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READY TO BELONG: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF A RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE
PREVIEW PROGRAM ON THE CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS OF STUDENTS
WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who never gave up, always believed, and taught me through prayer, love, and persistence that anything is possible.

It is completed in memory of Ruth Ann Magee - Special Educator, Wentzville, Missouri, 1988,

Your knowledge, love, & creativity were instrumental in saving my life.



“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”

- Albert Schweitzer

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ABSTRACT

The primary theme of this dissertation investigates the impact of belonging within a residential pre-college program (e.g., summer bridge, summer institute, college preview camp program) on the career and college readiness (CCR) of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The program was part of a collaborative initiative between the state's department of vocational rehabilitation and the university's inclusive post-secondary education program, serving students under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Data was originally collected as part of a broader program evaluation using a mixed methods format, it is presented here as three separate mini studies, each in its own manuscript. Manuscript 1 employs an inclusive qualitative design using photovoice, where students with IDD, acting as co-researchers, construct definitions of belonging and use evening reflections to consider the camp's impact on the way they think, feel, and believe about their future. Manuscript 2 uses a pre-post survey design to explore the camp's impact on students' perceptions of their career and college readiness, as well as their sense of belonging. Manuscript 3 presents parental perceptions of the camp's impact on their children's career and college readiness. Findings demonstrate the programs' ability to positively impact CCR in students with IDD, the dynamic and individualized nature of belonging within pre-college programs and hope as common variable in parents of program attenders.

Keywords: Belonging, career and college readiness, inclusive post-secondary education, intellectual and developmental disabilities, photovoice, residential pre-college program

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Originally conceived as a mixed methods study as part of a broader program evaluation, individual components were separated and presented as mini studies at the request of the dissertation committee and are contained in Chapters 2, 3, & 4. This dissertation is written in a three-manuscript format and is supported by an introduction and conclusion; references & appendix for individual manuscripts will be provided at the end of the full manuscript for ease of reading. Tables and figures will be numbered within the individual manuscripts themselves, with each new manuscript beginning at 1.

The primary theme of this dissertation investigates the impact of belonging within a college preview camp on the career and college readiness of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Sense of belonging for all students is critical in higher education and should be considered as an evaluative point for any new or sustained programming (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012; Parsley et al., 2023; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 2017). For students with IDD sense of belonging is even more critical (Carter & Biggs, 2021). Data was gathered as part of a broader program evaluation during the summer of 2023. First, I will present background information on research exploring the importance of belonging as a predictor of college preparedness and success for students with IDD, which provides support for the investigations conducted in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Each of these chapters, while not generalizable, could inform similar programs and researchers as a single point of review their own programs, or to support broader investigation of similar topic in the future. Study participation was limited, with population size dependent on factors such as number of students

with IDD who participated in camp, and the subset who opted to participate resulting in low population size is noted as a major limitation to all components of the work presented here.

Chapter 2: Manuscript 1

This chapter presents an empirical study drawn from data conducted at a suburban college campus during a residential college preview program for students with intellectual disabilities and other developmental disabilities. This work demonstrates inclusive qualitative design where Photovoice (a participatory method), and evening reflections supported data collection as part of a broader formative program evaluation., involving students with IDD as participant researchers actively constructing definitions of belonging and the way in which college preview camps impacts the way students think, feel, and believe about their futures. Photovoice activities and iterative conformational work during evening reflections were used as investigative methods during this collective journey. We report findings to our primary research questions and consider the implications for future programming.

Chapter 3: Manuscript 2

In this chapter, I present findings from a quantitative descriptive study, conducted as part of a broader program evaluation this data was collected using pre-post surveys to assess the impacts of a camp program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Quantitative descriptive studies are “concerned with and designed only to describe the existing distribution of variables without much regard to causal relationships, or other hypothesis” (Portia et al., 2024 p.72). Specifically, I explore students' perceptions of their own college and career readiness, as well as their sense of belonging, before and after the camp experience. This approach aims to measure self-assessed changes in key areas of college preparation and social integration, which are critical factors for students with IDD in transitioning to higher education

and career pathways. Insights gained from this pre-post survey data may guide enhancements to camp programming that strengthen college readiness skills and foster a deeper sense of belonging, ultimately supporting students' success in postsecondary settings. We consider:

- What were students' perceptions of their own career and college readiness, as indicated by pre- and post-camp surveys, before and after camp?
- What were students' perceptions of their sense of belonging, as measured by pre-post surveys before and after camp?
- Based upon these findings, if any, in what way could camp programming be augmented to better support college readiness factors, and students' sense of belonging?

We report findings to our primary research questions and consider the implications to future programming.

Chapter 4: Manuscript 3

The final manuscript introduces empirical research that employs a survey design with data gathered as part of a broader program evaluation to investigate parental perceptions of the impact of a college preview camp on their child's career and college readiness through sense of belonging. In this inquiry, we ask parents to consider the shifts in student behaviors indicative of mindset shifts and the meaning parents gleaned from seeing their students participate in the college preview camp.

- Based on parental perception, what was the impact of the college preview camp on their child's career and college readiness?
- Based on parental perception, what was the overall impact of the college preview camp on their child's sense of belonging?

- Based upon parental perception, what were the impacts to parental thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their child's future?

Based on these findings we provide recommendations for future camp programming

Chapter 5: Triangulation

Chapter 5 will synthesize the common themes and findings across the three manuscripts discussed. It will address concerns identified within the study, proposing potential solutions or approaches to mitigate these issues for future researchers. Additionally, the chapter will offer recommendations for subsequent research and outline methods by which such studies might inclusively support students with intellectual disabilities as equal contributors to the scholarly literature and as collaborative research partners.

Sense of Belonging in Education

As human beings, we are inherently driven to find value, meaning, and a sense of belonging in our lives (Frankl, 1986; Baumeister & Leary, 1985; Maslow, 1943). Deprived of the opportunity to construct meaning, we risk experiencing profound sense of disconnection and loss. Drawing on Maslow's (1943) seminal work, we understand that beyond fulfilling our basic physiological and safety needs, all people crave human connection – a connection that is not just a desire, but a fundamental need, as vital as food and shelter. Maslow emphasizes that belonging is a “hunger” that is pervasive, a need that motivates individuals to find their place within groups. Hence all individuals, including those with disabilities, seek to contribute and be known to the world around them finding increased security and fulfillment while simultaneously cultivating belonging and connection to others (Brownlee, 2020; Carter & Biggs, 2021; Frankl, 1986; Maslow, 1943). Brownlee (2020) elevates our duty to resolve its absence in education and other places she states the facilitation of belonging is, “a non-contingent,

fundamental, morally urgent need which appropriately animates the human right against social deprivation” (p.26).

Within educational environments, this translates to the necessity of fostering interconnectedness among students. Belonging is dynamic, it exists where students have a sense of security and place, actively engage with their surroundings, share insights, exchanging wisdom, and participate in shared experiences (Allen et al., 2022; Carter et al., 2022; Carter & Biggs., 2021; Eisenman, 2020; Morningstar et al., 2015; Parsley et al., 2023).

Belonging is intricately linked to a student's sense of identity as they transition into adulthood—a phase where their self-perceptions find affirmation and normalization often within their peer and teacher relationships (Allen & Kern, 2017; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 2017; Van Gassbeek & Tasse, 2024). This sense of belonging thrives not merely on superficial welcome, but on genuine sense of being present, invited, welcomed, acknowledged, supported, heard, befriended, needed, and loved (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Carter & Biggs, 2021; Van Gassbeek & Tassé, 2024). Belonging is shaped by both cultural and individual factors, reflected in diverse goals that show a student's commitment, engagement, and confidence in their environment and future aspirations (Allen & Kern, 2017; Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002; Morningstar et al., 2017; Tinto, 1975; Wehmeyer, 2020).

We posit that the essence of belonging is realized through the subjective perception of students with IDD being valued and respected within the school environment. This perception is nurtured through reciprocal relationships within the school community, built upon shared experiences, values, traits, and interests providing students with a sense of membership, commitment, and security. For students with intellectual disabilities, this sense of connection to school is particularly crucial, as they actively seek inclusion and recognition within it. This

interaction's complexity is influenced by various environmental and personal factors which can either facilitate or impede the development of individual and group identity (Allen et al., 2021; Raver et al., 2018).

Sense of belonging significantly impacts students' attendance and participation in education as well. When students feel that they belong, they are more likely to be invested in their studies, attend classes consistently, seek academic assistance, take academic risks, are more deeply engaged in their educational communities, and remain committed to their educational objectives (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bandura et al., 1997; Morningstar et al., 2017; Eisenman et al., 2020; Strayhorn, 2012; Tinto, 2017). Additionally, students with a higher sense of belonging also demonstrate fewer behavioral problems, are happier, and have higher degrees of academic self-efficacy (Allen, 2018). Conversely, a lack of belonging can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, detachment, and disengagement which may influence students' decisions to persist in, or even set goals for, higher education and across their lifespan (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Strayhorn, 2020; Tinto, 2017; Wehmeyer et al., 2020).

For students with intellectual disabilities, this sense of connection to the school is particularly crucial, as they actively seek inclusion and recognition within it. The complexity of this interaction is influenced by various environmental and personal factors, which can either facilitate or impede the development of both individual and within group identity. Unfortunately, many students with disabilities do not experience the same sense of belonging in school as their peers due to a history of exclusion from the education system (Wehmeyer et al., 2020). Intended to provide an overabundance of support, exclusionary practices are still widely used across America. Often impacted by poor understanding of administrators and teachers, restrictive placements begin during the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) process and inadvertently

hinder the development of critical skills that support self-determination and rob students with IDD of the day-to-day risk that empowers them to thrive (Bumble et al., 2021; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Wehmeyer et al., 2020; Yell, 1995). As Allen et al. (2022) stated quite succinctly, “A very brief synthesis of the bulk of the work that has been done on belonging might read: belonging might read: belonging is good. The absence of belonging? Well, that is bad” (p. 1134).”

According to Wehmeyer et al., (2020) only 16.5 % of students with IDD spent 80% or more of their school day in the general education setting, furthering that over 49.7% of students with IDD spent less than 40% of their day in a general education setting. This dramatically limits peer groups, provides less than challenging curriculum, and reduces engagement in extracurricular activities. The impact of such practices inadvertently forces students with IDD to the periphery of social integration throughout their academic careers; thrust into the shadows of self-contained classrooms despite the growing body of evidence discouraging such practices (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2014; Wehmeyer et. al., 2020; Yell, 1995). For many students with IDD, such lessons conveyed through ill-informed practices within public education are the starting point for a lifelong curation of loneliness (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2014; Papay & Bambara, 2014; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Carter & Biggs, 2021; Wehmeyer et al., 2020). So, what if anything, are students with IDD preparing for in the future? What about post-secondary education? How might they begin to foster and grow a community of belonging?

College Participation for Students with IDD

Historically, students with IDD have faced many barriers to attending college, rooted in societal misconceptions about their abilities and potential. Often, societal beliefs, rather than scientific evidence, shape the systematic boundaries of what is considered normative (Khun,

1970; Wolfensberger, 1983). Inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) programming transcends the normalization of individuals with IDD in society, rooting itself in the broader goal of holistic personal development for students with IDD to be prepared for and take on their roles within society (Wolfensberger, 1983; Plotner et al., 2018). IPSE represents a transformative shift in how society approaches education and defines the roles of matriculating high school seniors with IDD by providing them with choices more like their non-disabled peers (Grigal et al., 2018). IPSE challenges the beliefs of educators, employers, families, and even students themselves by providing clear evidence that students once believed to be inhuman by society, indeed, can benefit from higher education (Harrison et al., 2019; Ducett & Myers, 2023). By fostering an inclusive education environment, IPSE not only upholds many of the varied principles which are provided in the complex and diverse definitions of educational equity, but also emphasizes the intrinsic value and diverse capacities of all people (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012).

For students attending college with IDD, IPSE is not just a pathway to academic knowledge but a passageway to a range of life experiences that many often take for granted. Choosing college, living in dormitories with friends, exploring the many adventures that emerge within an inclusive educational setting increases the social skills, choice making, self-confidence, and sense of belonging both to self and society for students with IDD (Prohn et al., 2019; Plotner & May 2019; Plotner et al., 2018). IPSE programs represent a transformative shift in how society approaches education and defines the roles of matriculating high school seniors with intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing them with choices more like their non-disabled peers (Grigal et al., 2018). Rooted in societal misconceptions about their abilities and potential, IPSE challenges the beliefs of educators, employers, families, and even students themselves by

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Benefits of IPSE on Employment

One of the most tangible benefits of IPSE programming is the emerging evidence that it could have a significant impact on employment prospects for students with IDD. For example, Smith et. al. (2018) reported that prior students with IDD who participate in an IPSE program earned approximately 51% more than youth with IDD who did not participate in higher education. A recent systematic review across all included articles noted employment ranges for students with IDD were between 37% - 91% IPSE programs, noting that the study reporting the lowest employment rate still demonstrated a significantly higher rate of employment than their control group (Avellone et al., 2021).

Graduates of IPSE programs often find themselves better equipped to navigate the job market. Exposure to a diverse campus community prepares them for collaborative work environments, enhancing their adaptability, and interpersonal skills. Explicit work-based skills through work-based employment, and explicit instruction in skills like interviewing support student preparedness (Southward et al., 2017; Torres et al., 2020).

IPSE Impacts on Social Participation, Self-Determination & Other Skills

Social participation and community involvement in campus activities are part of the meaningful belonging implicit in all students' needs (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975; Strayhorn, 2018). For students with IDD, IPSE provides a tapestry of social experiences (Carter & Biggs, 2021;

Spruit, 2021; 2021). Engaging in campus activities, joining clubs, and participating in group projects allows these students to forge meaningful relationships. Such interactions not only enhance their social skills but also foster a sense of belonging (Plotner & May, 2017).

Immersed in a diverse community, students learn the nuances of teamwork, communication, and empathy. Their increased participation in community and extracurricular activities support their ability to apply these skills within their own communities after graduation. Lee et al. (2021) conducted a longitudinal study which examined the growth of 30 students with IDD over two years of participation in an IPSE program. The study found significant improvements in adaptive behavior skills, self-determination, and expressive and written communication during the first year. Further enhancements were seen in self-determination, particularly through autonomy and life skills, and continued to improve during the second year.

Research indicates social benefits are not a one-way street. Carter & McCabe (2021) conducted a systematic review addressing eight areas of social impact on college campuses and peer partnering from IPSE programming. Findings suggested that peers who became involved with IPSE programs had broad and varied reasons for participating and partnering with students with IDD in higher education settings. Several of the reviewed studies indicated feelings of effective and successful contribution which ranged from supporting peers in making healthful choices to promoting effective self-advocacy and successful access and participation in the campus community (Lee & Taylor, 2022; May 2012). Other findings clarified the importance of friendships which emerged from peer mentorship. Peers also noted that they increased their knowledge related to working with populations with IDD, gaining marketable job skills which could be used for professional promotion (Ryan et al., 2023).

Promoting Belonging for Students Attending College

Belonging plays a critical role in all subjective experiences, including supporting the transition of students from high school into college (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Strayhorn, 2018). The concept of belonging is not just about feeling at home; it has profound implications for students' academic success and personal well-being (Morningstar, 2015; Strayhorn, 2018). For example, Vacarro et al. (2015) studied 8 college students with hidden disabilities during their first year of college, they found several qualities were positively impacted by sense of belonging. First, students who felt a sense of belonging were able to successfully master the many demands posed within the college system: these included various academic tasks, including stronger study skills. Second, students' sense of belonging supported their ability to deepen and increase trusting relationships with professors and peers. Third, some participants felt a sense of belonging increased their ability to self-advocate and navigate peer relationships.

In the pursuit of fostering a sense of belonging among all students, educational collaborators have implemented various interventions and structures designed to cultivate inclusive environments. These initiatives, ranging from pedagogical approaches to institutional frameworks, serve as proactive measures to nurture a sense of connection and belonging among diverse student populations. For instance, educational institutions have embraced interventions such as buddy benches, peer-to-peer programs, and unified extracurricular activities, which aim to foster social cohesion and inclusivity among students (Griffin, 2017; Ziegler, 2020; Siperstein et al., 2019). These programs not only promote interaction and camaraderie among students but also create opportunities for individuals to develop meaningful relationships and a sense of community within the academic setting.

Pre-college programs (PCPs) emerge as potential throughways not only in the academic and social readiness gaps but also laying a solid foundation for cultivating a robust sense of self-worth, belonging, and preparedness as students' progress towards post-secondary decision making. PCPs comprise a broad umbrella of programs offered through college campuses to Pre-K -12 students to facilitate introductions to college, support skill acquisition, and/or provide early exposure to the college experience, and bridge students from high school into their first-year experiences (Sheth & Tremblay, 2019). Many terms and phrases are used interchangeably to describe pre-college programs, including residential summer programs, summer programs, summer institutes, summer bridge programs, skills camps, college preview programs, mini college day camp, pre-college outreach programs, pre-college intervention programs, educational outreach programs, college outreach programs and others (Dalke & Smith, 1987; Kahn, 2002; Greene et al., 2023).

Pre-College programs address numerous college and career readiness (CCR) competencies. College Preview Camps serve as gateways to break away from routine activities and social circles. College preview camps provide students with realistic opportunities to experience both the negative and positive aspects of college life. Students find themselves in an unfamiliar setting, with greater autonomy for choice making. Camps typically last between 1 – 2 weeks, students stay in dorms, navigate campus in small counselor lead groups, and are provided peer mentorship.

The sense of belonging that develops through these programs emerges both through structured camp activities and naturally through peer interactions as they engage in and enjoy new experiences. Adventure-based activities play a therapeutic role, enhancing emotional and social well-being by fostering relatedness, motivation, and confidence (Bustamante, 2021;

Erwert & Sidhorp, 2020; Findley-Van Nostrand & Pollenz, 2017; Gass, 1999; Hill et al., 2018; Kallison et al., 2012; Olsen et al., 2018).

Programs for Promoting Belonging for Students with IDD

Although there are now over 300 IPSE programs serving students with IDD across the United States, less than 2% of the students with IDD attend college after high school (Think College, 2023). One of the biggest barriers currently within IPSE programs is that many students who may benefit from participating in IPSEs are unaware of their existence (Grigal et al., 2023). This awareness discrepancy stems from various factors including limited outreach by educational institutions, prevalent social misconceptions about the capabilities of students with disabilities, and disfunction at multiple levels within the state educational systems who are tasked with providing transition services, education, and training to students with disabilities, including those with IDD (Berg et al., 2017; Grigal et al., 2011). Consequently, many students who could immensely benefit from IPSE are left in the dark, insufficiently informed, and unaware of their rights and opportunities to post-secondary educational experience which could lead to work. Which begs the question, what prepares students with IDD to enter college?

In higher education, researchers continue to develop and examine methods to foster a sense of belonging for students with IDD. Pre-college programs (PCPs) inclusive of college preview camps (CPCs), and summer bridge programs (SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMs) have frequently been offered to traditionally attending high schoolers, and incoming first-year students without IDD, providing opportunities for exploration, adventure. These programs facilitate a sense of belonging and motivation often increasing academic persistence, retention, career expectancy, solidifying the commitment for college, and/or other post-secondary pursuits

(Findley-Van Nostrand & Pollenz, 2017; Jackson et al., 2022). These programs remain under explore for students with disabilities, including those with IDD (Parsley et al., 2023).

Some campuses are making deliberate efforts to include these students in first-year orientation and pre-college programs through inclusive practices and research. Schroeder et al. (2021) interviewed first-year students with Intellectual Disabilities (n=6) who were participants, and other collaborators (n=10) involved in a first-year orientation program to determine how students with IDD “described, experienced, and supported belonging” - shared spaces, experiences, understanding, and interests were common themes which emerged from within study participants (p.239). They further looked at the way the program itself was constructed to support belonging by program leaders, including whether program content was modified to support inclusion in first-year orientation discussions and how leaders used active listening to ensure the responses, ideas, and suggestions of students with IDD were incorporated. Further, students were grouped carefully to support shared interests.

Moreover, pedagogical strategies focusing on self-determination and social skill development have been incorporated into curriculum design, aiming to empower students and enhance their sense of agency and belonging (Wehmeyer et al., 2012). By equipping students with the necessary tools to navigate social interactions and academic challenges, these interventions contribute to a supportive learning environment where all individuals feel valued and included (Morningstar, 2017).

Investigation of College Preview Camps

Scheef et al. (2021) noted that providing pre-college programs that explore “post-secondary educational experiences” for students with disabilities are both an opportunity and benefit afforded by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA).

Transitional programs, like pre-college programs, that support social-belonging interventions are appropriate to investigate. Walton et al. (2023) found that “social-belonging interventions have beneficial effects because higher education outcomes are subject to psychological threats rooted in group identities” (p.1). Such threats may provoke doubts about belonging and identity among students; in short, students may wonder if and how they will belong, if their experiences are normal, and/or what belonging might look like on a college campus for them.

Within pre-college programs, it should be the goal to provide a comprehensive framework for both academic and non-academic skill development, with a keen recognition of the significance of fostering sense of belonging across behavioral, cognitive, and emotional domains. This sense of belonging is essential for perseverance and the facilitation of goals, particularly as they begin post-secondary education (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Eisenman et al., 2020; Schroeder et al., 2021; Strayhorn, 2012).

Our work, conducted as part of a broader program evaluation, sought to step forward in the vein of other researchers who have explored the experiences of marginalized populations and their experiences of a sense of belonging in higher education. For example, Strayhorn (2012) prioritized sense of belonging as one of the key components in a summer bridge offering for incoming first-year students. Noting that belonging is “context dependent,” when individuals are in new and foreign environments they seek more strongly to belong, for students who may already have a reduced sense of belonging related to their intersectionality facilitating belonging becomes even more important for student entrance to college.

While Parsley et al., (2023) sought to understand if a weeklong summer academy program for students with IDD would benefit those in the same way traditional attenders

benefited from their experiences. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, they asked questions related to how the camp impacted the students' interests, awareness and considerations related to social participation in college. They found that pre-college programs increased awareness of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education programs within their groups and increased students' sense of belonging by providing them information about their ability to pursue post-secondary education.

The focus of our evaluation was a college preview program aimed to provide students with an opportunity to experience and reflect on their individual experience of life on campus. Offered over 4 days and 3 nights, the camp furnished participants with opportunities to learn about and make personal connections to key constructs such as career exploration, self-determination, college readiness, independent living, and workplace behavior. It supported the normalization of students' own group identity by engaging camp participants in programs led by IPSE (Inclusive Post-Secondary Education) program participants who were students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) attending the university's current IPSE program.

