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program on their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program receiving supports on overcoming barriers while participating in career related activities?

Analysis of Data

Primary data for this study were obtained from semistructured interviews with six students in the CCS-PSU program to measure their perspectives on participating in career activities and with preparing for competitive employment. Findings of this study were

organized through multiple rounds of data analysis. Categories were generated under the initial codes of job preparation, career activities (for Research Question 2) and career barriers, COVID-19, and emotional supports (for Research Question 1). As mentioned in the methods section, in vivo coding was employed for coding the data to provide a deeper understanding about participants' views and perspectives (Saldana, 2016).

As noted in Chapter 3, to disguise the scores, I uploaded a masked copy of the data for a second coder to use for coding. The second coder and I met via Zoom during Fall 2021 to discuss the coding scheme and we decided to categorize the data under five major categories that emerged from the research questions. Next, I downloaded data from Dedoose (that were drawn from the categories) from the coded data into an excel spreadsheet. Then I used the spreadsheet to analyze the data to find the emerging themes. This step occurred in Winter 2022.

Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

This section identifies the findings that addressed each research question. The data were collected and coded through multiple rounds. Themes emerged from this study described the types of career activities participants worked on and the career goals they identified from participating in career activities. The main themes described in this chapter are informational interviews, career assessments, and employment path lessons. These career activities were coordinated by the participant's job developer. Additional themes discuss transportation needs and for participants to continue receiving employment supports from their job developer and vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor as they proceed with obtaining a career focused job. This study also found participants were able to identify challenges and coping mechanisms through supports in

their work environment who could assist them with addressing barriers as they moved forward to working in competitive employment.

Research Question 1

1. What are the perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program on their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment?

I asked the protocol questions in Table 2 to examine the perspectives of students with ID in the CCS-PSU program preparing to work in competitive integrated employment through personal semistructured interviews. Six themes emerged from data analysis.

Theme 1: “I have had informational interviews”

One of the most common themes from the interviews was the that all six participants identified they had informational interviews that were coordinated by their job developer via Zoom. According to the Portland State University Career Center, informational interviews are an activity used during career exploration that provides job seekers a chance to interview an employer that is of interest to them for potential job opportunities. The job seeker would typically ask the employer open ended questions about a certain job position and what it would entail. Basically, they are given the chance to interview the employer to explore about career pathways they might have not previously known about.

Michael is a senior in the CCS-PSU Program, and he really loves attending sporting events. In terms of career activities, he shared he had informational interviews with Nike, Portland State University, athletics, and Special Olympics, he stated,

They said right now we know; they don't have anything open but when they do, they'll...I'll connect with them and see what I can do with them because that's my goal...working in sports...something around sports.

Gayla is really excited to graduate from the CCS-PSU program this year; she is finishing up her senior year. She described that before the pandemic, she loved being social with others and participating in campus activities. Regarding career activities, Gayla shared that she had an informational interview with Oregon Museum of Science Industry (OMSI) and two other places that she could not recall. Jessica (senior) indicated that she had one informational interview to learn more about becoming a barista. Luke (senior), who also participated in informational interviews stated,

Or like working with animals and we were interviewed by people who are within that field most of the time and then.... What would the time be? what's it like working there? and stuff like that so yeah, we did do that virtually during like virtual means and all that so....

Robert is going into his senior year in the CCS-PSU program. Robert loves sports and he describes himself as being a hard worker, enthusiastic, and very energetic as he prefers to keep himself busy. Robert shared that he had an informational interview that was organized through his job developer and a family member who had connections with a sports related employer. Jeremy (senior) completed some informational interviews with employers on campus that could end up in long-term jobs (non-student positions).

Theme 2: "We did employment path lessons"

Employment path lessons were mentioned by four participants. As noted in Chapter 2, during 2020, the development of employment path lessons occurred, funded

by Oregon Developmental Disability Services that were put in place because of COVID-19 and the limited access students had to engage in community-based work experiences. The students in the CCS-PSU program engage in employment activities and career counseling through support from the employment specialist and the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling intern. Employment path lessons involve a variety of student-centered employment activities including learning skills and role playing. While there was uncertainty during COVID-19 restrictions, once job opportunities were opened back up at PSU, students were able to maintain campus employment if they chose. Participants recalled they participated in this with the job developer but did not recall the details except that one participant remembered that it was focused on job interviews.

When Michael was asked to elaborate more on employment paths, he was only able to recall, “it was just called employment path”. Jessica recalled that her job developer, “gives us a lot of things about work” when asked to describe employment path. Gayla said, “I remember is employment path with the job developer.” Lastly, Robert shared the following regarding employment paths,

The job developer has done employment path lessons with juniors and Seniors. And we practiced how to best go to an interview. We learned about things such as proper attire.... appropriate and inappropriate attire to wear to an informational interview. We've practiced questions...questions for us and he'll ask us questions and then after we're done, he'll give us feedback and then he'll say after that he'll say you can go again.

Theme 3: “We did a ton of assessments”

All six participants reported they completed career assessments that measures career interests, values, and skills. Michael had little recollection about participating in career assessments, but he was able to share, “Hmm... I just remember that when like...I heard that and said, ‘Oh yea’ I can see myself working in sports and I don’t want to be in an office all day.” Jeremy is a senior in the CCS-PSU program and before COVID-19 hit, Jeremy really enjoyed meeting up with his friends for pizza and attending sporting events on campus. When Jeremy shared about career assessments, he stated the process of completing career assessments was, “checking boxes” with the job developer and Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling intern and he learned that “Working with the animals and caring for them” was an identified theme for interested jobs after completing the assessments.

Jessica is a senior in the program, and she enjoys cooking, dancing, and singing, Jessica’s favorite things to do on campus (before COVID-19) was to hang out at the library, the food carts, the Smith Center, and Cramer Hall. With regards to career assessments, shared, “Yeah um so he went through the list and asked me the questions of what I wanted, and I said yes and some of it is no.” Jessica also remembered looking at flashcards that describes jobs with the Clinical Rehabilitating Counseling intern (CRC intern) and food/prep related jobs was a theme for her, “We chose food together.”