Like researchers before us, our goal was to determine if the shared adventure of a weeklong college campus experience with students who had similar characteristics, coupled with camp programming might positively impact students own sense of belonging increasing their overall college readiness, to determine this we looked at various pathways including confidence, security, and overall commitment to attending college, in addition to engaging with students to construct definitions of belonging, and the way such constructs impacted the way they thought, felt, or believed about college.

Program & Setting Description

The camp was hosted by the IPSE program at a large R1 institution in the central part of the United States. The university itself has approximately 20,000 students during the school year, however the population on campus during the time of the program itself was largely restricted to professorship, and other on-going skills-based camps not associated with the program itself.

Camp participants were housed in campus dorms. The campus dormitory was a large multi-story building that had multiple elevators for student use. The primary door was locked and accessible only by keycard, in addition the first floor had a security check-in window with student employees that watched as students came and went. The students were housed on the 4th floor of the building, which was somewhat hot when students arrived. The floor had east and west hallways that separated genders. All students in this study identified as the gender assigned at birth, therefore each was assigned to either a female or male wing of the dormitory setting.

The hallways were controlled by key card access, to support students in keeping track of their key cards each student was provided a nylon draw string backpack, and camp lanyard which had space for their keycard and their name — students were motivated to wear lanyards as access to the campus cafeteria and payment for food were linked to these as well. At the center of the hallways was a central vestibule, seating area and office with locking which looked out to the elevators. Each locked hallway also contained a TV room with long tables, chairs, and a few end tables, the room had windows with blinds. The TVs were not operational during the camp.

The students had meals at the campus cafeteria, hot food choices changed daily, there were always soups, salad bar, desserts, breakfast cereals, fruit, various beverage choices, breakfast pastries and donuts. The cafeteria was approximately 100 feet from the student's dorm.

Each day the students walked to and from camp educational sessions, and recreational activities. The educational sessions were held across campus which provide students with an

opportunity to learn to navigate city streets, crosswalks, campus walking paths and building corridors together. There was a golf cart available for students who became overheated, or could not tolerate walking due to health, or stamina.

The primary goals of the program were to empower high school students with IDD the experience of living and learning on a college campus, developing academic and non-academic skills, introducing students and families to IPSE, and helping students understand their rights empowering them to advocate for themselves now and later in life. All these areas represent funding and guidance for programming under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. Pre-ETS are a special set of services which address areas of training known to support individuals with disabilities in transitioning from high school into post-secondary education and employment after high school. Focus areas include: (a) job exploration and counseling, (c) work-based learning, (c) counseling related to post-secondary education, (d) work readiness training, (e) instruction in self-advocacy (WIOA, 2014). Part of this was skills acquisition, and another part of that was introducing and familiarizing students with college as an option, in addition to their families.

The camp addressed multiple components of Pre-ETS. Educational sessions led by doctoral scholars and supported by current IPSE students. A sample of one daily schedule, with examples of daily sessions are provided to support readers (See Tables 1 & 2).

Educational sessions were busy, with most interactive features provided. All sessions were attended by multiple educators, including the camp director, and program director from the university itself. Educational sessions were held in the education building on campus which was about a 15-minute walk from the dorms. Students navigated campus together with camp counselors. Many sessions included the IPSE program social worker, and all sessions were

attended by multiple doctoral scholars whose training and experience were in special education with a focus in secondary transition. Scholars all had experience in working with students with intellectual and developmental disabilities through the universities inclusive post-secondary program. Current IPSE students contributed to the camp discussion by sharing their experiences and talking about their internships.

Table 1

Sample Presentations from Scholars With Descriptions

Activities	Description
How, why, when?	• Information about job applications • Support in completing a job application
Would you rather?	• Ice Breaker – “Would You Rather” Career Edition teacher made PowerPoint game.
Career Clusters	• Introduce 13 Career Clusters w Q & A
Career Exploration	• Future-scape online tool w/ support
“Oh Puh-Please” with extension activity	• Resume / Cover Letter • Communication Skills - Professionalism • Attitude
Who’s in your web?	• Networking – finding supports and networking for jobs

Note. Not a complete list of all camp activities

Table 2**Sample Daily Schedule**

Time	Activity
7:00 am	Door Knocks
7:30 am – 8:30 am	Breakfast
8:30 am – 8:45 am	Room & Floor Checks
8:45 am – 9:00 am	Walk to Education Building
9:00 am – 11:30 pm	Session 1 – Going to College • College Expectations • Difference Between • School & College
11:45 am – 12:45 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Session 2 – Employment • Employment 101 • Career Exploration
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Walk to dorms, get swimsuits
3:15 pm – 5: 00 pm	Swimming or Museum (student choice)
5:30 pm – 6: 30 pm	Dinner
6:45 pm – 8:45 pm	Evening Activity – Movie?
9:00 pm – 9:30 pm	Reflection Time
10:00pm	To rooms, lights out by 10:30

Note. Not a complete list of all camp activities

Definition of Terms

To clarify readers understanding of some of the terminology contained within this dissertation, we provide definitions of some terms:

Belonging

Belonging is a hunger for human connection, having elements of “intimacy, connectedness, membership, commitment, solidarity, or reciprocity”, “to be invited, welcomed,

known, accepted, heard, supported, befriended, needed, and loved within a community”
(Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Carter & Biggs, 2021; Maslow, 1947).

Commitment

Commitment can be defined as “being connected or buying into the program” ... “the combination of the perceived importance of one’s work, level of interest in the activity, personal enjoyment, effort, and attendance” (Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002, p.859).

Connectedness

The experience of belongingness, relating to others, cultivation of friendship, social interaction, social acceptance. Meaningful interactions, inclusion, partnership, and quality positive experiences within the community. (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Allen et al., 2021; Shohet & Orr, 2020).

College preview camp

A camp provided to students and youth typically during the summer, with the purpose of supporting orientation to a specific college, or academic discipline. Sometime designed to address a critical shortage, or facilitate the enrollment of diverse, or marginalized populations (Strayhorn, 2012).

Engagement

The degree to which students are involved, connected, excited, or participating in school, or a program (Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002).

Growth mindset

The individual (or collective) positive perceptions of students and individuals’ ability to experience and promote growth (academic, social, behavioral) through self-determinate

behaviors (e.g., decision making, goal setting, self-monitoring, self-advocacy, friend making, and other behaviors (Dweck, 1987; Morningstar et al., 2018; Wehmeyer et al., 2017).

Institutional commitment

Can be construed as having a strong feeling of loyalty to a school, or program (Davidson et al., 2015)

Intellectual disability

An intellectual disability is a condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that originates before the age of 22. (AIDD, 2024)

Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Inclusive postsecondary education, or IPSE, is a college for students with intellectual disabilities. It is attending college with other peers with or without disabilities. Students attending IPSE programs enroll in classes with peers with and without disability” (Stinnet et. al, 2023).

Participant – researcher:

A camp attender 14 -18 participating as a co-researcher within the photovoice study.

Perceived Support

The level of support perceived by student with intellectual or developmental disability within any given setting or experience

Pre-college program

a broad, general term used to describe any program provided to a youth, or student who is not yet a full-time college student (frequently on a college campus) to cultivate participation,

skills, interests, program, goal, or institutional commitment (Parsely et al., 2023; Scheef et al., 2021; Sheth & Tremblay, 2019; Strayhorn, 2018).

Pre-employment transition services

The services provided to youth and students of transition age (14-21) to support the career and college readiness of student's disabilities authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

Photovoice

a highly flexible, participatory method of inquiry/and or intervention which empowers marginalized populations through the taking and sharing of photographs creating starting points to broader conversations emphasizing societal, or programmatic change (Wang & Burris, 1997).

School connectedness

Having to do with the degree to which a student receives & perceives positively a) adult support, b) positive peer group support, c) commitment to education, d) school environment (Cumming et al., 2017, p.9).

Security

The individual belief and feeling of safety within the specified environment (Anderson – Butcher & Conroy, 2002).

Self-determination

A dispositional characteristic manifested as acting as the causal agent in one's life. Self-determined people (i.e., causal agents) act in service to freely chosen goals. Self-determined actions function to enable a person to be the causal agent in his or her life" (Wehmeyer et al., 2017, p.258).

Sense of belonging

Having a sense that one belongs to a group, career, identity, or within a setting, having cognitive, emotional, physical, or spiritual components.

Transition age

A youth not younger than 14, or older than 24 determinates upon programming type under the Workforce Innovation Act of 2014 (Pacer, 2023)

CHAPTER 2: MANUSCRIPT 1

Abstract

This study represents an inclusive qualitative design where both Photovoice, and evening reflections supported data collection as part of a broader formative program evaluation.

Photovoice, a participatory research method, empowers marginalized participants, including those with intellectual disabilities and other developmental disabilities (IDD), by providing an amplify the voices of participants attending residential college preview camp at a large state university. Acting as participant researchers, 8 students with IDD worked with a primary researcher and a secondary researcher to define and consider the impacts of camp programming through belonging on the way students thought, felt, and believed about college attendance and their future.

Keywords: Photovoice, intellectual disabilities, pre-college programming, belonging, inclusive post-secondary education

“It’s not make or break!” – A Photovoice Study

The transition to adulthood marks a pivotal phase in an individual's life, characterized by opportunities for increased autonomy, self-discovery, and the development of self-efficacy (Martin et al., 1993; Papaya et al., 2013; Shmulsky, 2015). These opportunities are essential for fostering positive post-secondary outcomes. However, for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), this journey is often laden with unique challenges and obstacles across various life domains (Butler et al., 2017).

The reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act in 2008 marked a critical shift in educational policy, extending eligibility for federal funding to individuals with IDD to attend inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) programs. This legislative change underscores a paradigm shift in viewing students with IDD not merely as special education recipients, but as potential college attendees empowered to access a diverse array of post-secondary education opportunities. Now more than ever, students with IDD should be viewed as potential college attendees, having access to a range of options, including over 318 IPSE programs across the United States (Think College, 2023).

Despite the number of options to participate in college, few students with IDD enroll, as many barriers persist for these students, those who do attend are often not fully prepared to take on the challenges of the first year and persevere (Grigal et al., 2020). Self-advocacy, self-determination, peer relationships, access to resources, self-efficacy and the mindsets associated with academic persistence (try, fail, try again), are often lacking (Morningstar et al., 2017; Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Dynasrski et al., 2023)

We have long understood the impact of belonging, a key factor in student persistence at college, and a subject of academic inquiry for decades. Academic performance and social

integration are two critical elements that influence, and are influenced by, this sense of belonging. Spady (1971) underscored the role of social integration in the collegiate environment. His research probed the “subjective sense of belonging” and examined how “interpersonal relationships on campus” contribute to student retention for first year college students (p. 39). Spady’s findings revealed a direct correlation between the establishment of friendships, indicative of interpersonal relationships, and the likelihood of students' continued enrollment in college.

Expanding on these insights, Tinto (1975) refined what researchers knew about the multifaceted nature of social integration within higher education. His analysis suggested that in addition to family influence, a student’s persistence, even before coming to college, is impacted by their pre-collegiate training and social activity in high school. Social integration, according to Tinto (1975), historically was posited as a decisive factor in whether students feel they are engaged, have an allegiance to the institution, and choose to persist in their studies.

Since the 1970s, researchers have repeatedly affirmed the importance of belonging in students’ enrollment in and persistence with higher education. When students feel that they belong, they are more likely to be invested in their studies, attend classes consistently, seek academic assistance, take academic risks, have higher levels of social support, and remain committed to their educational objectives (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Farrington, 2013; Morningstar et al., 2015; Eisenman et al., 2020; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 2017). Conversely, a lack of belonging can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, detachment, and disengagement, which may influence their decisions to persist in, or even set goals for, higher education (Farrington, 2013; Grigal, 2013; Morningstar et al., 2015; Tinto, 2017; Wehmeyer, 2020; Strayhorn, 2020).

Early investigations conducted by Tinto and Spady predate the era in which the notion of students with disabilities (SWDs) pursuing higher education were frequently considered, which provides an abundance of space and room for the investigation of principles of engagement and perseverance for students with disabilities today related to post-secondary education attendance (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1973).

As scholars contemplate the profound implications pertaining to post-secondary education participation for SWDs, including those with IDD non-academic aspects such as sense of belonging are re-emphasized. Morningstar et al. (2015) used focus groups gathering feedback from professional stakeholders to support the initial development of six domains which would frame career and college readiness in students with disabilities, including those attending IPSE programs. In this, mindsets (mindsets are commonly known to motivate students to preserve academically, and socially, mindsets often predict or mediate behaviors) inclusive of sense of belonging, emerged as an importantly noted factors. (Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Morningstar et al., 2015) Lombardi et al. (2018) and Monahan et al. (2020) continued to examine factors related to successful post-secondary education participation for students with IDD. These researchers' findings suggested that mindsets as non-academic skills have an important place in the policies and practices which will support SWDs as they work to become college ready and invite further research from within the research profession.

Additionally, Tinto's updated discussions re-visit and re-emphasize the significant role that social networks have in student engagement (through belonging) and suggest that while some portions of engagement are certainly beyond the control of institutions of higher education (IHE), indeed it should be the charge of such IHEs to support a sense of belonging for all students including those with disabilities through the pedagogical and programming choices they

make (Tinto, 2023). This means that educators, colleges, and program administrators especially those in pre-college roles who initiate students' first encounters with higher education, bear some responsibility to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities have a sense of being "present", "invited", "welcomed", "known", "accepted", "supported", "heard", "befriended", "needed", and "loved" all components which will both empower and enable a greater sense of belonging (Carter & Biggs, 2021).

Finally, Tinto (2024) clearly states that the evidence which facilitates our understanding of persistence for students in higher education, must begin to hear, understand and integrate the perspectives from students themselves rather than solely relying on the perspectives of researchers as has been done in time pasts, noting that evidence which does not represent those perhaps even the most fundament definitions which begin our understanding of what things like persistence, and the way academic and social integration [inclusive of belonging means.

Each of these empirical studies has laid the groundwork for the nuanced understanding of the importance of a sense of belonging within transition in shifting and supporting the pursuit of higher education for students with IDD.

Problem Statement

Pre-college programs (PCPs), including college preview camps (CPCs) and summer bridge programs, while frequently considered for marginalized, and at-risk populations are traditionally aimed at high school students and incoming first-year students without IDD (Parsley et al., 2023). These programs offer opportunities for academic exploration and social engagement, contributing to a sense of belonging and academic motivation. The impacts of these programs are evident in their contribution to increased academic persistence, retention, career

expectancy, and a solidified commitment to college or other post-secondary pursuits. PCPs have long been used, and researchers have investigated, and promoted such programs to support minoritized, non-dominant, and at-risk populations (Strayhorn, 2012; Findley-Van Nostrand & Pollenz; Green et al., 2023; Kirkendal et al., 2008).

For example, Findley-Van Nostrand & Pollenz (2017) sought to investigate if a six-day pre-college program could increase student persistence in incoming college first-year students, focusing on both academic and non-academic factors. Sense of belonging was targeted as a known predictor that increases student persistence at the institutional level in marginalized populations. Their work found that students who participated in a pre-college program had increased levels of sense of belonging through institutional commitment and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) community access, with increased feelings of acceptance and membership. Further, their work found that 91.7% of students who were enrolled in the summer academy continued to persist in STEM, versus the 87.2% who were not enrolled.

Other researchers, like Greene et al. (2023), illustrated the effectiveness of pre-college programming in supporting diverse populations in gaining exposure on college campuses, as seen through their study of a summer camp designed for students interested in engineering. The six-day camp provided both academic and non-academic experiences, focusing on not only nurturing interest in engineering but also significantly enhancing the participants' sense of belonging, with 80% of attenders reporting this positive outcome.

The effectiveness of PCPs in meeting the unique needs of students with IDD remains an area ripe for exploration. Research is just emerging to determine how PCPs support and address the specialized needs of students with IDD (Parsley et al., 2023). For example, one barrier that students and families of students with IDD is conceptualizing college as a viable option for

themselves or their student. Parsley et al. (2023) held a summer academy which provided a weeklong college experience for 23 students with IDD. They found that camp itself supported the way students thought, felt, and believed about college and their ability to attend college.

Kirkendall et al. (2008) conducted a study on the impact of a “college-based dormitory program” on transition age youth with IDD. Their findings indicated that youth participant in the program experienced “normative life transitions” like those experienced by their non-disabled peers. Additionally, the study revealed that teens in the program demonstrated improvements in various areas, including life skills, goal setting and awareness, self-advocacy, vocational awareness, and social skills. These findings highlight the need and potential of pre-college programs to support students not only in considering post-secondary education and training opportunities but also in enhancing discussions related to independent living and what steps may be required to support their specific student.

Similarly, Rothman et al. (2008) evaluated perceptions of students that attended a one-week residential pre-college transition program at SUNY Albany. Using a survey design, researchers asked participants about the skills and topics they felt they acquired during the program, the importance of its impact on career success, and the most useful aspects of the program. Results indicated that the students felt the most valuable skills they gained to be in the areas of self-advocacy, social skills, and rights as an individual with a disability in impacting positively their future success. Formation of new friendships, increased autonomy, and confidence were also noted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of college preview camps (PCPs) in meeting the unique needs of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities

(IDD) and to explore how their sense of belonging during these experiences influences their perceptions of college. While research on PCPs is emerging, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these programs support the specialized needs of students with IDD (Parsley et al., 2023). One critical barrier for students and their families is the challenge of conceptualizing college as a viable option. Previous research, such as that conducted by Parsley et al. (2023), demonstrated that residential pre-college programming supports student understanding of IPSE programming. Yet, despite this progress, much of the existing literature on career and college readiness, pre-college programming and even pathways to inclusive post-secondary education for students with IDD is framed from the perspectives of interested stakeholders, leaving the voices of transition-age students with IDD largely unheard. As researchers at a large, research-intensive university dedicated to inclusive post-secondary education, we sought to first understand how participants framed their own definitions of belonging, and then sought to collaborate with them as participant-coresearchers to better understand the way their experiences of belonging, and other programmatic features impacted the way they thought, felt, and believed about their futures - potentially impacting future choice making.

Method

Design

We employed an inclusive qualitative design, utilizing photovoice—a participatory method—and evening reflections for data collection and synthesis as part of a broader formative program evaluation (Bigby, 2015; Budig et al., 2018; Liebenberg, 2018; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Photovoice

Photovoice is defined as “a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). In this study, photovoice and evening reflections were the primary methods for data collection and analysis, empowering participant co-researchers to articulate how their experiences of belonging at a college preview camp influenced their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about college and future choices. Our aim in selecting this method was to honor the agency, expertise, and unique perspectives of our participant-coresearchers, recognizing them as vital contributors to knowledge formation (Wang & Burris, 1997). As a participatory method, photovoice aligns with an inclusive collaborative research design.

Inclusive Designs

Bigby (2015) characterizes inclusive designs as research paradigms that prioritize the rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to actively participate in programs that serve them and in shaping the knowledge defining their experiences. Rather than imposing strict definitions, inclusive designs should be viewed as a spectrum of approaches applicable across various research contexts relevant to the lives of people with IDD. Walmsley & Johnson (2003) describe inclusive research as a form of research which support individuals with IDD in contributing their expertise and lived experiences alongside the research skills of trained academics, thereby improving the relevance and quality of the findings.

In participatory methods and inclusive designs, researchers emphasize the participants' right to decide whether to act on findings, respecting their autonomy and preferences (Greenwood & Levin, 2006; Freire, 1970). Greenwood and Levin (2006) highlight that action within participatory research can manifest not only as “revolutionary praxis” but also through acts that foster self-realization, support democratic reform, and promote self-determination. Our

inclusive qualitative approach, which utilized participatory methods, intentionally shifted the role of camp participants to co-researchers, respecting democratic principles of autonomy and choice while fostering a collaborative environment for critical reflection. This inclusive nature ensures our findings are practical and contribute directly to the self-realization and empowerment of those involved, while also informing future programming

Justification

Balcazar et al. (1998) provided a historical context for participatory designs with individuals with disabilities. Participatory designs expanded because of a 1992 call from within the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, now known as National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, which established a policy for including individuals receiving services in the research discussions evaluating the programs that would serve them.

Participatory methods should strive to include participants in ways that are ethically and methodologically sound (Leibenberg, 2018). Our decision to use Photovoice was further supported and attributed to the primary researcher's work in art, specifically photography, and their personal experience as an individual with a disability using it as a medium that "reduced space" between themselves and others. A quote widely attributed to Robert Frank, a Swiss photographer, once said, "The eye should learn to listen before it looks" (Ames, 2019). This is the nature of our work as researchers, to listen, and to provide methods of inquiry, data collection, and analysis through which our participants' communities may speak, and will best support our inquiry.

Historically, the use of photography has served to elevate the voices of marginalized populations (Budig et al., 2018; Chinn & Balota, 2023; Freire, 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Arising from Critical Pedagogy, photography was notably introduced as an educational and co-investigative tool by Gabriel Bode, a community activist recognized for his innovation in using projected images to identify systematic concerns and facilitate shared discussions of relevant themes. Valuing the agency of community participants to work reflexively, respond to findings and generate change, his technique introduced photography as an important vehicle in reducing hierarchies between the oppressed (students/community members) and those in power (educator/politicians) (Freire, 2005).

Wang and Burris (1997) furthered the use of photography as a transformative method of research by using photography for stimulating conversations to solve existing concerns in rural China. Their work evolved the process from the simple projection of images by the researcher to providing cameras and a topic of exploration to co-research participants. They coined the term “photovoice” as the photos give voice to those who might otherwise be overlooked.

Photovoice is a highly flexible visual participatory research method that combines the use of photography and shared communication (e.g., focus groups, interviews, writing) to identify, investigate, and respond to programming and societal concerns of those involved in the investigative process (Krisson et al., 2020; Wang & Burris, 1997). According to Chinn and Balota (2023), during Photovoice “community members not only decide how their lives are represented, but they also determine how meaning and new knowledge is created through taking and discussing photographs” (p.725). Using Photovoice methodology, participants who act as co-researchers are provided with, or help develop, themes used as prompts for their photography. After taking photographs that are representative of the theme for themselves, participant-coresearchers meet as a group to discuss how the photographs represented their own lived experience. Photovoice has numerous benefits to participants including a) increased levels of

self-awareness, b) self-advocacy, c) confidence, and d) content knowledge (Chinn & Balota, 2023).

Recently, researchers have expanded the use of photovoice into studies involving persons with IDD. For example, Krutt et al. (2018) explored photovoice for use in their program evaluation of an adult community center which served adults with autism. The center's focus was on providing programming in the areas of social, vocational, and education. Participants were provided prompts which related to their feelings. The study sought to determine if photography was a successful vehicle for engaging participants, and if participants could follow the necessary steps to engage in their contributions to the researcher. Their findings confirmed that photovoice was appropriate for program evaluation and in use within participatory designs for individuals with IDD.

Chinn and Balota (2023) conducted a systematic review of the use of Photovoice with individuals with IDD, they noted that Photovoice had several unique features that provided benefits during research inquiries engaging individuals with IDD as co-researchers. First, they found that Photovoice methodology is highly adaptable, allowing researchers flexibility in its design. This means that researchers, when met with challenges, often rely on other inquiry avenues alongside photovoice to support them. Observation, caregiver support, dyadic interviews, group discussions, and focused prompts kept in a participant's pockets were just some of the many adaptations explored.

Participants & Sampling Strategy

McDonald and Kidney (2013) note that including participants with IDD must be approached carefully due to "relationship-based power imbalances". While some researchers suggest that consent should be assumed unless otherwise proven by legal documentation, other

researchers have stated that during enrollment a researcher's job to ensure consent is understood (Becker et al., 2004). In our recruitment and on-going consent process we first ensured that all participant – coresearchers understood and agreed to participation in the study by having conversations with all participants asking them to describe the research, its purpose, and as is the nature of participatory research to ask questions or make changes, or suggestions. Continuously, at the beginning of each evening setting provided an opportunity to re-assent verbally, each time stating that they could disengage at any time, that they would still have the opportunity to participate in a similar reflection group at the end of each evening, that camp services and participation would remain unchanged, and that the relationship (growing friendship) between the primary researcher and their self would be unaffected.

We obtained consent consistent with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the researchers' host institution. Consent was obtained from parents of participant-coresearchers, and an opportunity to assent was provided to them with parents present. Assent was also obtained by the primary researcher orally at the beginning of each session with research co-participants. All recruitment documents were produced in English; there were no non-English speakers enrolled in the camp program. Child assent forms were modified to ensure accessibility using plain language and simplified explanations to support understanding (See Appendix E & F).

Participant-coresearchers were 8 individuals with intellectual disabilities who participated in a four-day residential summer college preview camp on a large university campus. Camp admissions and enrollment were completed through a collaborative effort of pre-collegiate services at the university campus and the IPSE program. Criteria for overall camp admissions required that campers could (a) independently care for their hygiene needs, (b) had a basic functional reading ability, (c) basic functional math ability, (d) were able to eat independently,

(e) had no severe behavior, or emotional concerns, (f) could adapt & navigate change, and (g) had the potential to be successful in competitive employment situations. Camp applications were reviewed by the primary researcher, sample applications are provided for review (See Appendix C).

For our study, we used purposeful and convenient sampling to recruit our participant-coresearchers (study participants). Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers select participants or cases based on their availability and accessibility (Creswell, 2002). Purposeful criterion sampling provides researchers with the opportunity to select participants who possess similar qualities and are thought to have specific knowledge about a given phenomenon, program, or experience (Palinkas et al., 2013). In addition to the general requirements for attending the college preview camp, our study criterion required that all participant researchers be transition-age students between the age 14 - 18 years of age, had a description of intellectual disability described in their camp applications (no medical documentation was required), and were able to assent to participation. In addition to having an intellectual disability, some camp participants noted additional disabilities such as fetal alcohol syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, or multiple disabilities.

All participants must have had parent (guardian) consent to participate and must have been able to assent to their own to participation. We described and discussed the research with ($N = 16$) camp attenders (all attenders at the universities IPSE college preview camp), a total of 10 parent-student sets provided consent and assent, two students were excluded during enrollment based upon the primary researcher's observation that they did not meet the criterion for inclusion, as their needs appeared to be more significant than those identified on camp application. As a result, the support needed to participate was not available to support

communication and safety. The first student was a student with autism spectrum disorder who was later identified as having 1:1 support at school, who exhibited high elopement tendencies and significant boundary concerns with other campers and camp counselors. The second student was a student with a developmental disability, upon meeting the student, the student was unable to respond or describe what actions they would take within the study, (e.g. conducting research, taking pictures, participating in group discussions) Neither excluded participants based upon the researchers experience in working with students with developmental disabilities appeared to understand or be able to communicate clearly what they were assenting to during the assent process, or to understand their role in the study or the study's purpose enough to provide true assent.

We further describe participants self-descriptions for gender, age, disability label, grade, work experience, geographical area of home residence, if they were receiving SSI, and if they were actively enrolled with Vocational Rehabilitation (See Table 3). We recorded disability labels as provided on participants' applications, or as provided during sessions; we did not request clinical diagnostics or medical documentation. For example, if a guardian disclosed the student had FAS, we utilized the label provided. We used the 'Locale Look-Up' Tool on the National Center for Educational Statistics website to determine the local classifications for our participants using the exact address provided by participants; we felt this was important as geography significantly affects the type, quality, and quantity of transitional opportunities SWDs have access to (NCES, 2023). We provided age and grade for our participants, as stated in their applications. We defined work as engagement in community-based employment outside of the family home. A student working in the family home, working informally within a school-based

setting, or engaging in informal activities such as cutting the grass at a neighbor's yard would not meet our definition of work.

Table 3

Participant Profiles

Identifier	Gender	Age	Label	SSI	Locale	DRS	Grade	Working
Panther	M	17	IDD FAS	Y	Suburban Fringe	Y	12 th	N
Carson	M	15	IDD ASD	Y	City, Large	N	10 th	N
Vader	M	16	IDD	N	Rural, Fringe	Y	11 th	Y
Jim	M	17	HFA	N	City, Large	Y	12 th	Y
Analytica	F	15	IDD/A SD	N	City, Large	Y	10 th	N
7Seven	F	15	HFA	N	Remote, Town	Y	10 th	Y
Zara	F	17	DD	N	Medium, Suburb	Y	12 th	N
Janna	F	16	DS	N	Medium, Suburb	Y	10 th	

Note: Names reflect participant - researchers' self-selected pseudonyms. This table displays demographic information based on de-identified student data. Abbreviations used are as follows: IDD = Intellectual Disability/Developmental Disability, HFA=High Functioning Autism, DD = Developmental Disability, DS = Down Syndrome, SSI = Supplemental Security Income, VR = Vocational Rehabilitation; Locale used are SF = Suburban Fringe, CL = City Large, RF = Rural Fringe, RT = Rural Town, MS = Mid-Suburban

Other individuals present at the study and participating in other portions of the program evaluation included parents, camp counselors, educators, program directors, and social workers. A secondary observer who was a doctoral scholar with a specialization in both social work and special education was present during all parts of the photovoice study and reflection.

Setting & Context

This study took place at a research-intensive, suburban university campus located in south-central portion of the United States. During the fall-winter-spring schedule the university offers a variety of pre-collegiate programs for middle school students who are labeled as gifted and talented, inclusive of Model UN workshops, ACT/PSAT prep camps, and other skills-based activities. Each summer, middle school and high school students are offered skills-based camps, which are sometimes combined with residential experiences in college dorms to give students a college preview.

The CPC (college preview camps) which was the subject of our case study was newly woven into residential summer pre-college programs at the host campus and the first of its kind to be offered there. The program was developed to support student familiarization with the existing IPSE program on campus and served as a pre-employment transition service funded partly through the state vocational rehabilitation program. Students were invited to take part in daily workshops and outdoor programming. Skills-based work supporting the development of career and college readiness skills included workshops on career exploration, self-determination, goal setting, disability awareness, and self-advocacy. In contrast, outdoor activities included trips to the college pool and playing basketball. Other day-to-day living activities consistent with being on a college campus included eating at the campus cafeteria and walking to various buildings on campus.

Living Quarters

Participants were housed in a mixed-gender dormitory on the third floor, accessible via elevators and stairways. Individuals were separated based upon assigned gender at birth, with male-identified individuals in one hallway and female-identified individuals in another, there were no participants who self-identified as non-binary, gender non-conforming, or transgendered at time of application. Access to each hallway was regulated by electronic key cards, limiting entry to designated participants. Dorm rooms featured twin-sized beds, dressers, and private bathrooms equipped with showers and toilets, secured by keyed locks. Roommate assignments were randomized by pre-collegiate services because the camp was comprised of only individuals who had intellectual disabilities, or other developmental disabilities, each student was matched with a student sharing similar characteristics. Recreational rooms were available within each locked hallway, while a mixed-gender recreational space on the same floor provided additional amenities, including stationary windows, a non-operational TV, and seating arrangements. Counselors resided in dorm rooms on each hallway, corresponding to their gender. The dormitory setting served as a platform for participants to develop critical social skills alongside peers, counselors, and mentors, fostering autonomy, self-regulation, self-awareness, and daily living skills (Getzel, 2023)

Eating Facilities

The dining facilities, situated adjacent to the dormitory in a separate building accessible via a sidewalk, were accessed using electronic keycards. The main campus cafeteria offered a rotating selection of foods daily, catering to various dietary preferences, including specialized needs. In exceptional cases, such as one participant requiring specific dietary accommodations, an alternative eatery located at the opposite end of the campus was utilized. These dining

experiences were meant to facilitate the continued development of social skills among students, interactions with peers and community members, and the opportunity to make informed dietary choices. Moreover, exposure to the cafeteria environment provided insights into potential campus employment opportunities (Sogari et al., 2018).

Educational Facility (Lecture Room)

Daily Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition) courses covering several topics were conducted in a conference room located within the Education Building on campus. Participants accessed the building by walking approximately 0.4 miles from the dormitories. The conference room, situated on the third floor, was readily accessible via elevator, stairways, and building ramps. Equipped with five tables, the room featured a wall-mounted screen at the front and 36-inch display screens at each table, facilitating interactive learning. A projector ensured visibility both at the front of the room and at individual tables. Additionally, markers, pens, pencils, post-it notes, and other materials were provided, with guest lecturers providing additional materials to support instruction.

Pool

Participants attended the campus pool twice during the camp. The pool, located half a mile from the residential area, was accessed through a double steel door entrance with concrete sidewalks and ramps. Staffed by lifeguards and recreational facility personnel, the facility operated normally during the camp period, accommodating multiple camps and swimming activities. While the indoor pool and diving well were inaccessible and drained, the outdoor pool, featuring an Olympic-sized main pool with a 13-foot diving well and two 1-meter springboards, was available for use. Participants enjoyed free access to all outdoor deck areas, including the diving well under the supervision of CPC counselors.

Materials

The primary researcher coordinated with program and camp directors and the technology department to determine suitable technology for participant-coresearchers. Options considered included student-owned devices, iPads, and disposable cameras. Due to restrictions on student-owned devices, iPads were chosen from the campus technology center. Survey materials were stored in a waterproof folder and iPads were kept in a rolling file cart; the IPADS were distributed at the beginning of each day for Photovoice participation and collected at the end of each evening session. A portable projector and necessary adapters were provided for evening reflections. Additional personal items and accessibility aids, including a golf cart for campers with mobility concerns, were also prepared.

Procedures

Our study was conducted as part of a broader program evaluation lasting four total days. To develop our training manual & procedures we consulted several websites, articles, and explored first-person accounts of Photovoice research. These sources were both informative and contextually rich, supporting our understanding of photovoice methodology, adaptation, and application with diverse populations, including students with IDD (Chinn & Balota, 2023; Garcia, J., 2022; Jurkowski, 2008; Liebenberg, 2018; Kirsson et al., 2021; Krutt et al., 2018; Overmars-Marx et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2021; Lam et al., 2019; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Chinn & Balota (2023) conducted a systematic review of 31 studies involving individuals with IDD, highlighting innovative Photovoice applications and adaptations over time. While many studies deviated from traditional Photovoice methods, they typically encompassed key stages, including a) audience selection, b) recruitment of participant researchers, c) training, d) consent, e) ensuring social validity of research topics, f) providing cameras or technology, g)

allowing time for photography, and e) engaging in a discussion of the photographs taken by participant researchers in order to develop themes.

Our Photovoice study was initially designed to integrate these stages and included the development of training materials to support co-researchers in understanding Photovoice and utilizing group reflections to support the development of themes using the SHOWED method (See Appendix H) (Wang & Burris, 1997). The SHOWED method fosters critical engagement with visual narratives captured through photography, guiding participants to reflect on underlying issues, relevant topics, and potential solutions. Utilizing structured questioning, the SHOWED method facilitates meaningful discussions and insights which can support on-going program evaluations which are conducted for and with the populations they are meant to serve. The SHOWED method typically includes the following questions:

- What do you see in this photograph?
- What is happening in the photograph?
- How does this relate to our lives?
- Why do these issues exist?
- How can we become empowered by our new social understanding?
- What can we do to address these issues?

We initially believed use of a structured question sequence such as the SHOWED method would benefit our participant-coresearchers due to their limited experience with Photovoice methodology. However, during our study while engaging participant researchers in dialogue and reflection to ensure their active involvement in shaping the research process. As part of an iterative process, we recognized the importance of remaining adaptable to evolving dynamics within the research partnership. By embracing flexibility inherent in Photovoice and the

SHOWED method, we tailored our approach to meet the unique needs and preferences of our participant-coresearchers, fostering a sense of ownership and trust (Chinn & Balota, 2023; Wang & Burris, 1997).

During the initial evening reflection, we immediately noted the use of the SHOWED method question sequence, without accommodations, was neither preferred nor suitable for our participant-coresearchers. This was expressed both verbally and non-verbally by the participant-coresearchers with disabilities participating in the study. Specifically, the first evening we met for group reflection on the photographs, we provided the initial question, “What do we see here?” and noted that our participant-coresearchers looked both bewildered and somewhat afraid to respond. Based on this response, we asked if this analysis process made sense to them, or if they would prefer to simply present and describe their reasons for taking the photo. All researchers responded positively either by nodding to indicate yes or stating yes, and their faces displayed additional relief in the form of smiles. One by one each participant co-researcher presented their photographs. Occasionally, some participant-coresearchers forgot to take pictures, these researchers participated by providing commentary, sometimes through agreement, other times through questioning, and on occasion through an outpouring of emotion taking us by surprise.

The primary researcher was present for 12 hours per day with participant-coresearchers, attending most sessions with the broader camp population and having the opportunity to observe and reflect on individual aspects of the camp. The secondary observer joined the primary researcher and was present each evening, typically arriving 1 hour before evening reflection. At the end of the day, the focus group sessions were planned for one hour; time was built-in to extend as the group desired (See Table 4).

Table 4***Evening Focus Group Progression***

Action	Leader	What it looked like
Meet & greet	Primary researcher	Participant researchers self-selected seats; primary researcher read from a script on night one, casually welcomed all other evenings.
Present concept photovoice prompt	Primary researcher	Primary researcher presented photovoice prompt, participant researchers discussed.
Definition & Meaning Building	Primary researcher & Participant researchers	Primary researcher asked an introductory question like, “What does it mean to belong?” group responded, defined concept, discussed importance to future. Secondary observer ensured integrity of discussion.
Reconfirm Discussion Data	Primary, secondary, and participant researchers	Member-checking, review data from previous evening using poster-size post-its; primary researcher confirms understanding of previous evenings discussion with students. Secondary observer interjects questions constructively.
Review photos from previous evening	Primary, secondary, and participant researchers	Each participant researcher showed their photograph and discussed what prompted them to take the photo; other participant researchers, primary researcher, and secondary observer asked questions. Some students used photos taken themselves, some used photos they searched on the web, and some researchers simply

listened and provided
feedback on other photos.

IPAD collection / Next day's prompt	Primary Researcher	Primary Research Collected IPADs
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Morning Check In

On the first day, the primary researcher met students and families at the dormitory, study information was provided to all camp participants and all parents, and students were provided an opportunity to consent/ assent consistent with the Institutional Review Board guidelines.

On subsequent mornings, the primary researcher arrived early to provide students with their iPads prior to breakfast. The students were reminded of their prompt for the day. The primary researcher remained with the students throughout the day; the primary researcher provided occasional reminders to take photos and restated the photovoice prompt for students as requested.

Additionally, on the final day of camp the students were given surveys that were part of the broader program evaluation. The primary researcher discussed the possibility of a follow-up session with students and provided information about when the session would be held.

Evening Reflections

During the first evening reflection, the primary researcher and graduate student acting as secondary observer introduced themselves and shared with participant-researchers their unique roles in the process. The primary researcher confirmed that all participants present still wished to participate, and all participants confirmed their desire to continue. The primary researcher then welcomed everyone to the team and provided an accessible discussion using plain language

about adventure and belonging, and what the researchers hoped to find out. The primary researcher then requested feedback from the participant-coresearchers, who reciprocated by sharing their thoughts and ideas. As a team, the participant-coresearchers and the primary researcher agreed that the topic and approach were both of interest to the population.

The primary researcher then discussed the role of being a participants-researcher. Using an IRB approved script, they provided detailed instructions about photovoice technique, ensuring that participants understood both the ethical and safety concerns associated with taking photos in public. These included: (a) getting verbal consent prior to photographing individuals, (b) general rules about safety (i.e., awareness of self and space), and (c) using composition techniques which respected the privacy of photographed subjects (e.g., not capturing faces, photographing from a distance, or behind). The primary researcher then provided the first prompt and gave students instructions to pick up their IPADs for taking pictures in the morning. Thoughts and ideas of the participants were consistently taken and retained on poster-size post-its.

On subsequent evenings, the primary researcher and secondary observer met before evening reflection to set up the room. A poster-sized post-it, which contained the previous night's data was reviewed, was placed on the at the front of the room. We provide digital representation of the post-its (see Fig. 1 – 3). The primary researcher confirmed that all participants-researchers present still wished to participate, all participants confirmed their desire to continue. The primary researcher confirmed with the participant researchers some of the initial thoughts and ideas which were present from the previous evening's reflection. Participant researchers were asked to share photos that they, or others had taken. Participant researchers provided their photos and briefly discussed these with the group. Photographs that were taken by others or were not on IPADs were not reserved but were considered during reflections to support

overall themes. The primary researcher then introduced the prompt for the next day of camp. During evening 3, in addition to the regular procedure, students were asked to choose pseudonyms.

Photovoice Prompts

Prompts were provided during the evening sessions for the subsequent day. Students could request prompts to be repeated during the day if they needed a reminder.

- Prompt 1: Take a photo, or photos of something that represents a feeling of adventure during your college preview camp experience. It could be a picture of an activity, a place, or something that made you step out of your comfort zone, learn something new, or grow.
- Prompt 2: Capture a moment, or moments that made you feel a sense of belonging during the college preview camp. It could be a photo of a group activity, a supportive friend, or a place where you felt a sense of inclusion.
- Prompt 3: What motivates me? Take a picture of something that represents something that you think about when choosing college.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

We utilized a secondary observer as part of our study; we requested the secondary observer act as gatekeeper within our participatory design to ensure that participant-researchers voices, and not the primary researchers voice remained the dominate force in the room during all reflective sessions. As part of member checking, the primary researcher and secondary observer collaborated closely throughout the study both with each other and the co-researchers. Each evening, the primary researcher reviewed session notes, while the secondary observer conducted a separate review of their own notes. The following evening, before meeting with participatory researchers, the primary researcher and secondary observer coordinated to discuss emerging

themes they believed had been identified by the students. This collaborative approach aimed to enhance the clarity and inclusiveness of the research process, ensuring that participants' perspectives were accurately reflected as part of each evening's reflection. Other times, the secondary observer, supported group interaction, and clarity within discussions by interjecting a clarifying question, likewise occasionally the primary researcher would ask the secondary observer to support the rephrasing of a question, if for some reason the wording of a question was not stated in a way that appeared to be accessible to the participatory researchers.

Analysis

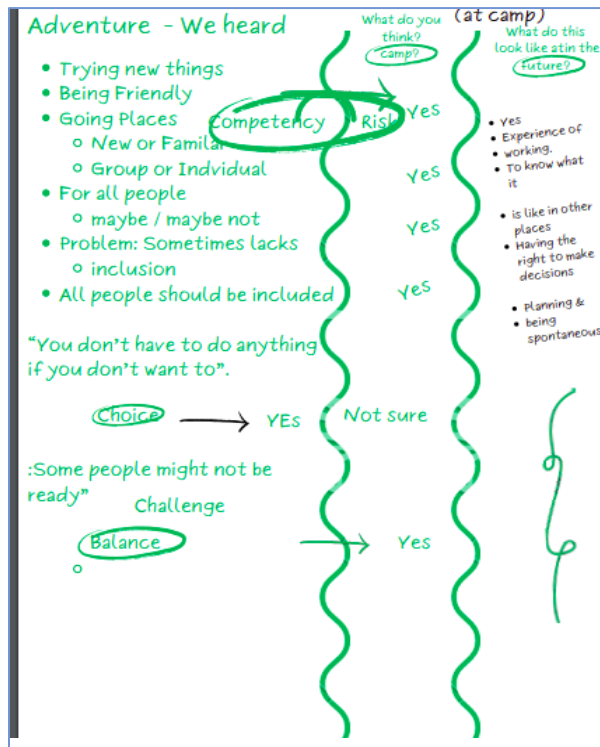
As previously described in Table 2., participants were provided with prompts for the collection of data, the initial analysis was conducted within the group each evening and initial themes emerged and were logged during evening sessions on wall-sized post-its, reviewed by the primary research and secondary observer after each session, and member-checking was then conducted with the group during the following evenings session. Figures 1, 2, & 3 all provide exact replicas of paper post-its in, for the purpose of this article we converted these to digital form for readability.

All sessions were recorded and transcribed (See Fig 4). Transcripts were reviewed and compared to session notes which were recorded each evening. Meaningful words, phrases, and quotes were added to a single document with photos which were selected by the group and placed in a separate file for review by the primary researcher and secondary observer to examine after camp. Conforming and disconfirming evidence was reviewed and sorted. For example, while most participant co-researchers noted that sense of belonging was imperative in imparting a desire to pursue post-secondary education or a career environment, one participant co-researcher had a strong descending opinion stating that these factors were not important, that

indeed belonging is “...not make or break”, when it comes to going to school as training is necessary in reaching a career goal.