Gayla described the following in terms of career assessments:

The thing I do remember with working with her in person is that we did tons of assessments...With at home, it in a book focus new work like I...I can’t remember...let’s see...but I remembered...Well, I do remember whether I seen a

very good color scenes in a pamphlet of jobs, I be interested in ideas, and I also remembered....it was different kinds of jobs in different areas...In areas if I am interested or not, if I use it, I say a yes, or if I say no.

Gayla also shared,

Just be easy for me to take the initiative...umm....Based off like how I prepare for a job or related to careers in general and...And with me...I'm me I always... always have tons of ideas of work as I really want to imagine, I want to do a job for me to prepare to know what jobs, knows what ideas to compare and learn what jobs I'll be more interested in or to look in if that makes sense.

Gayla concluded,

The intern, I mean, knows me really well as a person because she knows like what I am interested in, we got into jobs, the idea was I don't have a job but when I have a job, not being on a desk or sitting down and I'd rather be environment where I can be social and to make connections with co-works and to have a fast past kind of job. I actually remember...umm...we did something to...I actually remembered from my PCP. Actually, in my PCP, there is a slide about this; more details about it like Q&A about what I want from a job.

Luke is also a senior in the program. During his free time, he enjoys watching and playing sports, particularly baseball and soccer. He also enjoys watching TV shows. Luke really enjoyed his job on campus before COVID-19 hit. For Luke's view on career assessments, he described the following,

I mean I guess it like reassess like...what I'm like personally. And then, like what type of job that would fit me with like...like personality, you know that so. What

like types of jobs that...types of jobs that, like I'm interested in and like. That would make me, more like happy to go to it. Whereas if, like it's not that like I'm not interested in, but like I had to do it because, like you know it's...it's work like it feels like work, which I know that's what it is, but like you probably wouldn't. Like they can be like it probably like his system in my mind that like oh yeah I don't like this job and really wanted this job I didn't get it so like...

Robert said,

We did it with cards and we put cards of all of my strengths in front. And we put cards of all of my weaknesses in back and. Not surprisingly, I have many strengths, so the strength section was much fuller than the weakness section. I've learned that I...There are certain jobs that I would not like to do like I would not like to work in the job setting of an office on a computer with technology or fixing cars...maybe like being a mechanic.

Theme 4: "I really want to still work for them"

Five of the six participants identified their preferred career focused jobs while they shared about their career activities on campus. Michael (Senior) identified that he really enjoyed his internship job last summer (focused on sports related tasks), he said, "where I was working before...umm...I really want to still work for them. So hopefully I'll be able to".

Michael went on to say,

Working on PSU campus as I'm working...I love being around them...being with my coworkers are so important. So, I went back to my Job Developer and said

this is something where I want to be for a long time after college, so that's when I came back...just weighing it out right now.

As previously noted, Jeremy identified that he would enjoy working with animals when he completed the career assessments, "working with the animals and caring for them." Jeremy ultimately obtained a job working with animals.

For Jessica (Senior), she discovered that she would want to be in food preparation services, "I really want to make smoothies, because it's kind of my favorite thing to do because I did it lots with my job developer online before." She also expressed her interest in becoming a barista.

Gayla has strongly identified that she wants to work in retail for a store that offers a particular setting.

Yea I wanted to say that I'm pretty content for the time being but for career focused jobs is I have a lot of idea a lot of ideas of what I want to do as a career for a job...my ideal job is to work at....my dream job is working for the Container Store.

She also added,

So, I will be doing...I have been to the Container Store way many times, so I do know the materials really well and I know the prices pretty well at this time I am interested in customer service.

Robert (Junior) learned that he loves sports, popular culture, and acting. He described that acting is more of a hobby but would love to work in anything sports related.

He described, “See what helped me make those decisions and narrow the playing field down was...is that I love popular culture and I love acting, and I love baseball.”

Theme 5: “The job developer could still be working with me after I graduate”

Five of the six participants mentioned they will continue collaborating either with VR and/or staff with a job development agency as their next steps for preparing to apply and obtain their career focused job, which will also be considered competitive integrated employment. Job development services are coordinated through VR, which will be a continued services for the CCS-PSU Students after they exit the program. As reported in the literature, interagency collaboration is a critical component for employment outcomes for individuals with ID in post-secondary education programs (Grigal & Whaley, 2016). Michael (Senior) stated,

That I’m like I want to get back to doing something but I’m just being patient and I don’t really have a worry about working in the field....maybe it’s just undetermined....maybe I be able to work again...and...I mean hopefully next year when I’m a graduate...hopefully that things will open up more like maybe if I work for Portland State...hopefully things will be somewhat normal that I can go back to working and know how to so just being off for so long is like... Maybe like figuring it out like a job coach can be working with me...Or like call my new employment. I don’t know. And job developer could still be working with me after I graduate.

Robert (Junior) shared,

Yes, I feel, prepared to work in this type of job and my next steps are to just keep in contact the employer. After the internship is over and see if maybe they have a permanent job for me after the internship is over. And also continue to keep following up with the job developer as well.

Luke (Senior) described this next step was to take some time to figure some things out before he pursued his career focused job in terms of geographical location, work schedule, and transportation. When he was asked if he had anyone to assist with him, he identified the following, “The job developer...like we're kind of like on correspondence with each other time, email....and he works with the...pretty much vocational rehabilitation.”

Gayla (Senior) and Jessica reported they planned on connecting with their job developer after they were questioned about it. In terms of Gayla's next steps and with working with her job developer, she mentioned, “umm...it's still in progress I'm actually finding other customer service jobs as well that's not the container store.”

Theme 6: Transportation

Three out of the six participants identified they need to plan out their transportation when preparing to work. For Jeremy, “being able to figure transportation to get to the job.” Luke (Senior) shared, “Travel and so just trying to figure out like the logistics overall whether it's like the travel or....” While Jeremy and Luke reported transportation as more of job preparation, Gayla (Senior) reported transportation as more of concern and a worry in terms how long it will take her to get to and from work. She stated, “I think the main question is definitely transportation.” Gayla also added, “that's

probably really it if I work at the Container Store as a job, it's going to be long...I know that thinking about transportation and how long it would take.”

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in college inclusive program receiving support on overcoming barriers while participating in career related activities?