Figure 1

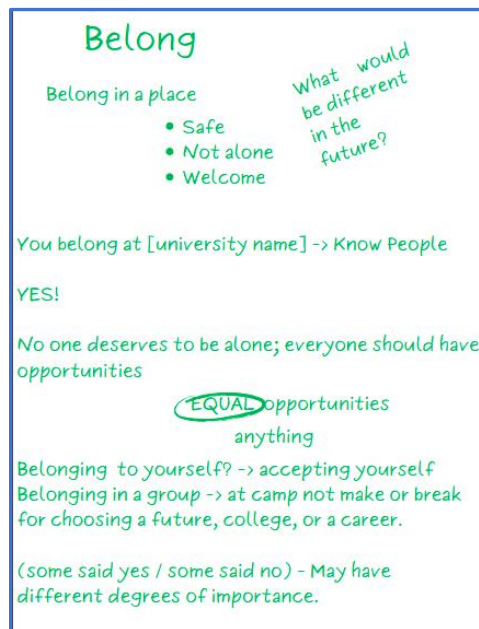
Construct Adventure / Belonging / Member - Checking



Note: Digital representation of in-group wall post –it

Figure 2

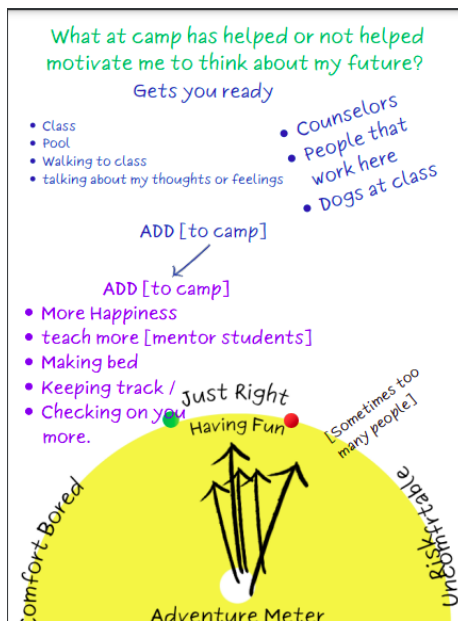
What is belonging? Constructing a Definition.



Note: Digital representation of in-group wall post -it

Figure 3

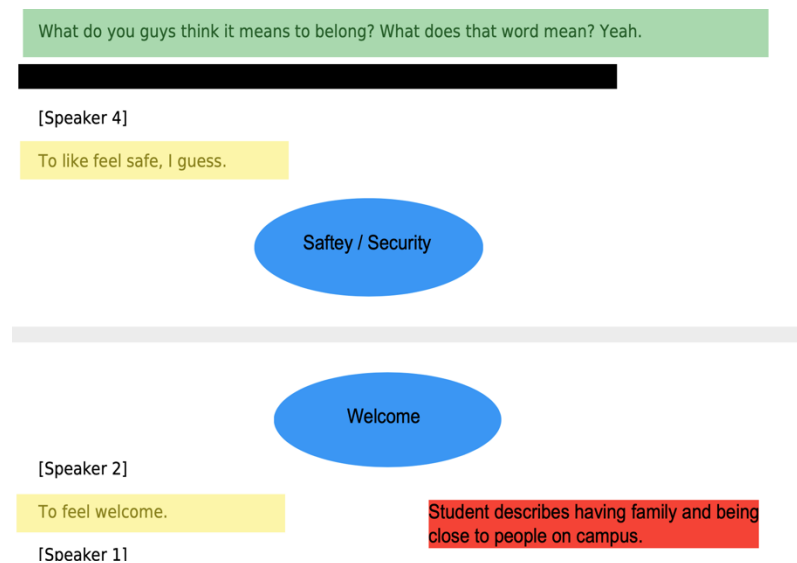
What Motivates Me at Camp?



Note: Digital representation of in-group wall post -it

Figure 4

Sample Beginning of Post-Camp Color Coding and Transcribing



Note. Beginning of transcription, color blocking, coding

Results

As previously discussed, a total of 8 participants shared in the experience and conducted the work that comprises the results of this research, the relevance was first in tapping the knowledge of those students for whom the program is designed, understanding their definitions of belonging and adventure, and the way in which such concepts impact the way they think, feel, or believe about this future. In this way we were able to understand more about our programming, and the impact the program made using photovoice. Our work was conducted organically, using an iterative process, where a barrier might arise (such as in the formal SHOWED framework) we adjusted to promote inclusion, increase depth, and support our participant-coresearchers in exploring topics in a way that made sense to them. Some participants-coresearchers found it was simply easier to discuss concepts than to take photographs, for these individuals, we listened closely to their responses and asked questions to ensure we had a clear understanding of the themes that were emerging from within the group.

For others, simply showing the photograph, providing a brief statement, or even nodding in agreement with other statements seemed to be a preferable pathway to participation. As definitions were constructed throughout evening sessions, we listened and supported our participant-coresearchers in building themes using cross analysis. This process empowered the group to look across definitions, consider their experiences at the CPC and think about and discuss their feelings, and consider their relevance to CPC programming, or their future. To support this cross analysis, using the same post-its we conducted member checking with, at times we created columns to structure information (See Figure 1).

Theme construction was not the laying of three photographs next to each other, photos provided starting points, or at times ending points for broader conversations. Definitions which had been created by the co-searchers themselves were the lens through which group work was constructed and confirmed. What started out as photovoice, gave way to what looked and felt more like photo elicitation, where thoughts, ideas, and conversations in our reflective space were stimulated by a handful of photographs provided by coresearchers each evening. While much of this represents the organic nature of the work conducted throughout the week, these changes cannot be fully attributed to construction and adaptation, all researchers should consider the time and resources needed to conduct Photovoice particularly with specialized populations. While we read many studies, this cannot replace experiential learning. For our study time, resources, and the taking into consideration of the dynamic nature of the CPC environment would have benefited this study, and our coresearchers.

Group Constructed Definitions

Adventure

Adventure is trying new things; it means being friendly and going to new, or even familiar places. You can do it as a group, or as an individual. Adventure may or may not be for all people, but all people should have the opportunity. The problem is that people with disabilities may not be. There are choices in adventure, in adventure you don't have to do anything you don't want to because some people might not be ready. There has to be balance. In the future this means we get to experience working, to know what it is like to be in other places, have the right to make decisions, and get to choose whether to plan or be spontaneous (See Figure 1).

Belonging

Belonging is a place, it means feeling safe and welcome, it means not being alone. No one deserves to be alone; everyone should have opportunities, and those opportunities should be equal. Belonging means that you accept yourself, being part of the group is important, but it is not make or break for choosing a future, college, or career though in our group this may have different degrees (See Figure 1).

Final Photovoice, and Evening Reflection Themes

Theme 1: Feeling Safe

Belonging through pathways of adventure experienced while attending pre-collegiate programming was defined by our participant researchers as having both an individual and collective nature, participants discussed that within various activities, and in general feeling safe, being with participants that share similar qualities, and having shared values are implicit to belonging. Rule following and conforming to camp guidelines were highly regarded within group dynamics. These were ideas that were discussed several times within our evening reflection time and were present in photovoice activities as well when considering belonging,

adventure levels, and overall feelings of participants about pursuing the work of camp together as a group.

Figure 5

Being Together, Having Fun, Staying Safe



Figure 6

Being Together, Having Fun, Staying Safe



During one of our evening focus group sessions, a participant shared a photograph of a swimming pool (see Figure 5), sparking a group discussion about its significance and symbolism. Some participants associated the pool with elements of belonging such as fun and friendship-making, emphasizing the enjoyment and social connection fostered by the activity.

However, another participant expressed concerns regarding the safety risks associated with swimming, highlighting the need for caution, we provide an additional photo of the pool outing (See Figure 6).

The reflection evolved in the following manner, while considering belonging, the primary researcher supported as the group focus shifted to the current photograph being displayed which was centered on a pool. The primary researcher asked, “Okay, so talk to me about your picture...what do you think it represented? What do you guys think of when you look at the pool?”

Panther [pseudonym] immediately noted, “There is a pool right there,” focusing on the literalness of the pool. When prompted by the primary researcher to elaborate, Panther expressed a recurring concern for safety, “Make sure you don’t sink in the pool.”. This comment resonated with the group, leading to nods of agreement from others.

In contrast, Jim [pseudonym] shifted the conversation towards the shared experience, saying, “The pool is like a picture of the pool. It’s a pool. Swimming and having fun.” His speech sounded lighthearted, his focus brings the group towards togetherness and enjoyment. Panther again interjected a safety concern, “Very big.”, Jim then added, “We all swam...Everybody swam,” further reinforcing the importance of the shared experience.

As the discussion progressed, Panther suggested, “We should play basketball next time,” reflecting a desire for safe, fun activities that could foster connection. This dialogue illustrated contrasting views: while Panther was focused on safety, Jim found a different representation of belonging in the photograph — the joy of being together. Ultimately these differing perspectives enriched the groups’ exploration of belonging and how both safety and shared experiences contribute to a sense of belonging.

Group activities, particularly those adventure-based activities which are known to foster a sense of belonging, also present important challenges that require critical thinking, autonomy, and decision-making skills. Skill competencies and physical abilities within our group varied widely. When posed with the physical and mental tasks we observed participant-coresearchers (supported by new friends) often made decisions to take on challenges they otherwise wouldn't. Panther was particularly concerned with the pool having never swam before, but his confidence and self-efficacy were evident and verbalized once he decided to step into the shallow end of the pool.

Theme 2: Not Alone

At one point during the evening reflections, the primary researcher asked, "Is it important that everyone feels like they belong? Why or why not?" The group responded unanimously, "yes," particularly Jim [pseudonym], who added, "because no one deserves to be alone." Gilmore and Cuskelly (2014) note that individuals with IDD have difficulty establishing and maintaining friendships, spend more time alone, and have fewer reciprocated relationships. Another co-researcher then spontaneously began to discuss a long history of loss, including the deaths of several loved ones and family members, stating, "it's hard, it's hard to be alone." The group then turned to primary research, looking for validation of their restatements, and asked, "If you [relation] died, would that make you hurt?" They then asked several others in the group if that would make them sad as well. This statement also made us consider the importance of supports and the way in which having college preview camp helped to build friendships and support structures.

Theme 3: Feeling Welcome

Students described that feeling welcome was important both through support and feedback received from staff, student mentors, and even the bags provided at the beginning of camp. One co-researcher Vadar [pseudonym] displayed a photo of a bag on a pool chair and described the experience of having his “own stuff”. When asked about why he took the picture, he said “It made me feel welcome.”, “I belong”. Carter & Biggs (2021), state, one of the goals in welcoming students with IDD into schools, faith, programs, and other social communities is to ensure that they are, “welcomed [and] received by others with warmth, friendliness, and an authentic delight.”

Figure 7

Towel and Bag on Chair – Feeling Welcome



Theme 4: Knowing People

Janna, one of the female participants, had a variety of connections to campus including several family members. She displayed a photograph of the campus stadium. Other participant-

coresearchers described having previous connections or allegiances as long-time residents of the state, and other social, or professional campus resources including family, athletics, and allied health, or educational professionals. Although some participants had seen the stadium many times, others had never seen it, which added to the excitement particularly for sports fans. As a primary researcher, I could not help but consider earlier researchers like Tinto (1973), and Spady (1970) who long before our study, and with other populations confirmed social integration, institutional commitment, membership, and extracurricular activities as components which fostered not only enrollment in college, but persistence for first year students. Many participant-coresearchers discussed family members, some appeared to make the connection that they would be “just like their parents” when they finally did have the opportunity to attend the university.

Theme 5: I Say When To Belong – “There is no bell”

As we talked about belonging, Janna presented a picture of a bell, the group discussed the bell, while Janna related the bell to education, Carson [pseudonym] another co-researcher, brought up the unique difference between belonging in their current school setting, and belonging at the college preview camp, stating loudly, “There’s no bell”, when asked what he meant by this, he explained, that belonging at camp was not scheduled in the way that traditional educational settings dictated where a bell halts periods of contact with friends and actions are highly controlled dictated by parents and teachers. As the group listened one student provided an example of a classroom, where there may be assigned seating limiting who you can and cannot talk to, another discussed being separated from others in the school in a self-contained classroom where the only time you have contact with your “real” friends is during passing periods in the hallway. Finally, another discussed that belonging at school limited the age and range of your friends. They relayed, “your friends at high school are just your friends right now”, that

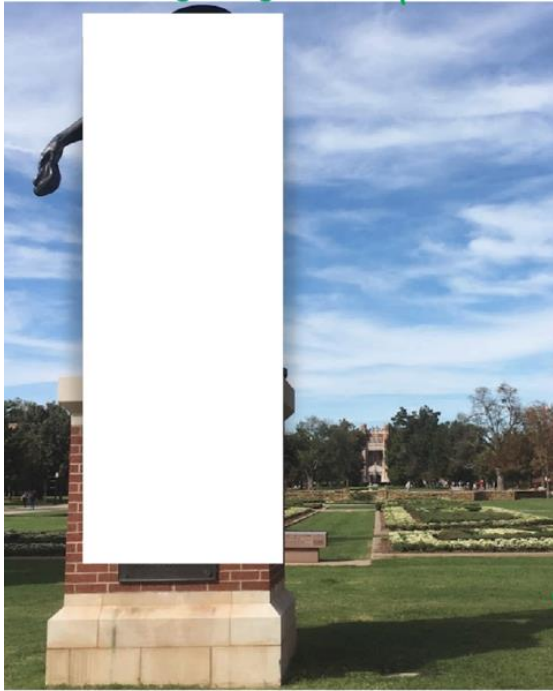
discussed how that would change when they turned 18. They furthered that friends at the college preview camp were from everywhere and they might last forever, or they may only last the weekend indicating uncertainty. Participant-coresearchers experienced greater agency having more control over their participation and relationships and actions taken within the camp community.

Theme 6: New Places & New Things - A Right to Learn and Grow

Many participants shared photos of pictures that portrayed movement and activity, one participant provided a photo of a statue of a man walking stating “He’s the [statue not identified]” the group chimed in describing that belonging was about “going places”, “seeing new things,” “learning” (See Fig.6). This was emphasized repeatedly during the focus group. At one point, while discussing the importance of belonging in choosing colleges and future careers, co-researcher Jim stated, “important to know what it is like in other places” (Jim, Pathways Group, 2023). The group relayed that belonging and adventure in higher education are essential rights that should be provided fairly, giving all students the opportunity to explore their futures. Pre-college programs and other programs should offer the same activities to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they do to those without. They continued to discuss that it was important not to assume someone’s readiness for a particular adventure or learning experience based on their disability; rather, we should recognize the everyday differences that exist between individuals. Figures 7 & 8 demonstrate addition examples of students documenting learning or movement.

Figure 8

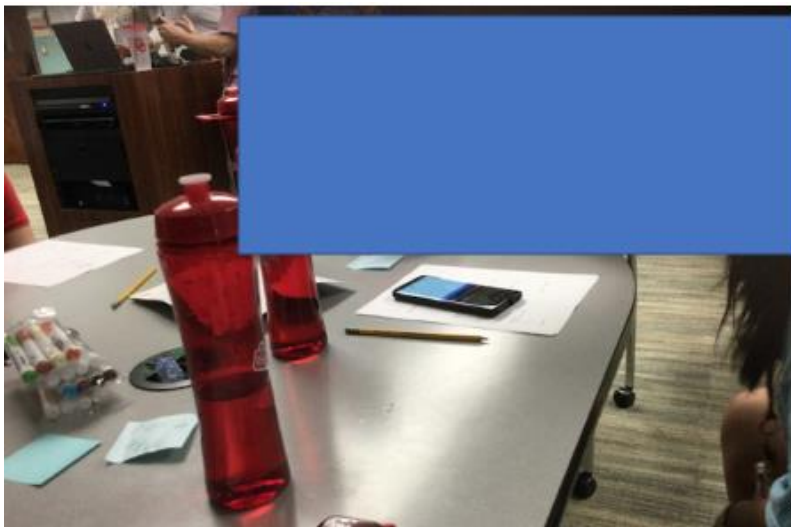
Photos Representing Going New or Familiar Places, Seeing New Things, Learning



Note. Photo of statue – Walking, Going Places

Figure 9

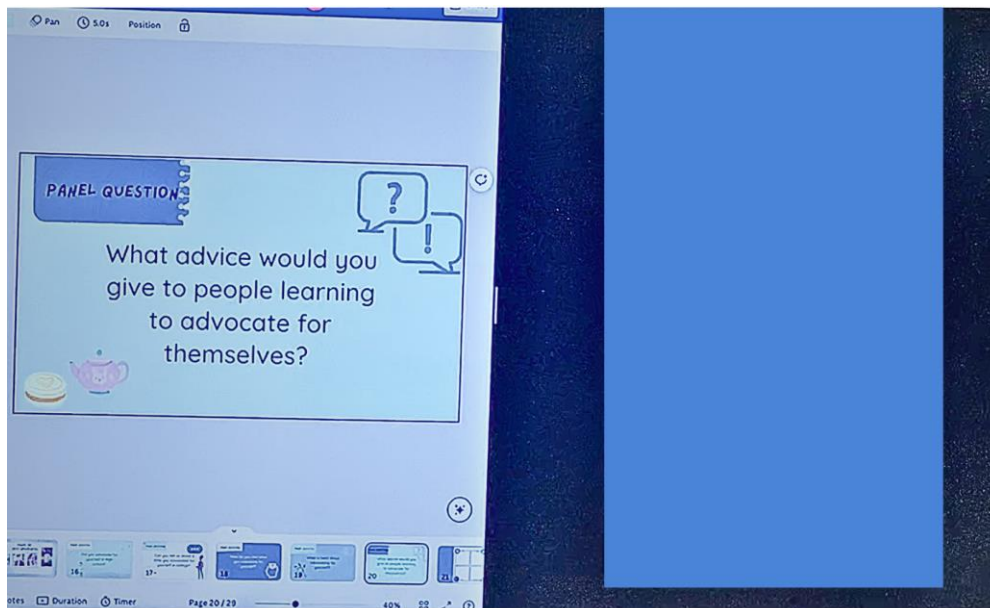
Photos Representing Going New or Familiar Places, Seeing New Things, Learning



Note. Photo in the classroom - Teaching us things

Figure 10

Photos Representing Going New or Familiar Places, Seeing New Things, Learning



Theme 7: My future. My choices

My future. My choices. Autonomy, choice-making and control our participant-coresearchers were discussed here and in several of our themes. Panther [pseudonym], one of the most vocal of the participant-coresearchers, shared his thoughts while displaying a series of photographs from various websites, that he had not taken but wanted to use to share his thoughts, they portrayed money, a lawn mower, and a house. He started, “You see this, I put it in the middle. I’m going to put it right there...if I get money.... A house. A lawn mower” (Panther, Pathways Group, 2023).

Curious, the primary researcher asked, “What are all those things? The house, the lawn mower. What is that about?” Panther then described, using a hopeful and determined tone, “When I leave college.” The primary researcher confirmed, “When you leave here?”, To which Panther reiterated, “When I leave here. I go to college, something like that... I can find me a house. I can live by myself. Not with my mom, not with my dad, not with myself” [indicating a

desire for a companion]. Panther continued, “If I want to have like... sleepovers, I can have that. If I want to have kids, it’s my house” [indicating the desire to have his own family]. The following day we learned Panther had been selected to interview for an alternate post-secondary opportunity at a local technical college that would allow him to do both an internship and gain training in the field of landscaping. Many students were enthralled by the many options for food that were available at the cafeteria, one presented a color photograph of a tray of colorful donuts. After showing other participant-coresearchers, they all discussed the many choices and opportunities that college presented and felt that this represented the opportunity to not only make choices, but declared those choices, could be good or bad (**See Figure 7**).

Figure 11

Examples of My Future. My Choices



Note. Donuts demonstrating opportunities for choice

Prompt 3: What Motivates Me?

During our final evening, the primary researcher, secondary researcher, and participant-coresearchers gathered to discuss the final question, due to time, and camp length we were unable to collect photographs for this prompt, data was formed based around group discussions, as in previous evenings discussions evolved organically, and iteratively. The participant-

coresearchers determined that the following components motivated them in thinking about their future (See Figure 3). Participant-coresearchers discussed that they felt well supported by the professors, doctoral students, and counselors. They outlined various components that were especially helpful.

- class sessions - sessions that included current inclusive post-secondary education students supported our participant-researchers in the way they thought, felt, and believed about their future; exploring their strengths both individually and with their peers, seeing what they were capable of, and supporting them in understanding their rights as individuals with disabilities.
- adventure-based activities – participant-coresearchers particularly those outside like the pool, provided opportunities to relax and build friendships
- exploration on campus – participant-coresearchers enjoyed having an opportunity to be outside, and walk around campus, provided opportunities for exploration on the campus environment, many of which had never been or seen a university campus, stadium, cafeteria, dorm, or lecture hall.
- talking about thoughts and feelings – being able to share with individuals around them and feel listened to supported students not only in feeling welcomed but being valued and known.

In addition to those areas that were helpful at camp, participant-coresearchers considered and discussed many of the elements of the camp that they felt could be added to or would have made the camp better.

- more happiness – participant-coresearchers felt that some of the activities were a bit too controlled and that activities could have been more exciting by increasing time spent together building friendships increasing overall fun and happiness
- IPSE students teach more – participant-coresearchers felt that IPSE students should have been more prominent and should have been teaching more
- check-in more – some participant-coresearchers felt that adults could have checked in more to ensure rooms were tidy, and that everyone was comfortable in the camp environment.

Summary

Participant-coresearchers significantly contributed to our comprehension of belonging and adventure as experienced as part of the pre-college program at the host site. Collectively, most participant-coresearchers concluded that the experience of belonging fostered by camp activities, friendship formation, shared values, interests, and expanded opportunities for decision making were essential both at camp and in selecting future post-secondary opportunities.

However not all. They made connections between the experiences they were having at the CPC to potential opportunities in their future such as the opportunity to work, gain insights into different environments, and increased opportunities to act independently, make autonomous decisions, plan, and engage in spontaneous activities.

Through their involvement in both the CPC, and the Photovoice study they gained valuable insights into the transformative potential of pre-college programming and how it can promote college readiness through various pathways of belonging. They found the CPC programming created a welcoming and supportive environment where they felt valued and

respected. This sense of belonging empowered them to take risks, share their ideas, and reciprocate such contributions to the future experiences of others.

Limitations & Future Research Recommendations

Our research had several limitations, first our research was conducted as part of a broader program evaluation it is time, place, and program specific, conclusions made here are not generalizable, even within other populations, or other institutions providing similar pre-college offerings. Belonging remains salient in definition between cultures, peoples, and groups. It is deeply contextual, particularly for students with IDD (Allen et al., 2021; Carter & Biggs, 2021; Strayhorn, 2021). Second, we made modifications to Photovoice to meet the needs of our populations, hence our process like many others was not “pure” (Chinn et al., 2023). Equipment, due to constraints of time, and approvals we utilized IPADs rather than the student’s own technology or phones. Using a student’s preferred and familiar technology in most cases is preferable, and results in much more data. Further, while it was clear that students enjoyed playing on the IPADs they demonstrated their preference for their phone cameras, as they often had pictures on their phones which we could not retain. Third, although we attempted to provide opportunities at every stage of the research process, and although we sent emails to contact our group for a final session where we hoped to discuss a project or presentation, and obtain additional data most students did not respond, and those that did made choices to focus on other summer activities. Finally, time and resources were against us in this study. Photovoice is an in-depth process that requires a fair amount of training regardless of population. Our study would have benefited from much more time, although our camp was abbreviated, future researchers could consider having pre-training meetings even across a semester of school to provide participant-coresearchers opportunities to practice.