To address this question, I asked the last three protocol questions listed on page 65. Two themes emerged: (a) interpersonal interactions (b) self-management. All participants shared different and unique experiences related to barriers and coping mechanisms.

Theme 1: Interpersonal Interactions

Four participants shared they have concerns relating to their work environment in terms of social support from some staff and customers. Specifically, participants shared about working with difficult customers and/or co-workers. They expressed their concerns about working with individuals who appeared to be negative, grumpy, or co-workers who were either not contributing to job tasks or doing the participant's job for them.

For Robert (Junior), “Anything else...another thing that concerns me is negative bosses I don't work well with negative people...I tend to work with better with positive bosses.”

Jeremy (Senior) said, “grumpy people outside” but was referring to customers who appeared to be grumpy. Three participants mentioned concerns about their co-workers. Jessica described that she does not like it when her co-workers try to do her job for her. She said, “My co-workers were doing my job and I didn't like it very much.”

Robert explained that he does not like when other co-workers slack off, he said, “I’m not used to it when other interns tend to slack off and not do anything.”

Luke was referring to challenging customers when he said,

It depends on like who comes up to you, like that might...because I think I remember, like a couple of people who like are pretty like challenging to deal with so like every other like coworker came up and then, like everyone else was pretty much like trying to deal with other couple people or this one person who was like annoying then other patrons might come up so...

Theme 2: Self-Management

Participants were asked how they were able to overcome the challenges they experience while engaging in career activities. This question was to help address Research Question 2. Self-Management is a theme that emerged as five participants mentioned they use their own coping strategies when addressing their barriers relating to their campus job or career activities. As previously stated, all participants shared different challenges, so each managed it in different ways. Five participants indicated they were able to cope by receiving supports through their job coach, job developer or natural supports by their co-workers. Natural supports refer to when an individual is utilizing supports on the job through co-workers or supervisors as opposed to relying on specialists or job coaches for assistance (Petcu et al., 2015).

Participants shared specific coping strategies they use during their employment experiences. Jeremy (Senior) indicated, “I put headphones on and if I can't do without noise and listen to music loudly” to eliminate distractions from loud noises. He would also close the computer when he felt overwhelmed by receiving too many emails and he

would keep a check list for his to do activities. Jessica (Senior) reported that she had to learn about teamwork when she felt bothered if she saw others doing her job. Gayla (Senior) explained that when she feels rushed, she must take time to progress. She described,

Yeah, I was talking about careers...I don't like being rushed...especially...I hate being rushed and when that's a career and the way I overcome it is that I like take my time with it and think about staying to progress with it.

Gayla also shared the following in terms of coping supports from her job developer,

A lot of it...mostly me being motivated like really when he would like ask me a question like related to job development or anything related, I know that I need to pause and take my time that was mostly may really be my thing is I try to stay highly motivated and take time to progress it.

Luke (Senior) explained he would seek assistance from his co-workers while dealing with difficult customers. He said,

I pretty much like asked my coworker for the most part, like whenever something challenging came up by what that's my job because we worked in like 3-to-4-hour shifts each. Each time pretty much, so I would see them periodically as like...like a like this person's being annoying or this patron... said something about this person, so I pretty much ask my coworker but, like 'I don't know how to deal with this can you help me?' with it so yeah.

Luke also shared that after he expressed his concerns about receiving too much job coaching supports, he was asked to fill out an assessment to describe how much supports he needed to negotiate less job coaching supports.

Robert (Junior) expressed his worry about criticism in the workplace, and he coped by telling himself he is doing his best,

Coping strategies that I know of when I deal with criticism is in the past, is to just continue trying my best just know that he's not talking about everyone; he's not talking about me. And just know that everyone knows that I'm a hard worker.

While the following data are not emerging themes, it is still important to consider in terms of career barriers and career concerns:

Fear of failure and/or making mistakes was shared by two participants. Gayla (Senior) described, "fear of failure of myself has always been a fear of me."

For Robert,

I worry about mistakes um and whether or not people will help me but I'm pretty sure with what I choose, there will always be someone willing to help me fix that in that job." Robert also shared, "I am not used to criticism when all I am trying to do is my best."

Two participants expressed concerns about receiving too much job coaching. Luke (Senior) shared, "I don't need like the job coaching...they would negotiate like, 'How much time do you think you need?', then, how much as like each job coach needs so yeah."

Jessica (Senior) said, "Okay cause he was telling me what to do just didn't like it."

Two participants mentioned distractions as challenges during their campus jobs. Jessica just simply stated, "distractions" and Jeremy reported he would get distracted from noises outside of his job site. He stated, "the motorcycle, the max." He also said, "Yeah, it's hard to focus." Jeremy also reported he would get overwhelmed with

receiving too many emails, “really overloaded sometimes and delete some and I keep some.”

COVID-19. Three participants shared that participating in the CCS-PSU program remotely impacted their ability to work on their campus job.

Gayla reported,

It really impacts...well I have a lot of ideas because with my job...again It impacts my job I have been terminated with COVID and both my supervisors because of COVID, they terminated me as well for three months of work and I was terminated because of COVID.

Michael (Senior) described,

It impacted so much. Like normally we would be going to like places and like talking to people so it's not like, “hey now I have a job because that making my preferred choice.” So that way it impacted me because I'm not working at PSU anymore.

Robert (Junior) shared that he had to stop working at the rec center for a while, he said,

The experience of being in the CCS-PSU program and working remotely has definitely been different, and the Rec Center did have to close down a few times. And, but we still did staff meetings, and they still did one on ones, with all the staff members, which I thought was great. But then I was also very happy, I was also very ecstatic when the Rec Center reopened and with our new policies.

Robert also shared that it was difficult to enforce people to wear their masks while he was working at the Rec Center, he described, “it was a struggle to enforce them sometimes it's a master up the courage to do it, but I've done it a few times.”

Emotional Support. There were no questions in the protocol involving emotional supports, however, three participants shared about the importance of emotional support while discussing their experiences with participating in the CCS-PSU program remotely due to COVID-19.