Researcher Statement of Subjectivity

As a researcher, I believe in the existence of shared and inherent knowledge, a wisdom that comes from both deep within our individual experiences and from a source beyond full human understanding. This knowledge transcends what we can fully define with conventional language. As Heron (1996) argues, propositional truth is not only relative to the language and concepts used within a community but is also shaped by the shared, experiential meanings that form the foundation for how language and concepts are understood and exchanged. I see knowledge as something that is co-created within a community through shared experiences and critical dialogue, where we each contribute to and refine the understanding of truth, while also being mindful of our individual perspectives and biases.

In working with marginalized groups or individuals with disabilities, I believe we must co-create knowledge together, recognizing and respecting each person's unique experience. This process requires critical subjectivity, where we remain aware of our own perspectives and biases, but also engage deeply in critical intersubjectivity—the dialogue and exchange that leads to a deeper, collective understanding. While this process is challenging, it is the most democratic way to create knowledge, as it allows for the full participation of all individuals, acknowledging the complexity and diversity of human experience.

To further support readers understanding, I view myself as a perfectly imperfect 51-year-old cisgender female who has been married for nearly 30 years and has lived experiences of both disability and historical trauma. I see myself as someone who has navigated various worlds, including periods of life on the streets at a young age and now relative affluence, both of which have deepened my perspectives. I emerged from a loving family, with two parents, both of whom are heteronormative, and formally educated. In our household, faith, love, education, equity and

appropriateness were all prioritized, with deviations from these tolerated at varying degrees over time. I am a twin, a mother, wife, educator, counselor, and advocate. I have worked in education, children and family services, and vocational counseling fields. My many intersections influence my perspectives on this research, these include a desire for clarity, structure, and perfection — a desire that was tested throughout the process.

Starting this process, I hoped for a perfect study everyone wildly impressed with the work that had been completed. In my mind I imagined large black and white photos nicely displayed on campus, perhaps even a community gallery, or some coffee shop — clean lines, raw images setting the stage. Yet, it felt once again that my work would be judged by someone else's book, or the many books that comprised my committee members. I hoped for whatever successful meant, and as a new researcher though I had tried to understand, I was not exactly sure what that was. Was there a specific box I needed to put it in — this was dissertation research, a subjective point that mattered. We all had our expectations, I had my own, but then research unfolds

Coresearchers came, sometimes they had pictures, sometimes they did not. Sometimes they brought drawings, watched, nodded in agreement, or just disengaged. As with any research team, or at least the ones I have been on, coresearchers converged as a group but resided as individuals. Each one's presence importantly represented a secret world of knowledge and information that I could only wait to be invited into. Like all researchers, my coresearchers displayed varied degrees of preparedness, excitement, engagement, or exhaustion all in good company. This was a piece I both did and did not calculate. They were human. An oversight, even with my experience of being an individual with a disability and working to fight against the process of labeling, my subjective experience of being a special educator I could not deny that I

had created a label and forgotten the other parts of who my co-researchers were. I hadn't considered what prompting engagement would be like on this team, unlike others I had been involved in there was an essential power balance that needed to be more critically assessed here, and it felt confusing.

I worried, I stressed and wondered if my choice to provide coresearchers so much freedom had been the right approach, more bias and fear relative to the interpretation of study success. At points I wondered how I could have self-sabotaged my own dissertation research so much, having nothing to do with my co-researchers, and everything to do with me. Perhaps I could call this "Failing Photovoice". Throughout this process, regardless of how intent I was in remaining present I had fears, and concerns, like any new researcher, and particularly one who was working on their dissertation – would this be enough? I had to fight my desire to remind students to take photos. I spent hours upon hours with them each day, but I was committed to their choice-making - taking pictures or simply being present to the experience of the CPC. This thought in and of itself becoming a barrier...too much.... too little support, what did it really mean? I had read about this dilemma, but now it felt so much more real.

After the research ended, and as I prepared to write this statement, it hit me, and I once again carefully unfolded the giant post-its that we had used for our analysis and member checking each night, it was enough. I had been the record keeper, the listener, the observer. I had asked questions of my coresearchers, and questions of myself. As they say in the airline industry, I checked, and cross checked the doors, it didn't mean we wouldn't have a catastrophe in midair, but I had done all I could with the equipment I currently had to prevent it.

In the end the coresearchers and I had shaped the analysis in ways that I had not expected; the research had unfolded in its own way. This process taught me an important lesson: research

does not have to be perfect to be valuable. I realized that sometimes, letting go of control and allowing the study to evolve organically is the most honest and respectful approach. I was after all, just the record keeper, perhaps even a contributor, but not the creator of meaning.

My own subjectivity arose in other places as well, my personal experience of being a twin meant having a profound and inexplicable sense of belonging. One so strong that it literally formed its own language that did not exist in cerebral pathways. On the other hand, with others, I felt completely misaligned (Klein, 2017). It shaped how I understood closeness, connection, and trust, this coupled with a disability — one often hidden from view yet still perceived by others — made belonging even more complicated. Subjectively this impacted my belief about what I might find in the research, and my initial approach. I listened and looked for clues, in some way I assumed the conversation would start at a deficit of belonging — often my own experience.

Here largely the conversation was quite balanced, while students felt exclusion and loss of control in varied places in their lives, their responses (when asked) often moved towards the broader population not just themselves. In the end, it wasn't just people with, or without disabilities it was everyone, or all people. It was difficult to tell how much they did or did not perceive any differences between themselves and others, or the way my own perception might interfere. Ongoingly, this became a question, and one in this study we would not approach. Sense of belonging would remain deeply contextual and hard to define, owing to the person, place, and time it belonged to, a handful of themes would be generated, but my own meaning too would inevitably come through.

In qualitative research, the concern is not the provability of something, it is the nature of something — what are the qualities — I found myself considering this again, and again. Am I proving, or listening? Am I gathering or am I hunting — gathering is a collecting of things which

may appear before you, hunting is seeking a predetermined goal. Neither approach is inherently better, they both have their place, but here my role was to gather. This tension between openness and direction became my constant companion. I worked to manage through this by meeting faithfully with my secondary observer each night, comparing notes, and member-checking with co-researchers to ensure that I was doing more listening than projecting. Therein was the tension that so many researchers described...I could feel happiness rising, when students' beliefs aligned with my own - it was exciting but had the potential to block my hearing. Equally there were times when frustration, or concern when conversations felt too deep, too long, or perhaps heading in the wrong direction. Yet, it was in these moments — the most uncomfortable ones — that the richest insights emerged. I now know, it is the heart of qualitative inquiry, and the gift of my co-researchers not the certainty of answers but the courage to let go, be open, make mistakes, and evolve.

CHAPTER 3: MANUSCRIPT 2

Abstract

Transition programs for middle school and high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) play a crucial role in preparing them for independent living post-secondary education and employment. However, there is limited research on the effectiveness of residential pre-college programs like summer bridge programs and college preview camps for this population. This study provides one piece of a formative program evaluation. In this segment we evaluate the perceptions of eight students with IDD on the impact of a college preview camp on their career and college readiness and sense of belonging using pre-post measures. The research was conducted at a suburban university in the south-central United States, hosted by its inclusive post-secondary education program. Students included transition-age students (ages 14-18) with mild/moderate IDD. The camp curriculum focused on Career and College Readiness (CCR) exploration and provided activities that met pre-employment transition service criteria, including job exploration, workplace readiness skills, and self-advocacy. Findings suggest that while the camp enhances career readiness in goal setting and achievement, expanded research is needed to understand the links between a sense of belonging and career and college readiness which were high, but remained stable throughout the course of the camp.

Keywords: pre-college program, intellectual disability, career readiness, sense of belonging, college preview camp

Perceived Sense of Belonging and Career and College Readiness Before and After a Residential College Preview Camp In Students With IDD

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) constitute a unique and gifted population frequently misunderstood and poorly positioned by schools and educators to pursue college (Carter, 2021; Uditsky & Hughes, 2012; McGrew & Evans, 2004). Barriers, such as beliefs and expectations, lack of program awareness, and social and academic exclusion can significantly impact the college aspirations of students with IDD (Grigal, 2012; McGrew & Evans, 2004; Siperstein et al., 2007; Snell-Rood et al., 2020; Wehmeyer et al., 2020).

Research shows that low expectations can be entrenched early in a student's academic journey (McGrew & Evans, 2004). For instance, some parents have described transition services as “divorced from students' abilities, needs, and talents” (Snell-Rood et al., 2020, p.1168). Low expectations for students with IDD are not limited to service providers; Kim & Baker (2022) found that while over 50% of students with autism surveyed expected to attend college, only 34% of their parents shared this expectation. Misconceived ideas about what constitutes a college-eligible student and lack of support by educators were contributing factors to expectations for college.

Lack of inclusive practices and supportive environments can undermine students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy. Belonging is a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1943). Sense of belonging is often contextual — impacted by the changing physical, social environments, and systems that are in place (Allen et al., 2021; Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Noble, 2019; Slavich, 2020). All children and adolescents are deeply impacted by their environments, for adolescents nurturing a sense of belonging through school and program engagement is crucial to their mental, academic, and social well-being (Carter, 2021; Lombardi

et al., 2021; Morningstar et al., 2017; Raufelder et al., 2021; Slavich, 2020). A student's sense of belonging at school is anchored in connection, security, and membership supported by meaningful relationships with teachers and peers, intensified through classroom participation and extracurricular activities, and empowered by opportunities to make choices and contribute to their school and community (Carter & Biggs, 2021; Strayhorn et al., 2012; Van Gaasbeek et al., 2023). When students do not see themselves represented in college-bound narratives or receive inadequate guidance and encouragement, their confidence in pursuing higher education is diminished (Eisenman et al., 2020; Elmore et al., 2018; Gilmore et al., 2014; Snell-Rood et al., 2020).

Legal Underpinnings

Promoting a sense of belonging in our schools and academic communities has long been a focus of our federal programs. Policies that advocate for the inclusion of students with disabilities begin in early childhood and provide on-going guidance to schools and service agencies well into adulthood (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Although the way in which each individual student experiences belonging may be nuanced, many researchers have repeatedly advocated for the integration and inclusion of all students within inclusive environment, noting sense of belonging and its long-term positive effects on the academic, social, and vocational outcomes of students (Gottfried et al., 2019; Odum et al., 2011).

The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 (IDEA) is a Special Education law meant to ensure the educational rights of students with disabilities (SWDs). As part of this guidance, schools are held accountable for developing and implementing services to support inclusion and access to public education and support the transition of SWDs, including those with IDD (IDEA,

2004). A transition plan is more than a random document or half-hazard requirement. According to IDEA (2004), transition services are “designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional ability of the child with a disability to facilitate the movement from school to post-school activities” (IDEA 2004, [34 CFR 300.43 (a)] [20 U.S.C. 1401(34)]). This process includes empowering students to work in a self-determined manner to set goals for their future including where they will live, receive post-secondary training, and work after high school. These goals and their effective implementation by teams increase transitional outcomes for SWDs, and support the exploration, access, and entrance to college for students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004; Mazzotti et al., 2020; Salinas, 2023).

Another significant contribution to belonging for college bound students with IDD came in 2008 with the revision of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA; P.L. 110-315). Changes significantly expanded access to higher education, allowing students with IDD to apply and gain admissions into comprehensive transition programs and post-secondary transition programs without a standardized high school diploma. In addition, students were now able to enroll in college coursework, receive specialized support, and access federal student aid (Grigal et al., 2013; HEOA, 2008; Hendricks et al., 2013). Since then, various colleges and universities have established pathways for students with IDD. Over 340 Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Programs (IPSE) programs are tailored to facilitate the academic and social integration of students with IDD in the United States (Grigal et al., 2013).

IPSE programs provide many benefits to students that attend them. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2022), there is a disparity between the number of individuals working with a disability (21%), and those working without (65.4%). Students with IDD who attend IPSE programs are more likely to work more hours, be more frequently

employed, and make more money (Cimera et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2011) Social outcomes are better as well; students with IDD enrolled in IPSE programs experience sense of belonging through supportive, reciprocal relationships with both adults and peers, widening their social circle and supporting a healthy interdependence while continuing to increase autonomy, self-determination, and skills for independent living (Bacon & Balgeri, 2021; Ducett & Meyers, 2023). By positioning students with IDD as well-prepared adults ready to take on future employment, choice-making, and self-advocacy as Uditsky & Hughes (2012) succinctly stated, “IPSE rests on the concept of embedding individuals with ID within the normative pathways to the maximum extent across the life span supporting ‘good lives’ through realizable goals (p. 299)”.

However, creating IPSE programs does not ensure that students will access them. Students must first believe they belong in college to set goals to get there (Burke et al., 2021; Lombardi et al., 2017; Kleinert et al., 2012; Wilczenski et al., 2013). While students without disabilities are rigorously supported in preparing for college, those with IDD are rarely directed to do the same. For example, Lombardi et al. (2022) found that students with IDD were statistically less likely to receive assistance from school counselors in completing college applications, guidance, and support in understanding what classes to take during high school, or introductions to college through tours and other activities. The same study identified that students with disabilities who were Black, and/or who had a lower socio-economic status received even less support (Lombardi et al., 2022). Given these and many other barriers, transition collaborators have been called upon to better understand how programs can support students with IDD in attending college.

College and Career Readiness

What does it mean to be college ready? This is one of the broadest questions our educational system faces today. Since Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), and the No Child Left Behind Acts (NCLB) established common core and the academic preparedness for all students, College and Career Readiness (CCR) as a term has been expanded to comprise many definitions. Conley et al. (2008) considered career and college readiness as “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution” (p. 24). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) recently provided a playbook for being future ready, noting that it was not just about academic work but rather comprised of many socio-emotional factors that contribute to a student's ability to integrate into future work and educational settings. Within CASEL’s framework, well-developed students display positive indicators including: (a) communication skills, (b) the ability to cultivate relationships, (c) the ability to develop and sustain a sense of purpose, (d) an understanding of how to support their own physical and mental health, (e) the ability to participate in their own communities (Atwell, 2022).

Belonging an Essential Need of CCR

A sense of belonging is critical not only for a student's emotional well-being but also for academic and career success (Lombardi et al., 2017; Morningstar et al., 2017; Vernberg et al., 2018). Lombardi et al. (2017) notes that “sense of belonging encompasses students’ identification with and connection to the school community and environment” (p.152). Sense of security, confidence, and varied relationships are all impacted through positive or negative associations with belonging (Lombardi et al., 2017, Morningstar et al., 2015). Conversely, isolation from peers in schools and inadequate community support may significantly impact a

student's sense of belonging negatively (Papay & Bambura, 2013). Research from Kutner et al. (2023) indicates that students with IDD often face "othering" through bullying and exclusion, which often hinders their ability to develop a positive self-concept.

Morningstar et al. (2015) conducted a study to develop an organizing framework for Career and College Readiness in which they determined that sense of belonging was an important mindset needed to support CCR of students with IDD. According to Dweck and Yeager (2019), mindsets are rooted in theories of learned helplessness and attribution and reflect students' core perceptions about their abilities and their place in the academic environment. These beliefs significantly influence how students perceive their potential and their approach to overcoming obstacles (Dweck & Legget, 1988; Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Students with IDD often exhibit fixed Mindsets, which can limit their engagement with challenges and reduce their resilience in perceived failures (Vernberg et al., 2018). What students believe they have the potential to do, they are more likely to do (Bandura, 1997; Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

Morningstar et al. (2017) found that a sense of belonging for students was supported through integration within the core curriculum, in addition to holding meaningful roles within the school community. Further, sense of belonging was enhanced through implementing a strengths-based approach to transition planning and providing meaningful "opportunities to develop mindsets" (p.196). Shifts in mindsets were found to be facilitated best through giving students' opportunities to "practice new skills, make mistakes" through experiences that were autonomous, flexible, and positive (Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Morningstar et al., 2017b, p.196). Dweck (2006) found that students who believe in their ability to grow and learn are more likely to engage in social activities and feel connected to their peers. Interventions that support growth mindset have

been found to enhance students' social interaction and reduce feelings of exclusion by promoting a culture of effort and development (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Shroeder et al. (2021) examined the impacts of a first-year inclusive college program on both students and faculty. They found that there were broad shifts in students' beliefs about how they viewed their disability and their ability to alter social and academic inclusion on campus.

Programs That Support CCR & Sense of Belonging

Programs designed to enhance career and college readiness (CCR) and foster a sense of belonging are key for supporting students with IDD. These programs often bridge gaps by offering tailored experiences and skills which will be needed to support future social and academic integration when students leave high school. Evidenced-based initiatives, such as School-Community Based Initiatives (Carter et al., 2020; Schultz et. al, 2021), Career and Technical Education (CTE; Test et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 2015), mentorship programs (Glust et al., 2017; Strayhorn, 2012), and pre-college programs offered on college campuses including summer bridge programs (Parsley et al., 2023) and college preview camps (CPCs), are all examples of such programs.

School - Community Based Initiatives

Establishing school-community-based partnerships and the programs that result from these collaborations are essential for fostering inclusion and sense of belonging for students IDD. Such programs not only facilitate skill acquisition but also seek to challenge and expand societal perceptions about what students w IDD can achieve (Carter et al., 2020; Schultz et. al, 2021). Ideas born from within communities maybe creative and responsive to the region's specific needs and existing resources (Carter et al., 2020). There are many evidenced-based programs that bolster career and college readiness for high school students with IDD. These transition

programs exhibit a wide array of approaches, ranging from innovative in-school activities such as coffee carts to collaborative, community –based programs art programs (Lindstrom et al., 1997; Schwind et al., 2018; Transition Program | Studio 84, 2022).

One example of a school-community based initiative is Studio 84, a community-based art-studio in a rural college town that collaborates with local schools to offer art-based career exploration for students with IDD (Transition Program | Studio 84, 2020). Such programs provide hands-on experience and foster career exploration by engaging students in meaningful activities. These initiatives underscore the importance of community-based involvement in enhancing students’ readiness for post-secondary life.

Career and Technical Education Programs

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs are another long-standing support structure for students with disabilities. CTE programs provide practical training and certifications that help students transition effectively from high school to post-secondary education or employment (Wagner et al., 2015). Research indicates that participation in CTE programs is associated with reduced dropout rates, increased rates of employment and higher earnings (Dougherty et al., 2018). Though little research has focused solely on the work of CTE serving students with IDD, programs like Project SEARCH are frequently partnered with CTE and exemplify programming by combining skills training, internships, and corporate collaboration to support vocational training for students with IDD (Fidler et al., 2022; Lombardi et al., 2018; Mueller et al., 2014).

For instance, Mueller et al. (2014) used the Job Readiness Assessment Tool to assess the effectiveness of Project SEARCH on a variety of work-based skills. They found that not only was the program significantly effective in supporting students with IDD in increasing work

skills, but that 60% of all students were employed at the completion of the program. Further, Green (2013) interviewed both parents and graduate interns of a Project SEARCH program and found that sense of belonging, in addition to increased confidence, self-worth, and increased communication skills, were important take aways.

Mentorship Programs

Mentorship programs are vital for supporting students with disabilities by pairing them with mentors who offer guidance, role modeling, and social support (Lindsay et al., 2012). Peer & leadership mentoring programs for students with IDD have been effective at supporting on-campus & off-campus involvement, navigation skills, career development, communications skills, health and wellness activities, and academic skills (Agawari et al., 2020). For example, a qualitative study by Patrick & Wessel (2013) found that faculty mentors provided valuable support in understanding campus resources, offering individualized advice, and fostering a sense of community. These relationships helped students feel more integrated and supported in the college environment.

Pre-College Programs

Sperry (2015) and others note that while post-entry education experiences were important, pre-entry educational experiences provided clear insights into how student would respond and persist within future educational environments. Pre-College Programs (PCPs) are a unique set of programs offered by colleges and universities. These programs are frequently held on college campuses during summer months to allow for student attendance during traditional high school and middle school hours. Historically, PCPs are positioned to support students in building institutional connections, strengthen and introduce new academic skills, explore career

pathways, introduce students to college programming (Kallison & Stadler, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012; Parsley et al., 2023).

Summer Bridge and College Preview Camps

Summer Bridge programs, and College Preview Camps are both pre-college programs. A Summer Bridge program traditionally is meant to take a high school senior or incoming first-year student from their final high school year, or summer, and provide them with time to acclimate to college. A College Preview Camp is meant to provide students with an opportunity to see and experience college to support visioning and experience being a college first-year student (Sheth & Tremblay, 2019). Many terms and phrases are used interchangeably to describe pre-college programs, among these are residential summer programs, summer programs, summer institutes, summer bridge programs, skills camps, college preview programs, mini college day camp, pre-college outreach programs, pre-college intervention programs, educational outreach programs, college outreach programs and others (Dalke & Schmidt, 1987; Greene et al., 2023; Kahn, 2002).

Research has demonstrated that PCPs, including on-campus programming, are effective in supporting marginalized groups, including students with IDD, by providing firsthand experiences of college life (Grigal et. al., 2013 Parsley et al., 2023; Turner et al., 2021). These programs help increase interest and persistence through pathways of belonging among students from marginalized backgrounds and at-risk populations including SWDs. However, there is limited understanding of how pre-college programs, especially residential College Preview Camps, specifically impact the perceptions of students with IDD relative to their own CCR and sense of belonging (Grigal et al., 2013; Parsley et al., 2023; Sablan et al., 2014; WWC, 2016).

Simmons et al., (2013) evaluated the impact of a residential college program on self-determination skills of students with intellectual disabilities. Students were paired with peer mentors and explored many self-determination behaviors such as effective goal setting, identifying their support communities, disability awareness, and general college life. Researchers noted that not only had students increased many skills during the camp experience, by the end of the four weeks all students had built relationships with peer mentors and other campus staff, creating a sense of membership, and belonging at the university and sense of self-efficacy.

Parsley et al. (2023) conducted a weeklong summer academy for college-age students with IDD, incorporating activities such as coursework, meals, volunteer projects, and group games. Their study used pre- and post-program assessments to measure changes in students' perceptions of their ability to attend college and found a significant improvement in students' sense of belonging and awareness of the social benefits of college.