For Michael (Senior),

It's been good cause like I still have my supports so like I still have my supports on writing, coaching like it would have on campus. It just....it gets lonely when you see like all your classmates on a computer and it's different where you can't just go up and be like, "hey I need help" like you had to get help for Zoom. I mean I'm doing the best that I can. I'm still getting my work done. It's not what I envisioned like if you asked me last Fall 2019 when everything was still normal and if someone asked me, "Hey what would your senior year be like?" I would say, "Oh! We would be on Zoom!" Like no one would have ever guessed that."

For Jeremy (Senior), "I miss going to the basketball games with my partner."

Jessica (Senior) shared, "I just missed the library, the food carts, The Smith Center, Cramer Hall." Jessica also stated, "I miss all my friends."

Robert shared how he benefited from participating in the CCS-PSU program remotely by stating,

It has been very helpful for the CCS program; I have created this social leadership hat; it gave me the chance to create the social leadership events. It also gave me the chance to create news...the news station.

Limitations of Study

Due to the uncertainty from the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were temporary changes to CCS-PSU that aligned with the PSU COVID-19 guidelines. Beginning in March 2020 all classes on campus were held remotely via Zoom. CCS-PSU students participated in the program virtually via Zoom, which included classes and individual meetings with CCS-PSU staff and peer navigators. Given these circumstances, CCS-PSU students had limited options for obtaining career related jobs on campus whereas the first cohort (class of 2020) had a higher percentage rate with employment. At the time of this study, students were receiving employment services remotely through an outside agency, their Job Developer, and Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling intern.

Another limitation is that convenience sampling was selected because there were only approximately 15 students in the CCS-PSU program at the time of recruitment and due to the limitations with COVID-19, with assistance from the co-director, four recruiting efforts were made and only six participants expressed interest in the study. I decided to proceed with the interviews rather than to continue with the recruitment process. This decision was made to avoid coercion and to respect the autonomy and choice of the students. Although it would have been ideal to have more participants, I proceeded with six participants given the nature of this study.

Furthermore, semi-structures interviews were the method adopted for gathering data and there are some limitations with this approach. There are usually risks with semi-structured interviews associated with low validity (e.g., difficult to compare responses between participants depending on how the predetermined list of questions differed from the actual questions) and high risk of bias (e.g., can lead to temptation to ask leading

questions, biasing your responses) (Tegan George, 2022). I used some probing during the interviews to assist with participants on recalling their memory of participating in career activities, however, there is concern about the risk of bias.

Another risk of bias is that I had previously worked with the participants as their Employment Coordinator for the Career & Community Studies (CCS-PSU) Program at Portland State University. I worked with the students who participated in this study during Winter, Spring, and Summer Term of 2019. During my time at CCS-PSU, I supported the students with their engagement of pre-employment activities and with obtaining and maintaining their campus jobs and I was partially involved with the PCPs that were completed in 2019. Given this, perhaps felt pressure to tell me what “I wanted to hear”. The use of probing questions was used to address the different levels of communication. However, my judgment on how to probe may have influenced participants’ responses. I also referenced their PCP information to help guide their memory from the questions. Further, there may have been some risks to establishing trust with the participants as I am a non-disabled researcher and perhaps, they were not comfortable with disclosing about their employment barriers or concerns.

Participants were provided with the option to allow an informed individual to participate in the interviews, however, only one participant chose to have an informed person attend the interview. On one hand, I wanted to ensure participants had informed choice about inviting an individual to the participant in the interview. On the other hand, if each interview included an informed individual, perhaps the participants would have been able to provide answers more easily to the questions with little probing. For

example, when participants discussed they participated in employment path lessons, they were not able to recall all the details of the activity.

The PCP information normally provides rich information about the individual in terms of their employment and education goals and although the participants are encouraged to lead the meetings, they usually have their support team involved by contributing to the PCP. However, it is unclear if the data from the PCPs are a depiction of the students' voice as the PCP meetings involve information from the students' support team (including family members) and a note taker who then transfers the notes into the PCP document after the meeting. While the student is guided to lead the meeting, the data could still be influenced by their support team.

For participants identifying career barriers, my intent with asking about it was to avoid any potential harm by carefully phrasing the questions and to prevent participants from seeing their disability as a barrier to employment. Seidman, (2013) notated the process of interviews could cause emotional discomfort if certain topics are brought up and the researcher should work to minimize any distress for the participants (p. 67). For example, I evaded questions like, "Did you ever have issues with performing your job because of your disability?" as this could have caused harm for the participants.

In reference to member checking and trustworthiness, individuals with IDD may experience limitations with reviewing a long transcript; an effective approach would have been to condense the transcript into a shorter version by indicating the coded data (rather than the whole script). The next step would have been to follow up with each participant via Zoom to debrief, which would give the participants to have a chance correct and/or clarify any data that seemed inaccurate to them. Despite these limitations, collecting the

data through the participants' voices was a meaningful experience as there are limited studies that focus on personal interviews for individuals with ID in PSE programs.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study aimed to understand the perceptions and experiences of students in the Portland State University (PSU) Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disability college inclusion program who were preparing to work in competitive integrated employment. A total of six participants were recruited for this study. The data collected for this study was to address the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program on their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program receiving supports on overcoming barriers while participating in career related activities?

The findings from this study emphasize the need for interagency collaboration so that students with intellectual disabilities to stay connected to their vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor, employment service provider (job development agency), and with their Service Coordinator or Personal Agent through Office of Developmental Disabilities Services or Brokerage (for long term supports) after they exit the Career and Community Studies (CCS-PSU) program. Continued VR services will assist with the participants on receiving job development services including job coaching services. These services will assist with the students in college inclusion programs on obtaining and maintaining their career focused job, which is also considered competitive integrated

employment and with addressing employment barriers. Other findings suggest the career activities such as informational interviews, career assessments, internships, and employment path lessons guided the students on identifying and learning about their career interests and job roles they did not know about. Further, Chapter 4 clarifies that participants expressed interpersonal interactions with others relating to customers and co-workers. Other challenges shared by the students were all unique to each of them. Additionally, they were able to come up with self-coping mechanisms that were essential for helping them address their barriers in the workplace. This chapter will discuss the major themes and will include the research literature and theoretical frameworks that are well aligned with the emergent themes. This chapter will close with recommendations and outcomes linked with implications for future research.

Synthesis of the Findings

Research Question 1

What are the perspectives and experiences of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in an inclusive college program on their preparation for working in competitive integrated employment?