Turner et al. (2021) evaluated the impact that a summer bridge program had on the academic and social perceptions of colleges held by students with IDD. Students who participated in the summer bridge program had more persistence towards graduation. Additional findings suggested that students' sense of belonging to the college campus and community was facilitated during the summer bridge activity and persevered throughout the study. In addition to sense of belonging, students noted increases in academic confidence and skill acquisition which supported them during the first semester. There is a gap in the evidence both for students with IDD considering their own career and college readiness, particularly using newly identified frameworks like Morningstar et al. (2017). Further, there is limited studies which look the impact of residential pre-collegiate programs for this population (Parsley et al., 2023).

Sablan et al. (2014) identified notable gaps in the evaluation of summer bridge programs, college preview camps, and similar pre-college programming particularly regarding how specific components of career and college readiness instruction are assessed. They critique the predominant focus on metrics like grade-point averages and retention rates, arguing that these measures are insufficient for programs aimed at developing non-cognitive skills.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the impact of a college preview camp on students' perceptions of their own CCR, and sense of belonging. Building on the work of Turner et al. (2021) and Parsley et al. (2023), who investigated pre-college programs for students with IDD, this research responds to Sablan's (2014) call for the incorporation of non-cognitive indicators in evaluative research for summer bridge programs.

We specifically examine the college preview camp influences on students' sense of belonging and overall CCR, drawing on insights from Morningstar et al. (2017) and other scholars (Carter et al., 2021; Parsley et al., 2023; Lombardi et al., 2017, and Strayhorn et al., 2021). While not generalizable, our insights should provide a starting point for other investigators looking at non-academic factors that are frequently overlooked in pre-college initiatives.

The broader goal of this program evaluation is to enhance our understanding of the immediate impacts of camp programming and to highlight the importance of interventions like CPCs. While not generalizable we hope to demonstrate how these initiatives can serve as an effective means to foster college attendance and support students with IDD in developing a sense of belonging through pathways of commitment, membership, safety, and security (all dimensions

of belonging). By shedding light on these critical aspects, we aim to inspire other IPSE programs to consider similar approaches at their own institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing emphasis on college and career readiness (CCR) for students with IDD, there remains a significant gap in the way pre-college interventions such as CPCs impact students' perceptions of their own career and college readiness including sense of belonging. Traditional evaluations have focused on traditional outcomes and overlooked non-cognitive factors. This lack of attention can lead to missed opportunities for providing support to students' considerations for their future.

Many existing programs do not systematically assess the effects of their initiatives on students' feelings of belonging and connection within the college environment. This oversight can hinder the development of supportive frameworks that promote a sense of safety, support and belonging, which are essential for the success for students with IDD in post-secondary settings. Addressing this gap is critical to creating effective programs that not only prepare students academically but also cultivate the emotional dimensions of their college experiences.

Our study will fill this gap by evaluating the impact of a college preview camp on students CCR and sense of belonging, providing insights that will inform our study sites program design and the future experiences of students with IDD who attend it.

Research Questions

- What were students' perceptions of their own career and college readiness, as indicated by pre- and post-camp surveys, before and after camp?
- What were students' perceptions of their sense of belonging, as measured by pre-post surveys before and after camp?

- Based upon these findings, if any, in what way could camp programming be augmented to better support college readiness factors, and students' sense of belonging?

Method

Consent and Recruitment Process

We first gained approval for this study in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the primary researcher's host institution. We provided parental consent and student assent forms on the first day of camp during an introductory session. Additional opportunities for oral assent were reconfirmed upon presentation of the survey to students. Recruitment materials were produced in English, aligning with the language capabilities of the camp attendees. Child assent forms were adapted for accessibility, using plain language from approved university templates, and were re-approved by the IRB.

Sampling Strategy

We used purposive sampling to support our program evaluation. Purposive sampling is "a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research" (Oliver, 2013). Camp admissions and enrollment were conducted collaboratively with the university's Office of Pre-Collegiate Services, the university's IPSE (Inclusive Post-Secondary Education) program, and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. The camp criteria required camp attendees to be transition age (14-18 years) students with an intellectual or developmental disability, who could attend to their own personal hygiene needs, and had no major behavior that was aggressive or towards themselves. To participate in our study, students were required to have consent of their legal guardian and be able to self-assent to study, showing

an understanding of the study itself and having a desire and interest in participating. Upon check-in, all camp attendees (n = 16) were initially offered the opportunity to participate in study attendees. Ten camp students were provided consent by their parents, with respective assents. However, two students were excluded post-consent and assent due to not meeting study criteria. For survey research, these included barriers to communication that were not solvable within the given time limit and the apparent lack of understanding of the study's intent or what their participation entailed, which was observable by confused looks, non-responsiveness, and the inability to state what they were assenting to when asked.

Demographic Overview

Table 1 reports the demographic characteristics of the students by the following attributes: self-reported gender, age, disability, grade, work experience, geographical area, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient status, and if the student was a client of vocational rehabilitation receiving services. Disability statuses were recorded as per students' applications or disclosures during sessions without requesting clinical diagnosis or medical documentation. For instance, if a guardian reported the student had Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), this label was used. Geographical classifications were determined using the 'Local Look-Up' Tool from the National Center for Educational Statistics, which considered the exact address provided by students as reported on their application (Locallookup, 2023). Age and grade were reported as stated in the students' applications. Work was defined as employment outside the family home; activities such as working within a school setting or performing tasks like mowing a neighbor's lawn were excluded.

Table 5

Descriptive Summary of Surveyed Students

Identifier	Gender	Age	Type	SSI	Locale	VR	Grade	Working
Panther	M	17	IDD,FAS	Y	SF	Y	12	N
Scooby	M	15	IDD, ASD	Y	CL	N	10	N
Vader	M	15	IDD	N	RF	Y	11	Y
Jim	M	17	HFA	N	CL	Y	12	Y
Analytica	F	15	IDD/ASD	N	CL	Y	10	N
7Seven	F	15	HFA	N	RT	Y	10	Y
Zara	F	17	DD	N	MS	Y	12	N
Janna	F	16	DS	N	MS	Y	10	N

Note: This table displays demographic information based on de-identified student data.

Abbreviations used are as follows: IDD = Intellectual Disability/Developmental Disability, HFA=High Functioning Autism, DD = Developmental Disability, DS = Down Syndrome, SSI = Supplemental Security Income, VR = Vocational Rehabilitation; Locale used are SF = Suburban Fringe, CL = City Large, RF = Rural Fringe, RT = Rural Town, MS = Mid-Suburban

Program Description

The CPC emerged in the summer of 2023 as a collaboration between the institutions' inclusive post-secondary education program and the state vocational rehabilitation program to support the career and college readiness of students with IDD through the introduction of Pre-Employment Transition Service (Pre-ETS) activities to students ages 14 to 18 at a 4-day residential CPC. The goals of the college preview camp were to:

- Increase overall career and college readiness of student attenders.
- Provide opportunities to explore career interests, make coursework connections, and support the investigation of post-secondary opportunities.
- Provide instruction and support in choice-making, self-advocacy, disability awareness, and accessing community resources.

- Provide opportunities for autonomous choice and decision making through the natural camp environment.
- Provide access to a supportive post-secondary environment where students could vision themselves in college, engaging in an IPSE experience before leaving high school with access to peer mentors, interacting with both adults and students with and without disabilities supporting a sense of belonging, and increasing students' confidence and support goal setting behaviors for college.

Camp coursework addressed the five areas of pre-ETS as outlined in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) including: (a) Job Exploration Counseling, (b) Work-Based Learning Experiences, (c) Counseling on Postsecondary Education Opportunities, (d) Workplace Readiness Training, and (e) Instruction in Self-Advocacy (WIOA,2014). Each day students attended classroom presentations with hands-on activities, transition assessments, and peer mentoring (See Appendix L). Additionally, students had expanded opportunities for independent living and choice-making while staying in the dormitory setting, which simulated life on campus with support of a residential assistant (camp counselor). Adventure-based activities such as visits to the campus pool and outdoor sports were provided. Students practiced navigating campus; with accommodations such as a golf cart to support mobility for some students.

Instrumentation

We selected the Community and Youth Collaborative Institute (CAYCI) Career and College Readiness Scale -Middle / High School Student Version and Community and Youth Collaborative Institute (CAYCI) Belongingness Scale both validated scaled instruments to measure students' self-perceptions of their own career and college readiness in a variety of areas

including sense of belonging before and after the college preview camp as outcome indicators related to the program goals (Anderson-Butcher & Amorose ; 2012). Prior to instrument selection we considered factors of time, population age and ableness. Both instruments were used in our study populations' age groups and were primarily developed for school and community program evaluation. In addition, instrument questions were concise, used plain language, with no questions being negatively worded. Both instruments were easily provided in paper pencil format which made them suitable for our population and environment.

Survey Administration

Both scales were provided to students in a common study room within their dormitory accommodations. The room had multiple rectangular tables, one couch and two separate armchairs (like those that might be used in a counseling office or office waiting room). In front of the tables were a large whiteboard and TV not operating during camp. The room had two entry-exit doors on each end, students could access their dormitory rooms to use the bathroom throughout the survey implementation. Students self-selected seating at tables, couches, or on the floor where desired — students who opted to sit at tables were distributed to every other chair. The primary and secondary researcher provided students with scales in paper/pencil format. The primary researcher read instructions for each item, repeating them slowly and providing support as needed to individual students. No major challenges were encountered. Student support during the survey reading included assistance with reading specific questions, repeating items, and ensuring the students were on the correct questions. Upon completion, students placed their surveys into a manila envelope at the front of the room. The surveys were then sorted into separate envelopes for each student. To ensure anonymity, names were removed, and surveys were assigned numbers by the primary researcher and sorted into respective envelopes with other

surveys representing varied components of the broader program evaluation. Data for each student was then entered into an Excel spreadsheet for loading to SPSS.

Instruments

CAYCI Career and College Readiness Scale -Middle / High School Student Version

According to Anderson-Butcher et al. (2016) “The CAYCI Career and College Readiness Scale for Middle/High School students assess students' perceptions of their self-efficacy and preparedness for post-secondary education and careers, higher scores indicate a greater perception of preparedness and levels of motivation” (p.2) (See Appendix J). CAYCI-CCR is a 7 item– 5-point Likert type scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*). Factorial validity assesses whether an instrument measures what it was created to by confirming the factor structure. The CCR scale utilized confirmatory factorial analysis to ensure each item tapped the primary construct of career and college readiness. A chi-square test demonstrated some discrepancy between the model and the data χ^2 (S-B) = 114.87, df = 14, $p < .001$. The Root Square Mean (RMSEA) is a measure of how well the model approximates data. Xi &Yang (2018) noted that various researchers have describe different cut-off points for RMSEA, Anderson-Butchers et al. (2016) model demonstrated a reasonable fit RMESA = .085 (90% CI = .079, .27) (Jöreskog & Sörborn, 1993).

CAYCI Belongingness Scale

The CAYCI Belongingness Scale according to Anderson-Butcher et al. (2002) is designed to assess individual perceptions of belonging within programs and educational settings. The initial scale was designed with 10 items, confirmatory analysis demonstrated the scale need additional refinement. After modification the scale exhibited strong internal consistency (α across calibration and cross-validation samples. The revised instrument five item instrument

adequately addressed youths' perceptions of support, acceptance, comfort, commitment and being part of a group, which the creators of the scale define as two primary domains security and membership, and a continuous variable of belonging (See Appendix G).

Pre-Post Camp Career and College Readiness Analysis

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of a College Preview Camp on students' perceptions of their own career and college readiness across several domains' using questions related to preparedness for college, ability to set goals, getting a job, career interests, school-future connections, ability to successfully transition to college after high school. To determine the appropriate statistical measures for comparing pre-test and post-test scores and to assist in statistical analysis and interpretation exploratory data analyses, including frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, and tests for normality we sourced OpenAI's ChatGPT (2024) and consulted Laerd Statistics (Laerd Statistics, 2018). Normality tests revealed inconsistencies across some variables, indicating the test for normality was not met. Given these violations and the small sample size we chose to use the Wilcoxon Signed –Rank Test, a non-parametric alternative, to assess changes in perceptions between pre-test and post-test scores.

Frequencies

Frequencies were used to assess and compare the distributions of responses in both the pre- and post-surveys to evaluate students' (n = 8) perceived sense of Career and College Readiness (CCR) before and after the college preview camp for each question. Although no statistically significant shifts were observed, Figures 1–14 provide visual representations displayed as percentages to illustrate while frequencies do not provide a measure of significance, there could be some practical significance drawn from these descriptions (Kirk, 1996).

Question 1: What I learn in school will help me prepare for college. The distribution of responses for this question are illustrated visually as shown in Figures 1 and 2; eight students responded to this question. At pre-camp, three participants (37.5%) strongly agreed that what they learned in school would prepare them for college, three participants (37.5%) agreed, one participant (12.5%) neither agreed, and one participant (12.5%) strongly disagreed. Post-camp results give students (62.5%) strongly agreed, two participants (25.0%) agreed, and one participant (12.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed that the classes they took in school would prepare them for college. There was an increase to strong agreement related for this question, this increase may suggest that camp was effective at increasing students' beliefs that what they would learn in school would help prepare them for college with no students responding they disagreed post-camp.

Figure 12

Pre-Prepare

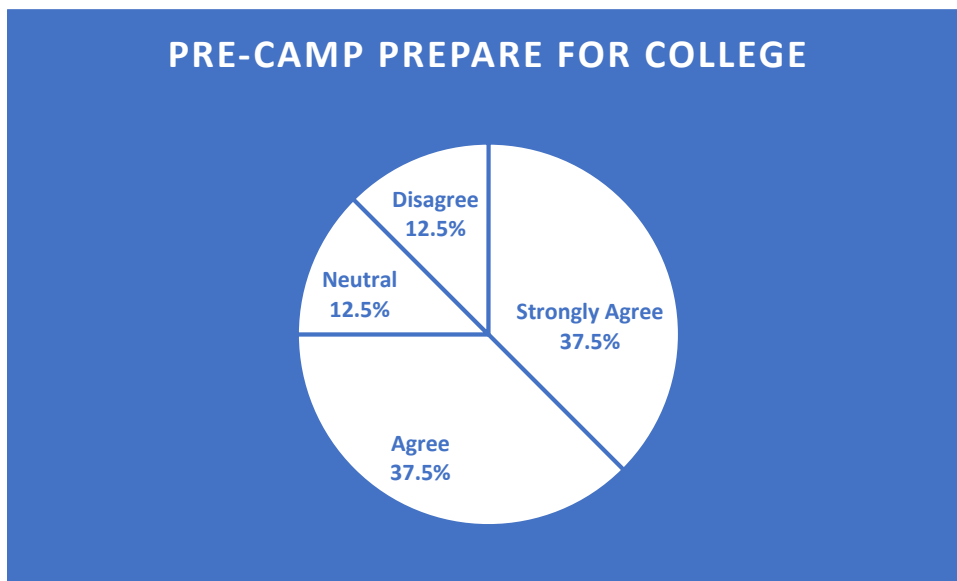
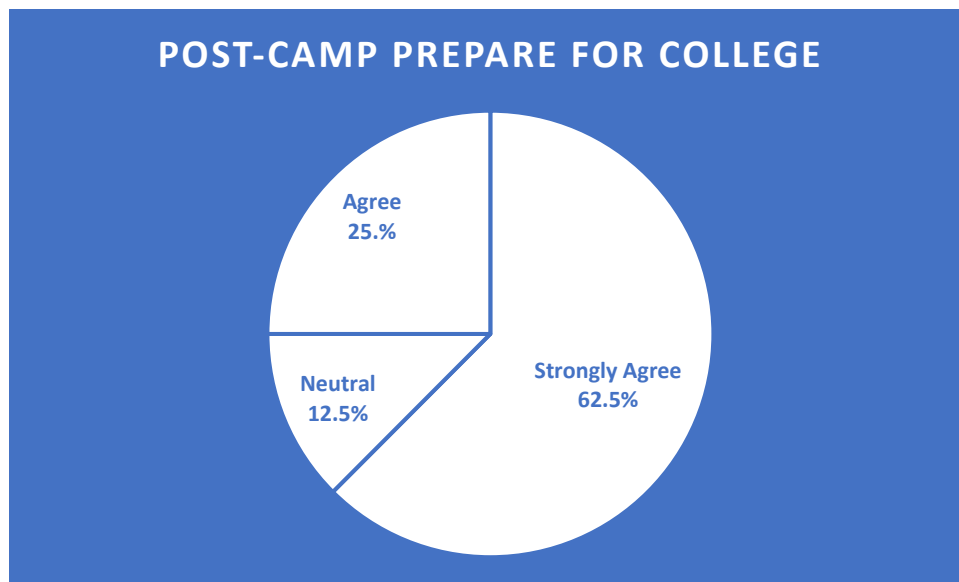


Figure 13

Post-Prepare



Question 2: I set goals that will help me get into college. The distribution of responses for this question are illustrated visually for this question as shown in Figures 3 and 4; eight students responded to this question. At pre-camp, two participants (25%) strongly agreed that the goals they set would help them get into college, four participants (50%) agreed, one participant (12.5%) disagreed, and one participant (12.5%) strongly disagreed. Post-camp results revealed six participants (75.5%) strongly agreed and two participants (25.0%) agreed. The substantial increase in strong agreement regarding goal setting suggests that camp programming may have enhanced students' beliefs and confidence related to their own self-efficacy to set and achieve goals for their future college aspirations.

Figure 14

Pre-Set Goals

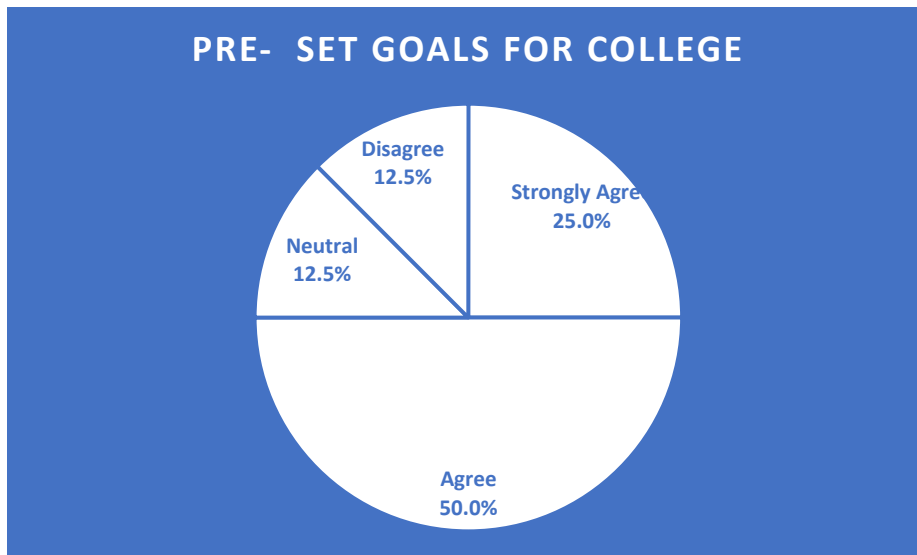
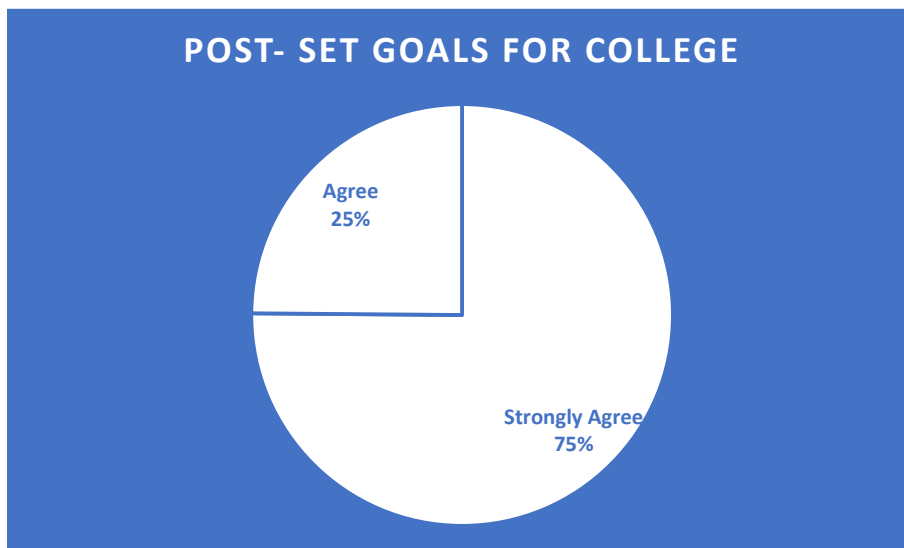


Figure 15

Post-Set Goals



Question 3: I am confident that I will go to college. The distribution of responses for this question are illustrated visually as shown in Figures 5 and 6; eight students responded to this question. At pre-camp, five participants (62.5%) strongly agreed they would go to college, one participant (12.5%) agreed, and two participants (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed. There were no differences in the distribution of post-camp responses this could be because students were

unsure about their desire to go to college, or ambivalent about the future, or simply that students had already made strong decisions related to what they may do in college.

Figure 16

Pre-Confidence Will Go to College



Figure 17

Post-Confidence Will Go to College



Question 4. I am confident that I will get the job that I want. The distribution of responses for this question are illustrated visually as shown in Figures 7 and 8; eight students

responded to this question. At pre-camp, five participants (62.5%) strongly agreed that they would get the job they want after high school, one participant (12%) agreed, two participants (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Post-Survey Results indicated no change from pre-camp survey to post-camp, while most students indicated strong agreement, or agreement, the lack of change may have indicated that students already have strong goals aligned to their future as most were working with Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. However, overall, the lack of change demonstrated no significant result.

Figure 18

Pre-Get a Job I Want



Figure 19

Post-Get a Job I Want



Question 5. I am aware of jobs that meet my interests. The distribution of responses for this question are illustrated visually as shown in Figures 9 and 10; eight students responded to this question. At pre-camp, 4 participants (50%) strongly agreed they were aware of jobs that met their interests, two participants (25%) agreed, two participants (25%) disagreed. After camp post-survey results indicated that five participants (63%) strongly agreed, two participants (12%) agreed, two participants (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this question. There was an overall increase in the number of students that responded positively to this question, this likely indicates that camp had a positive impact on the student's awareness of their own interests, and jobs which may align with those interests.