Career Exploration Activities

Informational Interviews. Participants shared they participated in informational interviews with their job developer. As previously described, Portland State University Career Center describes informational interviews as a common activity during career exploration, which provides job seekers a chance to interview an employer that is of interest to them to inquire about a particular job role. Through informational interviews, students get a better understanding about the job role or could learn about new job roles

they never knew of. Essentially, informational interviews can be helpful to guide the job seeker with making career decisions.

Informational interviews align with the *choosing* and *imagining* categories outlined in INCOME (Beveridge et al., 2002). Choosing refers to when the individual selects the type of jobs they prefer based on knowledge about occupations, job interests, and needs (Beveridge et al., 2002). Imagining implies when the individual realizes certain jobs exist. Through informational interviews, the participants have learned about jobs they were previously unaware of and have developed in the areas of choosing and imagining described in INCOME (Beveridge et al., 2002).

Teaching Job Exploration Skills

Employment path lessons. CCS-PSU Employment path lessons were identified as employment activities such as Job Development and Career Exploration services coordinated by the job developer at CCS-PSU that involves supporting students with engaging in employment activities and career counseling through support from the employment specialist and the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Intern. Employment path lessons involve a variety of student-centered employment activities including learning skills and role playing. Employment path lessons aligned with *informing* as described in INCOME (Beveridge et al., 2002). Informing refers to when an individual learns about their abilities, barriers, world of work, self-efficacy, and perceptions about work (Beveridge et al., 2002).

This theme is also paired with life design theory as this framework was created to be life-long, holistic, contextual, and preventive (Savickas et al., 2009). Based on what is described about Employment path lessons, it allows individuals to learn about themselves

in terms of their career interests, barriers, and work skills. In the life design's theory Savickas et al., (2009) specify the stages and process of career development, they point out, "By engaging in activities in diverse roles, individuals' identity those activities that resonate with their core self" (p. 241). Through engagement of activities, "people will construct themselves" (p. 241).

Basically, individuals could learn about occupational interests based on understanding the requirements and skills needed to reach their career goals (Dupree, 2018). Wehman et al. (2018) outlined pathways to employment as a model that involves experiences and services that individuals with disabilities participate in that could lead to customized integrated employment, it is designed for individuals with significant disabilities who would benefit from jobs that require customized tasks and responsibilities based on the individuals' strengths, interests, and preferences. The authors address that since individuals with disabilities have not been provided with consistent employment services and it was suggested to focus on models that lead to effective employment outcomes. Several pathways have been proven to lead to employment outcomes and the pathways involve customized integrated employment, internships, college, and other postsecondary education options (Wehman et al., 2018).

Exploring about Types of Jobs

Career Assessments. Participants shared their experiences with participating in career assessments that ultimately led to their decisions on career focused jobs. Career assessments are identified in Chapter 2 as one of the core elements to career exploration (Brown, 2012). It is part of the career decision making process for individuals investigating and learning about multiple job roles they might have not been previously aware of. The frameworks of INCOME and life design both explain important elements in terms of choosing and learning, which is affiliated with the process of career assessments in terms of how individuals learn and make occupational choices. Occupational choice consists of the individual's knowledge, personality, environment type, and the individual's needs, which determines their decisions about choosing a job (Beveridge et al., 2002).

The learned skills involving career exploration could be relative to life design as Savickas et al., (2009) explained the term, life-long are skills and interests are built into their life-long development. The authors suggest the life-long aspect of life design should help them decide for themselves which skills and knowledge they possess in their “lifelong development determine ‘how’ (the needed method), ‘who’ (the person or specialist that can give them support), ‘where’ (the environment in which it would take place, and ‘when’ (the best moment for the intervention)” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 244). These steps contribute to skills and knowledge (Savickahs et al., 2009).

The findings of this current study are like those from a national survey study that found, Petcu et al. (2015) focused on a study about how students with ID in PSE programs prepared for competitive employment and they found that most of the students

in PSE programs that were receiving vocational support services participated in career/vocational assessments.

Identified Career Focused Jobs. Five participants identified career focused jobs they would want to work in after they exit the CCS-PSU program. They shared they discovered their preferred jobs after they completed the career activities (primarily informational interviews and career assessments) on campus with their job developer. This phase of career development is matched with choosing outlined in the INCOME framework (Beveridge et al., 2002). But also, when students reach the stage of choosing a career focused job, this stage of career development could be considered *life-long*, as the skills and interest are built into their life-long development (Savickas et al., 2009). Wehmeyer et al (2019) expressed, “Occupational choices are seen as directed by self-concept and ‘work as a manifestation of selfhood’” (Savickas, 2005, p. 43, as cited in Wehmeyer et al., 2019, p. 42). The authors explained occupational choice is guided from the meaning of life experiences, future aspirations, and career behaviors (Wehmeyer et al., 2019). When comparing this literature to the findings, the participants identified their chosen career by engaging in the career development activities on the PSU campus with support from their Job Developer and Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling intern and their learned skills could be lifelong.

Continued Services with Vocational Rehabilitation

“The Job Developer could still be working with me after I graduate”. A critical theme that emerged from this study was the participants’ plan for continuing to collaborate with their Job Developer and VR Counselor so they could continue to receive support and services in preparing to work in competitive integrated employment. Smith et

al. (2018) stated VR services can be very effective for students with ID completing PSE programs as it could result in positive employment. These services typically assist students with accessing on-campus or summer jobs and provide support and training on the job and, could enhance the collaboration for employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Plotner et al., 2016).

Participants discussed the need for continued supports from VR and job development services as they move forward to their next steps with obtaining their career focused job. Competitive employment is the primary goal for students when they graduate from the program (Domin & Sulewski, 2019). Job development services are funded through VR services and currently, each participant has a case open with the VR program as this program works in partnership with the CCS-PSU program. Typically, the CCS-PSU student will meet with their transition team (i.e., VR counselor, PSE professionals, family, and friends) to discuss the next steps for obtaining and maintaining employment (that is career focused) before they exit the program. This meeting would usually take place during the Person-Centered Planning (PCP) meeting. The PCP documents (see Table 2) were collected for this study indicated that four of the participants would continue receiving VR support as their next steps to obtaining employment.

When exploring this theme through the lenses of the life design framework, it is aligned with the term, *preventive*, which is defined as early intervention for transition services (Savickas et al., 2009). In terms of transition services, this is specified as, “the process students and their families use to think about life after high school, to identify

their desired outcomes, and to plan their community and school experiences to assure the students acquire the knowledge and skills to achieve their goals” (Virginia Department of Education, 2021, para 1). For students with ID in PSE programs, the process of transition involves interagency collaboration between PSE and VR professionals (who have a strong partnership) to ensure that students will receive the services and supports they need to be successful in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment through coordination of job development services and career activities (Domin & Sulewski, 2019).

Vocational supports for students in PSE programs could be *preventive* as, “It is necessary to act on settings, looking for early preventive alliances and collaborations” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 245). In the framework of life-design counseling, this means “taking an interest in people’s future much earlier than when they have to face the difficulties of transitions, so their actual choice opportunities can be increased with special attention devoted to at-risk situations” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 245). Based on evidence presented by Domin and Sulewski (2019), seamless transition programs should begin for students with ID who are in high school settings and/or enrolled in college programs. Seamless transitions involve a strong partnership with VR and the schools that includes students with disabilities at the high school or college level. The purpose of seamless transition is to provide the student with supports and services that result in seamless/interrupted from high school to employment or PSE programs (Domin & Sulewski 2019).

Transportation. Transportation planning was mentioned by three participants. Jeremy and Luke considered transportation when they were asked if they felt prepared to

work in their career focused job while Gayla mentioned transportation as a concern because of the time it could take to get to her job site. Transportation appears to be a common employment barrier for individuals with disabilities. Lee et al. (2022) noted individuals with IDD in PSE programs experienced challenges with securing public transportation; they specify that transportation barriers were by parents and PSE staff of students with disabilities, and they discussed that public transportation was a barrier as the options were not available in rural areas (Lee et al., 2022).

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of students with intellectual and/or developmental disability in college inclusive program receiving support on overcoming barriers while participating in career related activities?

Interpersonal Interactions. Four participants expressed concerns about their interactions with others specifically relating to difficult/challenging customers and co-workers. For example, Justin and Luke addressed concerns about customers who can be challenging, and Robert mentioned concerns about negative leaders, and Jessica described that she does not like it when she sees her co-workers doing her job. It is vital for individuals with ID working in an employment setting to have positive relationships with their co-workers and customers as their workplace surroundings are part of their environment. Rossier et al., (2017) outline that people's career pathways and employment relies on a pattern of personal and environmental factors.

Co-workers and employers could be actively involved in a life design intervention to assist with supporting a "healthy development and personal well-being" (Rossier et al., 2017, p. 75). Soft skills in the workplace are a valuable element to job development services because it involves "greeting coworkers, engaging in appropriate break room conversations, and making eye contact are important to workplace success (Morningstar et al., 2017 as cited in Wehman et al., 2018). Soft skills are also beneficial for individuals developing relationships with employers and co-workers and further, it could decrease the stereotypes associated with hiring people with disabilities (Wehman et al., 2018).

Moreover, it is important to consider that social integration in the workplace is essential as these interventions could help adjust the work environment, which could

improve individuals' work performance (Carlson et al., 2019). For example, interventions were used to increase social integration and culture of work setting like taking breaks at the same time as co-workers to increase interaction (Carlson et al., 2019). Based on the findings concerning the participants interactions with difficult customers and/or co-workers, more research is needed about the types of interpersonal and social relationships the participants developed as social integration appears to be a significant factor in terms of healthy work environments for individuals with disabilities (Carlson et al., 2019).

Self-Management. Five participants provided examples on how they cope with the challenges and concerns they experience in the workplace. Here are some examples as stated in Chapter 4: Jeremy puts on headphones to avoid loud noises to focus on this job. Gayla will pause and take time to think things over when she's feeling overwhelmed or rushed. Jessica will remind herself about teamwork when she sees her co-workers doing some of her job tasks. Robert will remind himself that he is appreciated by others when he receives criticism. Lastly, Luke said he would reach out to his co-workers for assistance while dealing with difficult customers.

While the participants shared about their challenges while working on their campus jobs, each participant learned about themselves in terms of how to manage challenges in the workplace. INCOME (2002): Informing, which refers to when the individual learns about their abilities, barriers, world of work, self-efficacy, and perceptions about work (Beveridge et al., 2002). In this phase, individuals are resilient to the barriers they are confronted with. Further, the participants also demonstrated resilience by having the ability to manage their barriers while on the job, which can also be seen through career adaptability.

Career adaptability assists with individuals to become more resistant to challenges and barriers associated with careers decisions (Savickas et al., 2009). One of the five “Cs” of career adaptability is “*control*—it rests on the conviction that it is an advantage for people to be able to not only use self-regulation strategies to adjust to the needs of different settings, but also to exert some sort of influence and control the context” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 245). Also referenced in Chapter 2, Savickas et al. (2009) noted some significant factors for adaptability, including individuals confronting their concerns by increasing their confidence levels and by considering new possibilities and experimentations. As mentioned, the participants used coping techniques to overcome their barriers in the workplace.

Jeremy uses headphones to eliminate loud noises, Jessica learned that it was important to understand teamwork when she did not like to share her job tasks, Gayla coped by allowing herself to take her time to process information whenever she felt overwhelmed, Luke communicated with staff when he had to deal with difficult customers, and Robert reminded himself that everyone knows he’s good at his job whenever he felt like he was being criticized by his manager. The participants were able to demonstrate confidence while having the ability to manage their challenges in the workplace. Confidence is another factor as it involves, “having one’s own ability to handle challenges, obstacles, and barriers that may be encounter in pursuing goals and in undertaking activities needed to achieve career goals (Savickas, 2011; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, as cited in Wehmeyer et al., 2019, p. 183). Moreover, career adaptability can be even more prevalent to those with disabilities who need to “manage and address

barriers and challenges that affect transitions and changes” (Wehmeyer et al., 2019, p. 183).