Figure 20

Pre-Jobs that Meet My Interests

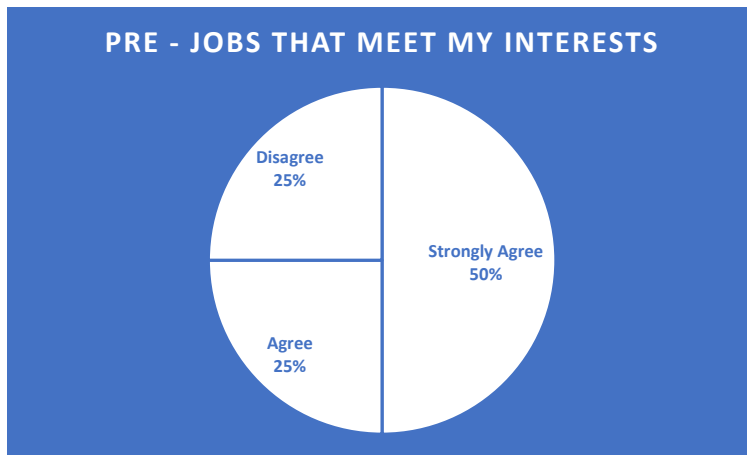
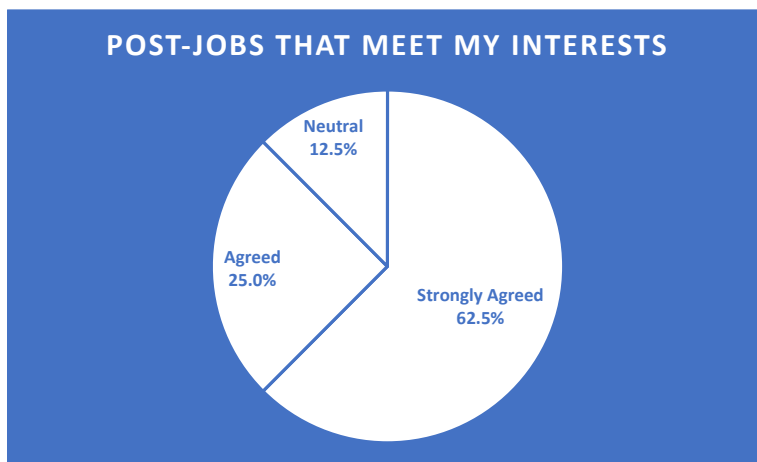


Figure 21

Post-Jobs That Meet My Interests



Question 6. I am taking courses now that are needed to go to college. The distribution of responses for this question are illustrated visually as shown in Figures 11 and 12; eight students responded to this question. At pre-camp, four participants (50%) strongly agreed that they would get the job they want after high school, one participant (12.5%) agreed, two participants (25.0%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and one participant (12%) disagreed. After camp post-survey results indicated that four participants (50%) strongly agreed, two participants (25%) agreed, two participants (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this question, and one participant (12.5%) disagreed. Most students consistently expressed strong agreement both

before and after camp, reflecting a positive perception that their current coursework would support future outcomes. Notably, one student changed their response from neutral to agreement, and another moved from disagreement to neutral, indicating slight changes in the perception of the relevance of current coursework on their future (Lombardi et al., 2017).

Figure 22

Pre-Coursework

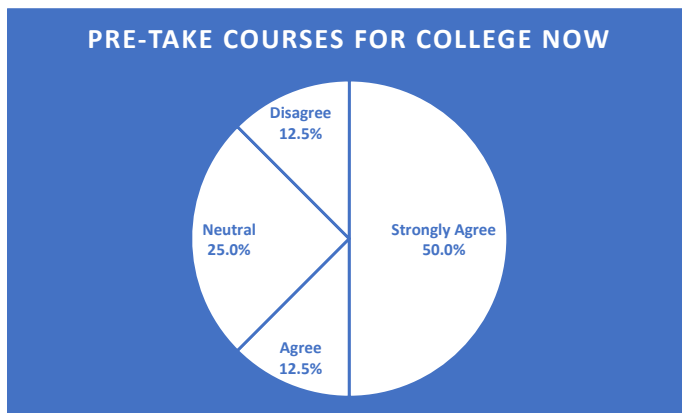
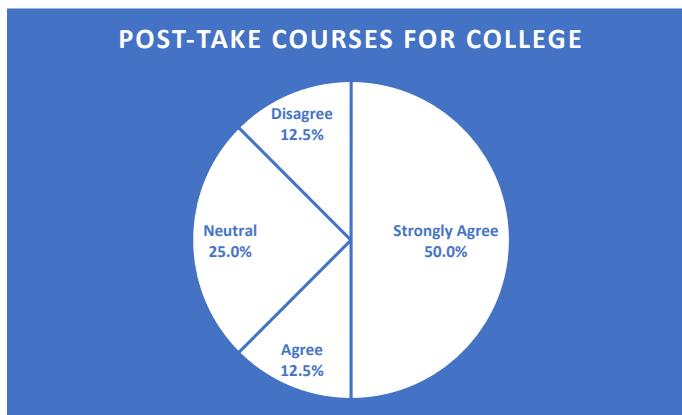


Figure 23

Post-Coursework



Question 7. I believe I can successfully transition to college. The distribution of responses for this question are illustrated visually as shown in Figures 13 and 14; eight students responded to this question. At pre-camp, three participants (37.5%) strongly agreed that they would get the job they want after high school, one participant (12.5%) agreed, three participants

(37.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and one participant (12.5%) disagreed. After camp post-survey results indicated that six participants (75%) strongly agreed, two participants (25%) agreed. The large increase in the percentage of students (62%) who responded “strongly agree” to this question suggests that camp is likely to have been effective at increasing students' confidence and belief that they could attend college.

Figure 24

Pre-Successfully Transition to College

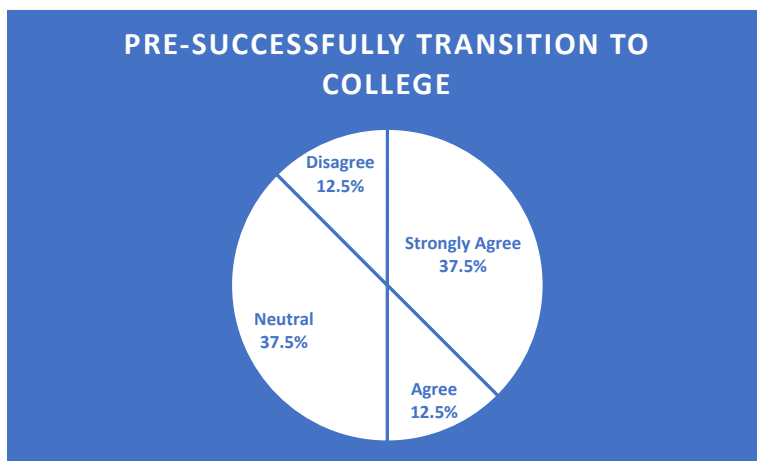
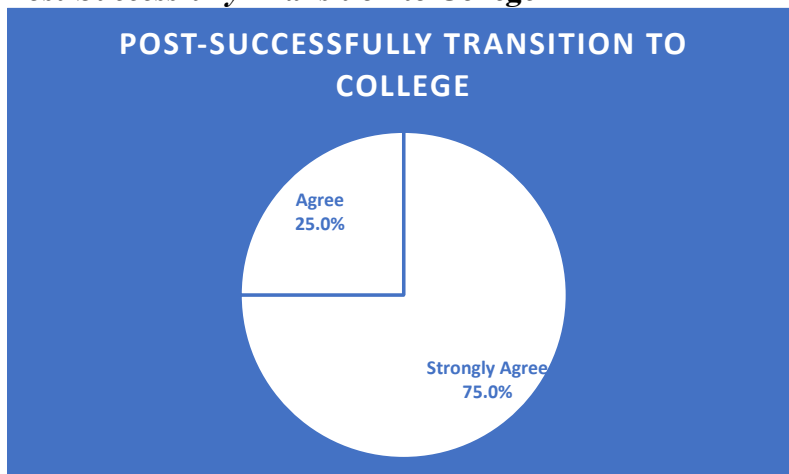


Figure 25

Post-Successfully Transition to College



Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted to evaluate the impact of College Preview Camp students' perceptions of own Career and College Readiness (CCR) by comparing pre- and post-intervention scores. We used this as a contrasting measure to see what significant results might be indicated. WSRT is a non-parametric measure appropriate given the deviations from normality observed in the data, often used in social science research for ordinal data like Likert scales (Simkins, 2011). We first present analysis of individual variables, and then created a continuous variable CCR_Score which demonstrates overall student confidence and perceived self-efficacy in the areas of CCR. Individual results may be seen in Table 3 and indicate varied impacts across different questions related to various components.

Within individual question responses two revealed significant changes before and after camps those were, "I set goals that will help me get to college" ($z = -2.006, p = .039$), and "I believe I can successfully get to college." ($z = 2.070, p = .038$). Students' responses in this area could indicate that the camp supported overall student confidence, and feelings of self-efficacy related to goal setting, and their potential to attend college.

However, no statistically significant findings were observed for the remaining questions including, "What I learn in school will prepare me for college" ($z = -1.134, p = .257$), "I am confident that I will go to college" ($z = 0, p > .99$), "I am confident that I will get the job I want" ($z = 0, p > .99$), "I am aware of careers that match my interests" ($z = -0.649, p = .516$), and "I am taking courses now that are needed to go to college" ($z = -0.447, p = .655$). The lack of significant changes in students' responses to these questions could be because their perceptions within these specific areas were relatively stable, because the participants had strong pre-existing beliefs already in these areas of CCR.

Table 6

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests – Uncombined

Question	Pre Mdn	Post Mdn	Neg Ranks	Positive Ranks	Ties	Z	<i>P</i>	(<i>P</i> < 0.05)
Prepare	3.0	3.0	1	3	4	-1.13	.257	No
Set Goals	3.0	4.0	0	5	3	-2.06	.039	Yes
Confidence	4.0	4.0	0	0	8	0.000	1.00	No
Get Job	4.0	4.0	0	0	8	0.000	1.00	No
Interests	3.0	3.0	3	3	2	-0.649	.516	No
Courses	4.0	4.0	1	1	6	-0.447	.655	No
Successful	3.0	4.0	0	5	3	-2.070	.038	Yes

Note. Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to compare pre- and post-test scores. *p* values less than .05 are considered statistically significant. $p < .05$, $p < .01$.

Descriptive statistics and confidence intervals were calculated for the combined CCR scores we applied bootstrapping both pre and post camp. The mean CCR score increased from $M=4.00$ ($SD = 0.82$) pre-intervention to $M=4.5$ ($SD = 0.52$) post-intervention. The median score also showed an increase from 3.93 pre-intervention to 4.64 post-intervention. Bootstrap analysis revealed that the 95% confidence interval for the pre mean ranged from 3.48 to 4.54 and for the post mean ranged from 4.18 to 4.80. For the median, the pre 95% confidence interval was between 3.29 and 4.79, while the post interval was between 3.93 and 5.00. These results indicate a statistically significant improvement in CCR scores from pre to post, with increased consistency in the post-measurement scores.

Table 7***Descriptive – Combined Variable***

Statistic	Pre_	Post
N	8	8
Mean	4.0	4.5
Median	3.93	4.64
Mode	5.00	5.00
Range	2.14 (2.86 to 5.00)	1.14 (3.86 to 5.00)
Variance	0.68	0.27

95% CI Mean	3.48,4.54	4.18,4.80
95% CI Mdn	3.29, 4.79	3.93, 5.00

Pre-Post Camp Sense of Belonging Analysis

Our study aimed to better understand the impact of a residential college preview camp on the student’s own perceptions of their own career and college readiness including sense of belonging before and after camp. To achieve this, we looked at differences in students perceived belonging using the CAYCI Sense of Belongingness Scale pre- to post-camp. Five questions were sorted into (a) Comfort, (b) Part of, (c) Commitment, (d) Supported, (e) Accepted, all five dimensions tapped the major constructs of Security/Acceptance. The original scale had four categories: “No!,” “no,” “yes” and “YES!” indicating various levels of agreement. Categorical responses were converted into numerical values for data analysis; “NO!” was assigned a value of 1, “no” was assigned a value of 2, “yes” was assigned a value of 3, and “YES!” was assigned a value of 4. Data was prepared in Excel and checked by a secondary researcher before being uploaded into SPSS for analysis.

We conducted exploratory data analyses, including frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, and tests for normality. Tests for normality revealed inconsistencies across some variables, indicating the normality assumption was violated. Given these deviations and the small sample size we opted to use the Wilcoxon Signed –Rank Test, a non-parametric alternative, to assess changes in perceptions between pre-test and post-test scores (Laerd Statistics, 2020). All tests agreed, confirming our preliminary survey review, and showed stability in students overall Sense of Belonging before and after camp, we provide further results in our analysis and discussion below.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to assess students' (n=8) perceived sense of belonging before and after the college preview camp.

Table 8

Descriptive CAYCI Sense of Belonging - Frequencies

	Test	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Median	Range	Min	Max
Comfort	Pre	8	3.63	0.518	4.00	1	3	4
	Post	8	3.63	0.518	4.00	1	3	4
Part of	Pre	8	3.75	0.463	4.00	1	3	4
	Post	8	3.75	0.463	3.50	2	2	4
Commit	Pre	8	3.50	0.756	4.00	2	2	4
	Post	8	3.50	0.535	4.00	1	3	4
Accepted	Pre	8	3.88	0.354	4.00	1	3	4
	Post	8	3.75	0.463	4.00	1	3	4
Supported	Pre	8	3.75	0.463	4.00	1	3	4
	Post	8	3.63	0.518	4.00	1	3	4

Descriptive statistics revealed the college preview maintained a high and stable sense of belonging, with only minor changes observed in part of, support, and acceptance. The nuanced impact of the camp, revealing both stability and some variations in individual experiences.

CAYCI Sense of Belonging Wilcoxon-Signed-Rank

Comfort. Question: I feel/felt comfortable at [camp name]. Students w/ IDD perceived comfort levels were assessed before and after camp. Out of eight participants, only one student's score demonstrated increased comfort levels. Similarly, only one student's score demonstrated decreased comfort level, and six students demonstrated no change between pre and posttest measures. Overall students reported a median comfort level of 4.0 both before and after camp. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test revealed that this change was not statistically significant $W = 1.50, z = .00, p > .99$.

Part of (Inclusion). Question: I feel/felt a part of [camp name]. On average, students' perceptions of being a part of the college preview camp community remained stable before and after camp (Mdn = 4.0) respectively. Testing revealed no significant changes $W = 1.50$, $z = .00$, $p > .99$.

Commitment. I am committed to [camp name]. A student's self-perceived commitment to camp programming was assessed before and after camp. On average, students reported a high median level of commitment (Mdn = 4.0) before camp, which decreased slightly post-camp (Mdn = 3.5) however, overall, it most students' comfort remained high. While there were minor visible changes in pre-post camp responses the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test indicated no statistically significant difference in students' sense of commitment, $W = 5.0$, $z = .00$, $p > .99$.

Supported. I feel/felt supported at [camp name]. students' sense of acceptance was measured before (Mdn = 4.0) and after camp (Mdn = 4.0). Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test results indicated no significant change in p-value.

Accepted. I feel / felt accepted at [camp name]. students perceived acceptance within the program, there was a slight decrease in the mean score from 3.88 pre-camp ($SD = 0.354$, $N=8$) to post-camp ($SD = 0.463$, $N = 8$), although this change was not statically significant. The bootstrapped confidence intervals were stable (pre: 03.63 to 4.00, post: 3.36 to 4.00).

Overall, the results from Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test suggest that the residential college preview camp successfully maintained high levels of inclusion, comfort, commitment, support, and acceptance among students with IDD. These findings indicate the students began the program with strong feelings of acceptance and belonging, which highlight the effectiveness of the camp environment and programming in sustaining a sense of belonging, However, there were no significant changes before, or after the camp.

Continuous Variable (Primary Dimension) Belonging

Given the outcomes from our Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for individual items which comprised belonging, we next utilized the median score of each item to create two continuous variables Median_Belonging, and Post_Median Belonging. After creating these we again ran tests for normality on each new variable, the results of both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilks tests Median_Belonging (K-S = 0.455, $p < .001$; S-W = 0.566, $p < .001$) and Post-Median_Belonging (K-S = 0.391, $p < .001$; S-W = 0.641), $p < .001$) indicated significant deviation. As a result, we opted to use non-parametric measures to conduct further analysis.

A Wilcoxon Sign Ranks test was conducted and revealed no significant differences in belonging scores pre-(Mdn = X) and post-interventions (Mdn = Y), $z = -0.577$, $p = 0.564$. Among the eight participants, there were two negative ranks, and one positive rank, with 5 ties, indicating only minor changes with students' scores remaining stable and high post-camp.

Sub-Variable (Sub-Dimension) Security & Membership

Belonging within CAYCI was originally structured around two sub-dimensions: Security and Membership. To assess using this structure, we reorganized the five-question survey items back into these sub-dimensions to evaluate whether there were any differences in students' scores. For the Security sub-dimension, the results indicated no significant change with a test statistic of $z = 0$ and $p > .99$; Among the eight participants, two showed a decrease in scores, one experienced an increase, and five had tied scores with all scores remaining relatively high. For the Membership sub-dimension, the analysis also revealed no significant difference, with a test statistic of $z = 0$ and $p > .99$; three participants showed a decrease in scores, two exhibited an increase, and three had tied scores. Overall, scoring based on these sub-dimensions showed little difference, as with all other analysis students' scores remained relatively stable and high.

Discussion

We sought to understand how a college preview camp might impact students' sense of belonging and overall feelings of preparedness and confidence towards college and future careers. Toward sense of belonging, despite stable pre- and post-camp scores across the dimensions of comfort, inclusion, commitment, support and acceptance, the evaluation offers valuable insights into the potential impacts of the camp experience, although there were few changes noted in students' responses, we reflect on Strayhorn's (2011) research on college bridge programs. It could be that students experienced strong feelings of acceptance and being valued simply by being included in the camp environment, which emphasizes the significance of inclusion in solidifying students' confidence in their own ability to experience community, and belonging in post-secondary settings, and the camp as an effective introduction to college.

Strayhorn (2011) emphasizes that a sense of belonging is crucial for marginalized populations including students with disabilities. According to Strayhorn (2011), students from marginalized programs often enter programs or institutions having varying degrees of belonging because of their previous individual social and academic experiences. We rely on Carter (2021) to further support this consideration, as within his ten dimensions invitation, presence, and being valued are all powerful dimensions of belonging which the program sought to achieve. He suggests that the act of invitation creates a powerful and significant feeling of being valued within schools, program, and faith community for students with IDD. This could explain sustained high scores of belonging across time, with only minor, insignificant changes occurring post-camp.

Limitations

There were several limitations to our study. First, sense of belonging lacks a consistent definition; there is no universally constructed definition. We sought to combat this by constructing a within group definition during other components of our program evaluation which were conducted simultaneously with this study; however, definitions of belongingness remain complex and salient from person to person and even within groups sharing similar attributes like students with IDD (Gur & Bina, 2023; Raines et al., .2023) Second, our program was scheduled over a 4-day, 5-night period. Given the short duration there may not have been enough time within the camp environment to show significant changes using quantitative measures. Third, our sample size for this study was limited, N=8 participants; although non-parametric measures were utilized it is possible that we were unable to achieve a meaningful level of statistical power to support findings. One way to combat this impact is to couple data with qualitative measures; although not reported here, we also conducted a qualitative study with participatory elements, gathered data from other transition collaborators like counselors and parents simultaneously which is reported in previous and subsequent articles and triangulated at the end of this dissertation. Finally, self-reporting scales, such as Likert scales like the ones we used in our research, and are widely used to assess attitudes, beliefs and behaviors have both benefits and drawbacks. While there are many advantages such as ease of administration, standardization (Subedi, 2016) self-report scales also come with limitations including social desirability, central tendency bias, and are dependent on a high degree of self-awareness and the individuals' understanding of the survey question itself (Chyung et al., 2017).

Future Program Considerations/Recommendations

Our research showed that students' overall perceptions of their own career and college readiness increased as a result of their participation in the college preview camp, while sense of

belonging remained stable. Areas indicating significant change were in student's perceptions of their ability to set goals for college, and the perceived belief that they could successfully transition to college.

Researchers continue to understand how best to support students' interests, access, and preparedness for college, this begins by supporting mindsets and beliefs that they belong there. While the camp may have addressed goal setting effectively, and participation in the program may have stimulated an increased belief in college attendance, some benefit could be gained by providing expanded activities focused on interest exploration, supporting knowledge of the types of courses and curricula that is offered in inclusive post-secondary education programs, and providing information about the varied programs that are available around the state and how they differ.

CHAPTER 4: MANUSCRIPT 3

Abstract

Pre-college programs are well established linkages to post-secondary education prior to for many marginalized and at-risk populations prior to leaving high school (Strayhorn, 2012), however they are poorly examined as pathways for students with IDD (Parsley et al., 2023). As part of a broader program evaluation, this survey-based design examines parent perceptions of the impacts of a four-day residential college preview camp (CPC) on their child's sense of belonging, and overall career and college readiness. Our findings indicate that parents valued children's participation in the pre-college program, reporting increased hope and optimism towards their child's future, while not generalizable, our research opens considerations for other programs whose aims may be similar.

*Keywords:*parental perceptions, college readiness, intellectual disabilities, pre-college programming, inclusive post-secondary education

Parental Perceptions of the Impact of a Residential College Preview Camp

College and Career Readiness have been important initiatives of the United States educational system since the introduction of the common core standards under No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (Lombardi et al., 2018). Research indicates that students with IDD are significantly less likely to enter competitive employment or attend post-secondary education (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021; Avellone et al., 2021). According to National Longitudinal Transition Study – 2 (NLTS-2) data after high school, Wave 5 updated previous NLT-2 findings from 2005 and 2007 following students up to 8 years, those findings are reported here, up to 28.7% of students with IDD enrolled in some form of post-secondary education. Among these students, 18.9 % attended a 2-year community college program, 16.4 % participated in vocational school, and 6.7 % of students attended a four-year college. Nearly every disability category outperformed the students with IDD in post-secondary education attendance rates (Newman et al., 2011). There is a need to support youth with intellectual disabilities and other developmental disabilities (IDD) in the exploration and preparation needed to become a career and college ready (Lombardi et al., 2017, 2022; Morningstar et al., 2017; Parsley et al., 2023; Wilczenski et al., 2017). The more prepared students with IDD are for college, the higher their level of engagement, and the more likely they are to succeed (Lintangsari et. al., 2021).