Impacts of COVID-19

As discussed, three participants shared that participating in the CCS-PSU program remotely impacted their ability to work on their campus job per the data referenced in Chapter 4. Prior to COVID-19, this study aimed to investigate students’ perspectives in the CCS-PSU program about working in competitive integrated employment. However, the study shifted to focus on perspectives of employment preparation and career activities due to COVID-19. Grigal et al. (2022) addressed the employment impacts of COVID-19 on employment. Similarly, to CCS-PSU, there were no impacts in terms of pre-employment preparation services, which includes career awareness and exploration, 85% of the college programs reported collaboration with VR to provide pre-employment transition services as defined in WIOA guidelines (Grigal et al., 2022). Only 31% of students were engaged in paid employment while enrolled in courses during 2019–2020.

Implications for Actions/Recommendations for Further Research

As stated in the literature, the partnership between PSE programs and VR agencies are a major factor that could result in the students working in competitive integrated employment after completion of the college program (Lee et al., 2018). However, a key element from these findings is the partnerships between PSE programs, VR programs, and Oregon Developmental Disability Services are a crucial factor to supporting students to prepare to work in competitive integrated employment.

According to Grigal et al. (2022), only 28% (107) of students in the TPSID programs received VR services in 2019-2020. This low percentage is likely a result of

COVID-19. There could be additional factors to this percentage as Scheef et al. (2018) noted there are barriers associated with inter-agency collaboration in terms of paid employment for students in PSE programs due to the following challenges:

(a) Large investment time to develop relationships with VR personnel, (b) lack of clarity and guidance regarding state VR regulations for students who are enrolled in PSE program, (c) an inefficient system for VR referrals, (d) lack of interest from VR personnel to collaborate with PSE staff, and (e) issues involving VR payment system (Scheef et al., 2018, p. 211).

The CCS-PSU program at Portland State University has a solid partnership with the VR agency and with Oregon Developmental Disability Services (ODDS). The findings prove that this is a positive, ongoing collaboration that should continue as it could result in competitive integrated employment outcomes for students with IDD. The findings show participants worked with their job developer on getting access to engage in career exploration activities on campus like informational interviews, employment path lessons, and career assessments. These services were supported through their VR counselor, ODDS, and supported by the job development agency. While the PSE programs offer their systems of support including the college experience and PCP meetings, VR agencies and ODDS offer supports that are specifically tied to job development services that result in competitive integrated employment for individuals with IDD. As previously discussed, VR offers short term supports and ODDS offers supports for clients who require long terms supports for job coaching services.

Also based in the literature, there are limited findings about Developmental Disability agencies' involvement with interagency collaboration as the literature focuses

primarily on the partnership between VR and PSE programs. In Oregon, VR agencies and Oregon Developmental Disability Services have an essential partnership with respect to interagency collaboration per the Employment First guidelines (Oregon Department of Human Services (n.d.)). Further the CCS-PSU program holds a strong partnership with both VR and ODDS and these services are critical for individuals with IDD receiving employment services who require long-term supports for employment services.

Another key finding was the students actively engaged in the employment services that were coordinated by ODDS and the job development agency. Based on the findings, the participants consistently worked with their job developer and CRC intern on participating in career exploration activities, which helped them attain employment skills and with identifying career focused jobs. Importantly, they demonstrated resilience because of their ability to develop an awareness about their workplace challenges and ways to address those challenges by coming up with coping strategies.

The students also showed resilience because they were determined to engage in the CCS-PSU program virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. Another finding is there is a connection with Career Adaptability and the emergent themes for this study regarding the Career Adaptability Intervention Model of the five “C’s” (competencies) of *control* and *confidence*, and how it correlates with the findings of self-management.

For further research, more exploration is needed to measure the application of Career Adaptability for individuals with IDD in college programs due to the findings that was previously discussed. In terms of supports from CCS-PSU staff, two students discussed they were receiving job coaching supports, recommendations for future research are needed in terms of further details on how the participants were receiving

supports on overcoming their work barriers. While the participants shared their views about the challenges they experienced, the protocol did not include open ended questions pertaining to how they were receiving employment supports while addressing these barriers.

Career Adaptability model is instrumental with assisting individuals with disabilities on confronting their employment barriers and this could be a very effective approach for students with IDD in college inclusion programs. Further exploration is needed to measure the application of Career Adaptability for individuals with IDD in college programs as the five career competencies was closely aligned with the findings that emerged from the data concerning self-management.

Emotional support. Emotional support was a significant theme that emerged when the participants were asked how they were impacted by participating in the program virtually due to the PSU guidelines from the COVID-19 global pandemic. Further qualitative research is needed to investigate the benefits of emotional support for students with IDD in college inclusion programs and how the college experience could provide them with a sense of belonging. Lee et al. (2022) researched about studies relating to the impacts and benefits of students with IDD in PSE programs. In seven studies, they found major benefits that were defined as adaptive behavior (i.e., communication, socialization, and daily living skills), employment, independence, and healthy lifestyle. Particularly for adaptive behaviors, Lee et al. (2022) reported students with IDD discussed how they made friends, had positive relationships with others and felt more independent, and were motivated to ask others for help.

For instance, Michael (Senior) described that he really enjoyed working with his co-workers and supervisors. He also explained that even though he had his supports, it was more difficult to ask for help while being online. Jeremy enjoyed meeting with his friends and partner for pizza and PSU basketball games. Jessica (Senior) missed all her friends, and Robert (Senior) described that he was able to benefit by creating a social news network the CCS-PSU program.

Lastly, additional research is needed to address intersectionality for individuals with IDD who also come from diverse backgrounds relating to gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation because it would be important for this study to explore about students with IDD who also come from unique backgrounds.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Human Research Protection Program
1600 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 620
Portland, OR 97201
(503) 725-5484 psuirb@pdx.edu

Human Research Protection Program Notice of Exempt Certification

February 03, 2021

Dear Investigator,

The PSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the following submission:

Investigator(s)	Sheldon Loman / Eva Blixseth
HRPP #	217177-18
Title	Perspectives of Students with Intellectual Disability in College Inclusion Programs on their Preparation to Work in Competitive Integrated Employment
Funding Agency / Kuali #	N/A
Determination Date	02/03/2021
Expiration Date	N/A
Review Category(ies)	Exempt: # 2

The IRB determined this study qualifies as exempt and is satisfied the provisions for protecting the rights and welfare of all subjects participating in research are adequate. The study may proceed in accordance with the plans submitted (HRPP Forms enclosed).

Please note the following ongoing Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) requirements:

IMPORTANT: In-person interactions for the purposes of conducting human subjects research is suspended until further notice. Data collection must be through remote/virtual methodologies until this restriction is lifted OR an exception to perform in-person data collection is granted by Research & Graduate Studies.

Changes to Study Activities: Any changes to the study must be submitted to the HRPP for review and determination prior to implementation.

Unanticipated Problems or Adverse Events: Notify the HRPP within 5 days of any unanticipated problems or adverse events that occur as a result of the study.

Study Completion: Notify the HRPP when the study is complete; the HRPP will request annual updates on the study status. Study materials must be kept for at least 3 years following completion.

Compliance: The PSU IRB (FWA00000091; IRB00000903) and HRPP comply with 45 CFR Part 46, 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56, and other federal and Oregon laws and regulations, as applicable.

If there are any questions, please contact the HRPP at

psuirb@pdx.edu or call xxx-xxx-xxxx. Sincerely,



Eva M. Willis, CIP, HRPP Administrator
Research Integrity & Compliance

PSU HUMAN RESEARCH
PROTECTION PROGRAM
HRPP# 217177-18

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

(Co-Director forwarded this email to the CCS-PSU students)

Hi everyone,

This is Eva and some of you may already know me. I am trying to conduct interviews with students in the CCS Program to learn more about students' views and experiences with preparing to work in competitive employment that is focused on your career related goals.

Please watch the linked YouTube video link below and if you are interested in participating in this study, feel free to email me at xxxxxxxx and let me know your available dates and times and I will get back to you. Please also email me if you have any questions.

https://youtu.be/kp_PD8CmJUu

Eva Blixseth, M.S.

(Pronouns: she, her, hers)

Doctoral Student, Special Education Leadership & Policy
College of Education
Portland State University

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxxx

Appendix C: Recruitment Script from the YouTube Video

Hi, my name is Eva and some of you may already know me.

I am trying to conduct interviews as part of a research study to increase my understanding of students' perspectives and experience with preparing to work in competitive integrated employment in the CCS program.

The interview takes around 30–45 minutes and is very casual. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on participating in career related activities in the CCS program. Basically, the career activities that you have completed with your vocational counseling intern and with your job developer. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential.

I will reward each participant with a \$10.00 gift card to Starbucks as a compensation. Your participation will be very valuable to my research and findings could help others understand inclusive employment for students in college inclusion programs and the people in the field.

If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thanks!

Eva Blixseth

Appendix D: Consent Form

PSU HUMAN RESEARCH
PROTECTION PROGRAM
HRPP: 217177-18

Consent to Participate in Research (No Signature)

Project Title: Perspectives of Students with Intellectual Disability in College Inclusion Programs on their Preparation to Work in Competitive Integrated Employment.

Population: Students with intellectual disability (ID) in the Career and Community Studies Program (CCS) at PSU. Ages 18–30, personal interviews.

Researchers: Eva Blixseth, EdD Student in Department of Special Education Leadership & Policy at Portland State University

Sheldon Loman, PhD., Associate Professor, Special Education, Portland State University

Researcher Contact: xxxxxxx@pdx.edu (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxxxxxn@pdx.edu (xxx) xxx-xxxx

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The box below shows the main facts you need to know about this research for you to think about when making a decision about if you want to join in. Carefully look over the information in this form and ask questions about anything you do not understand before you make your decision.

Key Information for you to consider

What happens to the information collected?

Information collected for this research will be used to describe your experience and views about preparing to work in competitive career related jobs that involve making job choices, exploring jobs, learning about the job you want to work in, and other career related activities.

How will I and my information be protected?

We will take measures to protect your privacy by not revealing your name on the recording or transcript and by deleting all recordings once it has been transcribed into the document. Despite taking steps to protect your privacy, we can never fully guarantee that your privacy will be protected.

We will not be collecting any personal information during the interview. Despite these precautions, we can never fully guarantee that all your study information will not be revealed.

Individuals and organizations that conduct or monitor this research may be permitted access to inspect research records. This may include private information. These individuals and organizations include [the Institutional Review Board that reviewed this research.

What if I want to stop being in this research?

You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you may stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to join in any study activity or completely stop your participation at any point without penalty or loss of benefits you would otherwise get. Your decision whether or not to take part in research will not affect your relationship with the researchers or Portland State University.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

There is no cost to taking part in this research, beyond your time.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

All participants will be rewarded with a \$10.00 gift card to Starbucks.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or just want to talk about the research, call or email the research team at: Eva Blixseth Sheldon Loman

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxx@pdx.edu Email: xxxxxxx@pdx.edu

Who can I speak to about my rights as a research participant?

The Portland State University Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) is overseeing this research. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of the people who take part in research are protected. The Office of Research Integrity is the office at Portland State University that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights, or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Office of Research Integrity
PO Box 751
Portland, OR 97207-0751
Phone: (503) 725-5484
Toll Free: 1 (877) 480-4400
Email: psuirb@pdx.edu

Consent Statement

I have had the chance to read and think about the information in this form. I have asked any questions I have, and I can make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions anytime while I take part in the research.

- ☐ I agree to take part in this study
- ☐ I do not agree to take part in this study

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What are some of the career activities that you have been participating in with the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Intern?
3. What career activities have you explored with your job developer?
4. Give me an example on how you made a decision about the types of jobs you wanted to work in?
5. Did you ever complete any job interest assessments?
6. What did you learn about yourself from these job assessments?
7. Were you able to learn more about the jobs you wanted to work in?
8. Give me an example of what you learned about the job role?
9. Did you enroll in any classes that relate to your job interests?
10. Were you ever provided with opportunities to practice your interviewing skills? If so, tell me about it?
11. What challenges have you experienced with any of the career-related activities you have participated in? How were you able to overcome these challenges?
12. What concerns or worries do you have about working in a career-related job?
13. Do you feel prepared to work in a career related job? If so, what are your next steps?
14. Lastly, tell me about your experience with participating in CCS activities remotely? How has this impacted your participating in career related activities?