At the age of 16, every student with a disability who has been identified under IDEA in the United States must have a transition plan as part of their IEP, designed to improve the academic and functional ability of the child with a disability to facilitate the transition from school to post-school activities (IDEA, 2004). For students with IDD attending school, transition plans should at the very least provide goals for where a student will live, the type of post-

secondary training or education they will pursue, and their individualized employment goals (IDEA, 2004; Lombardi et al., 2017). This plan is critical in ensuring that collaboration towards a student's future begins early and that opportunities are achieved through appropriate goal setting and intentionally designed supports (Kohler et al.1996, 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2020; Papay et al., 2017; Shogren et al., 2012).

Over the past two decades, more legislation has been produced to ensure that students with disabilities can enter the workforce competitively. The Individual with Disabilities Act of 2004 (IDEA) ensures that students with disabilities entering public school systems are identified and provided a free and appropriate education in the United States. Under IDEA (2004) each student must be provided with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which takes into consideration the students unique preferences, interests, needs, and strengths provides annual goals for academic learning and independent living, as well as accommodation to access the curriculum. This plan, administered by the local educational agencies in collaboration with students, parents, educators, and related service providers, is just a starting point for each student with a disability attending K-12 education in the United States today (Shogren et al., 2012).

Recently, students with IDD have gained expanded opportunities to attend university and college post-secondary programs through legislative initiatives. The Higher Education and Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, expanded funding and support to students with IDD, providing greater access to post-secondary options. This bill allows students with IDD to apply for and receive federal financial aid like their peers without disabilities, addressing one of the top three obstacles to higher education in America – financial resources, were money and privilege drive opportunities.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is another essential piece of legislation which has supported the preparation of youth and students with disabilities as part of the Federal Vocational Rehabilitation program. Vocational Rehabilitation is a federal program that, since the 1940s, has utilized training and other rehabilitative services to support the entrance of individuals with disabilities into the workforce. WIOA (2014) revised the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, expanding services and programming to youth and students by lowering the eligibility requirements and initiating services at an earlier age.

Previously, a student or youth must have applied and been made eligible for services at their local state vocational rehabilitation office. Now, any student or youth who is presumed eligible for services can receive pre-employment transition services. These services, which should not duplicate the efforts of local educational agencies, must provide instruction or support in one of five evidence-based areas: a) job exploration and counseling, b) work-based learning experiences, c) counseling on post-secondary education and training opportunities, d) workplace readiness training, c) instruction in self-advocacy (Pre-Employment Transition Services - NTACT:C, 2024). Further WIOA (2014) increases support systems for students and youth by requiring collaboration amongst transition service agencies, schools, and institutions of higher education (Taylor et al., 2024).

Given these newer acts of legislation, the United States now has over 327 Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Programs, or IPSE. These programs vary in structure and level of inclusion, ranging from stand-alone programs (where students with IDD only attend specialized courses together) to fully integrated programming (where students with IDD take coursework predominately in the general curriculum with all other students; Hunter et al., 2019; Kleinert et. al., 2012). See Table 1 for additional descriptions.

Table 9***Types of IPSE Programs***

Model	Type	Settings	Supports	Focus	Coursework
Inclusive Individual Support	D, or C	With traditional attenders	Tutoring, Coaches, Mentors, EdTech	Career goals based on student interest, like traditional attenders with added supports	Traditional Coursework
Substantially Separate	C	With other students with IDD	Job Coach, Social Workers, Counselors	Life Skills, and Vocational Services	Independent living, job readiness, social skills
Mixed Hybrid	C	Split - some coursework is separate and some is traditional to meet the needs of students with IDD	Academic coaching, tutoring, mentors, person-centered planning, social workers, counselors, or both on campus and in the community	Independent living skills, university coursework, employment & job training, internships	Course with traditional students, coursework follows students' interests, specialized coursework addresses independent living, vocational skills, self-determination, disability rights, sexual health and wellness, and finance

Note. Adapted from Wolff (2019)

IPSE programming increases positive outcomes for students with IDD in a variety of life domains (Butler et al., 2016). Butler et al. (2016) compared a group of students with IDD who had completed at least two semesters of a college program using national core indicators. In the study they utilized data from the National Core Indicators (NCI) Adult Consumer Survey (ACS) and compared the results with the state's ACS findings incorporating information from both the survey and background information it contained. The ACS is a tool used to gather information about the experiences and outcomes of adults with intellectual disabilities (IDD). Developed by the NCI initiative, the ACS looks at various aspects of life, including personal well-being, community participation, and access to services (National Core Indicators, 2024). They found that students who had attended college reported higher rates of exercise, decreased dependency on prescription medications, had and had markedly higher rates of employment, and friendships groups. Further reported responses indicated higher rates of community participation, and lower incidences of loneliness.

Yet, even with the expanded opportunities and the understanding of the positive impact of IPSE programming on students' futures, few students are provided with goals in their IEP plan that support college attendance (Lombardi et al., 2017; Rowe et al., 2015; Shogren et al., 2012). How might we— researchers, educators, and transition collaborators—ensure that students with IDD set goals for IPSE and secure a position in what lies ahead? Student transition outcomes are most effectively supported through IEP Goals established by careful planning with students and their families or guardians, as well as the programs, services and activities that support students in exploring their futures (Lombardi et al., 2017; Schillaci et al., 2021). Research confirms this; Kohler et al. (1996, 2016) explored and introduced a taxonomy of evidenced-based transition practices that provide a framework for supporting the transition of students with disabilities into

postsecondary life. Key practices include active participation by the family in the planning process, and strong parent collaboration as part of the IEP team.

Parent and other social relationships (teachers and peers) remain the most powerful influencers of college attendance and employment outcomes for students both with and without disabilities (Carpenter et al., 1987; Doren et al., 2012; Kohler et al., 1996; Lombardi, 2017). For example, Carpenter et al. (1987) found that parental encouragement and support had a direct effect on college attendance. In addition, they confirmed that students' attitudes towards college were influenced by parents' beliefs. Given this it is important to consider parents in programmatic research which impacts students; this practice is also reinforced in Kohler's Transition Taxonomy (2016).

Understanding parental perceptions of programs is crucial for several reasons. First, parents serve as primary advocates for their children, and their beliefs about a program's effectiveness can significantly influence their child's level of engagement and support (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). When parents feel positively about the programs their children participate in, they are more likely to invest time and resources into those opportunities, fostering an environment conducive to learning and growth (Duman et al., 2018; Hamm & Mousseau, 2023). Additionally, parents who perceive a program beneficial are more likely to communicate their experiences to other families, thereby increasing community trust and participation (Stribbel et al., 2022; Wanant, 2010).

Moreover, parental perceptions can provide valuable insights into the strengths and areas of improvement of a program. Parents offer a unique perspective on their child's experiences and challenges, which can inform program evaluation and development. By incorporating parent feedback, programs can better align with the needs and aspirations of families, ensuring that they

address concerns related to inclusion and belonging. This responsiveness not only enhances the program's credibility, but also promotes a culture of collaboration between families and educators. Ultimately, prioritizing parental perceptions in program evaluation not only strengthens the support network for students with IDD, but also contributes to a more inclusive future. When parents are actively involved and their perspectives are valued, both students and programs grow (Duman et al., 2018; Hamm & Mousseau, 2023; Stribbel et al., 2022; Udiing et al., 2009; Wanant, 2010).

In this program evaluation, we consider belonging a critical mindset associated with career and college readiness, as it fosters a sense of security, confidence, and self-efficacy in students (Morningstar et al., 2017; Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Strayhorn et al., 2012; Schroder et al., 2021). However, students with IDD often do not automatically experience this sense of belonging at school and in their communities. This often extends to first year and pre-college programs (Schroeder et al., 2021). Schroeder et al., (2021) notes that while the number of students with IDD attending universities is growing, institutions still must work to ensure they have a “meaningful presence” within their learning communities (p.239).

The emotional impact of the exclusion of students with IDD on parents can be profound (Fernández-Avalos et al., 2020). When parents witness their child being left out or marginalized at any place in society, it can lead to feelings of frustration, sadness, and concern about their child's future (Fernández-Avalos et al., 2020). For example, in their study Fernández-Avalos et al. (2020) describe parents' feelings related to the possibility of a future of isolation, “all the parents said that the thought of their child... becoming socially isolated ...caused them to feel intense fear” (p10). These emotions can drive parents to seek environments that promote inclusion and belonging, not only for their child's well-being but also for their own peace of

mind. When parents see their children actively included in educational and social contexts, it affirms their hopes and aspirations for the future (Fernandez –Avalous et al., 2020; Young et al., 2022). Young et al. (2022) notes that parents worry about their student’s future success in the world and that this success is focused on their ability to not only work and live independently, but also to cultivate meaningful relationships.

As discussed, parental involvement in future planning is crucial, as is their perception of and support to the student in planning for college (Young et al., 2022). A parent’s confidence in any service or program is key to supporting student perceptions about their ability to belong in the same places and spaces as their peers, including college. Providing opportunities for these students to explore college campuses before graduating high school not only helps them feel connected, but also encourages their academic success (Strayhorn, 2018; Tinto, 1973) Pre-College programs offered on regional college campuses for students in grade school, middle school, and high school can play a vital role in helping parents envision a future where their children feel supported and capable of attending college.

Purpose of the Study

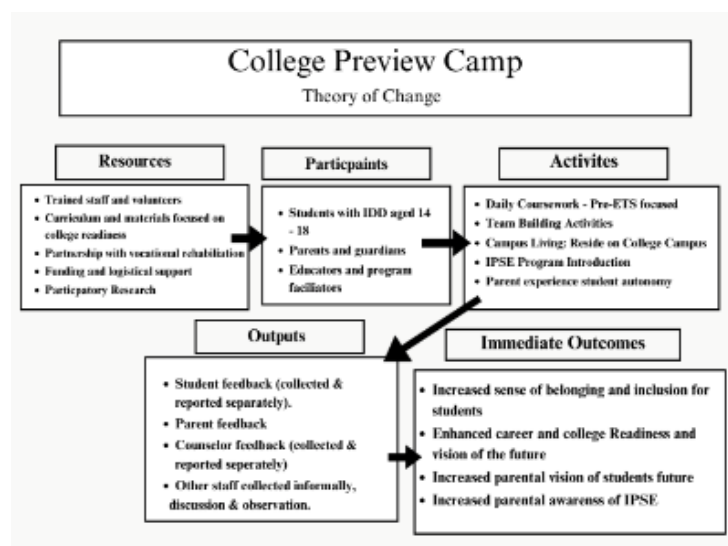
Our research, conducted as part of a broader formative program evaluation, sought to understand the impact of a college preview camp on the college and career and college readiness of students with intellectual disabilities through constructs of belonging, an important construct in the mindsets of students preparing for post-secondary education. The study integrated a theory of change through which student participation in the college preview camp might influence the way a small group of students with intellectual disabilities thought, felt, and believed about their futures. As part of this evaluation, we also examined parent perception of the camp’s impact on

their children, and the way such impacts influence parents' feelings or beliefs about their students' futures (See Figure 1).

This approach draws on the CCR framework developed by Morningstar et al. (2017), and other researchers who have explored CCRs of students with IDD, or other marginalized populations, school belonging, and other factors which influence the overall CCR of students with IDD (Baumeister and Leary, 1996; Carter et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2017, Allen et al., 2021; Maslow, 1947; Parsley et al., 2021; Strayhorn et al., 2012; Spady, 1970; Tinto.,1973; Tinto et al., 2017).

Figure 26

College Preview Camp Theory of Change



The camp program itself is housed on a large suburban campus at a research-intensive university in the south-central United States. The campus hosts an Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) program which serves 10-12 new students with IDD each year, mostly from the surrounding states.

The IPSE program provides students with opportunities to attend college like their same age peers and requires both inclusive and specialized coursework. Students live in dorms,

perform internships, and participate in community-based competitive employment. To support program awareness and provide greater access for students in middle school and high school with IDD who have an interest in attending college, the university collaborated with the local vocational rehabilitation agency. This initiative, supported by the funding allocation of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) through collaboration with the state vocational rehabilitation program, and pre-collegiate services, led to the development of the pre-college program, a four-day college preview camp.

Pre-college programs familiarize students with a college campus, provide expanded opportunities for skills enhancement, and allow students with IDD to vision themselves as college attenders by building a relationship between the school and students by supporting the social integration of camp participants on campus before college (Parsley et al., 2023; Strayhorn 2012, 2019; Tinto, 1973; 2019). Our research sought to determine if a 4-day residential college preview camp could impact the way students with IDD thought, felt, or believed about their futures, increasing students' overall college and career readiness.

Statement of the Problem

Parents are often the primary support to students through the IEP process, where goal setting and preparedness for college often begin. Their perceptions of a student's ability to attend college are significantly influence the types of goals contained in IEPs and access to information, and exploration of post-secondary education. (Lombardi et al., 2017; Agarwal et al., 2020).

Given the importance of these perceptions, especially in evaluating post-secondary education programs our study addresses a gap in understanding related to new residential pre-college programs for students with IDD. As the college preview camp is in its formative stages, we aim to investigate how parents perceive their children's experiences within the camp and how these

experiences shape their beliefs and feelings about the children's future. To achieve this, we explore the following research questions:

- Based on parental perception, what was the impact of the college preview camp on their child's career and college readiness?
- Based on parental perception, what was the overall impact of the college preview camp on their child's sense of belonging?
- Based upon parental perception, what were the impacts to parental thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their child's future?

Method

Consent and Recruitment

We sought approval for our study through our local institutional review board. Once approved, we utilized purposeful and convenience sampling to recruit students with IDD from a broader pool of camp attendees. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers select students or cases based on their availability and accessibility (Creswell, 2002). Purposeful criterion sampling provides researchers with the opportunity to select students who possess similar qualities and are thought to have specific knowledge about a given phenomenon, program, or experience (Palinkas et al., 2013). Our study criterion required that all participants be a parent to a transition-age students with an intellectual disability between the age 14 – 18 who was a camp attendee; age, gender, and sexual identity and race were not determinates of survey participation.

Participants

Parents were provided with consent documents at the beginning of camp (see Appendix G). Parents were emailed a link via the campus email system which guided them to the

institution's preferred survey program, which is securely hosted by the campus (Qualtrics). A total of 8 parents were contacted and a total of 8 parents began the survey, of those parents only six provided survey data. All respondents were female.

Instrument & Measures

The primary researcher created a survey to explore several key questions related to parental perceptions of the impact of the camp to determine the impact of camp programming on students' overall career readiness. A secondary researcher familiar with the population set and aims of research reviewed questions for appropriateness. There were 11 questions on the survey instrument, 8 scaled responses and 3 open-ended questions; response type varied based upon the type of information needed and were generally selected based upon the recommended responses provided by the university's dedicated survey tool. For example, where we needed to determine frequency, we provided response options which supported that need such as none, very little, a lot, a great deal. Conversely, when we asked something more specific like "the number of times per week", we offered multiple options. All questions were meant to tap constructs known to be important to the career and college readiness of students with disabilities, in addition to supporting further understanding of the impact of the camp on caregivers of students with IDD, who are often greatly impacted by their children's experiences in academic and social settings.

Descriptive Statistics

The survey results provided valuable insights into the parental perceptions of the impact of college preview camp on their children — students with IDD who attended the college preview camp.

Question 1

Based upon your perception, how much did the camp activities promote a sense of adventure and exploration for your students? A total of 5 parents answered this question. One parent (20%) felt that the camp activities provided students with a great deal of adventure and exploration, two parents (40%) felt it provided a lot, one parent (20%) felt it offered a moderate amount, and one parent (20%) felt it offered little (See Figure 2).

Figure 27

Parental Perception Child's Experience of Adventure & Exploration at CPC



Question 2

Based upon your perception, how much did the camp activities promote a sense of belonging and inclusion for your child? A total of six parents answered this question. Three parents (50.0%) felt students experienced a great deal (more than a lot) of belonging and inclusion through camp activities, two parents (33.3%) felt that students felt a lot of belonging and inclusion through camp activities, and one parent (16.7%) felt that camp provided very little sense of belonging and inclusion (See Figure 3).

Figure 28

Parental Perception of Child's Experience of Belonging & Inclusion

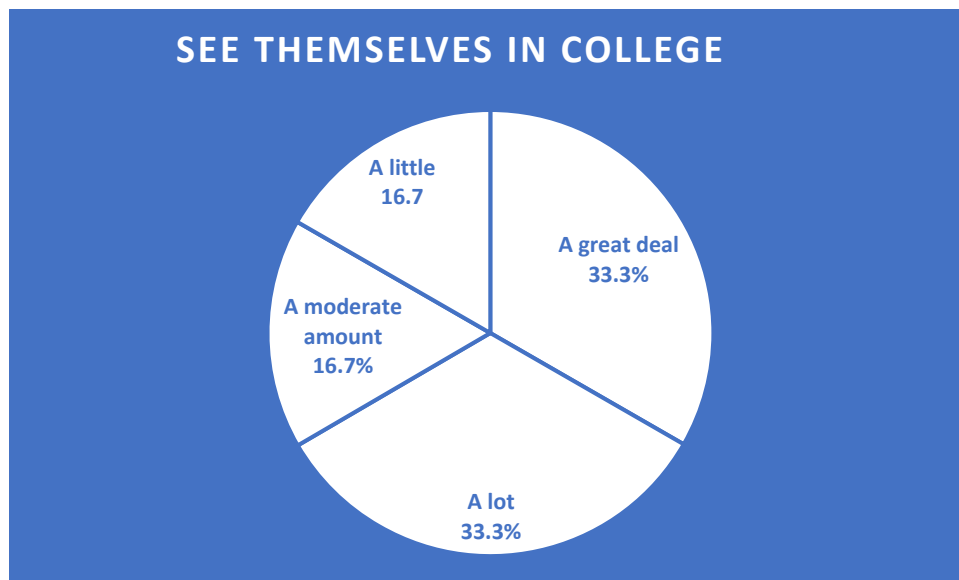


Question 3

Based upon your perception, how much did the camp foster your child's ability to see themselves in college? A total of six parents responded to this question. Of those, two parents (33%) felt the camp greatly supported their child's vision of college, while another two parents (33%) felt it supported them a lot. One parent (16.7%) reported a moderate amount of support, and one parent (16.7%) indicated that the camp only provided a little support in helping their child see themselves in college (see Figure 4).

Figure 29

Parental Perceptions of Camp Supporting Children in Seeing Themselves in College

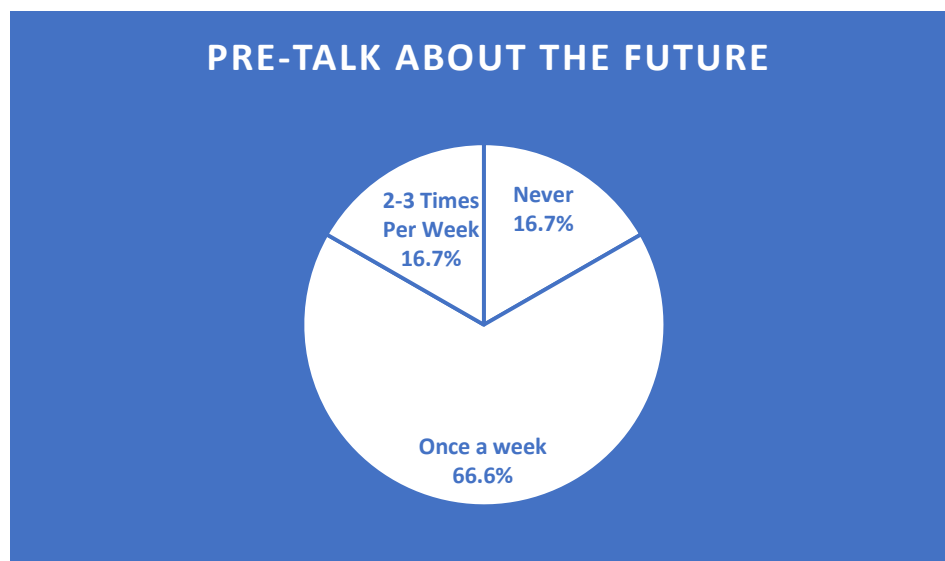


Question 4

Before camp how often did you hear your child discussing topics related to their future? A total of six parents responded to the question. Of those, one parent (16.5%) reported that their child never discussed future topics once a week. Four parents (66.6%) said their child talked about these topics once a week, and one parent said their child discussed these topics 2-3 times per week (16.7%) (See Figure 5).

Figure 30

Perceptions of the Number of Times They Heard Children Talking About the Future Before Camp

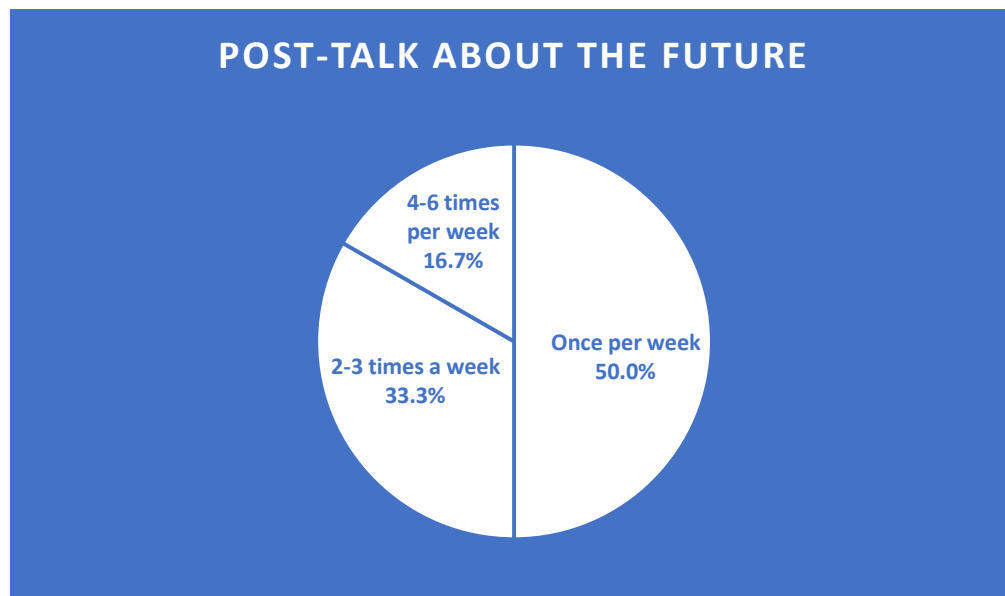


Question 5

Since leaving camp, how often have you heard your child discussing topics related to their future? Of those, three parents (50%) reported that their child discussed future topics once a week. Two parents (33.3%) stated that their children talked about their future 2-3 times a week, while one parent (16.7%) indicated that their child discussed these topics 4-6 times a week. This overall positive trend suggests that the camp was likely effective in supporting students to think about and discuss their futures (See Figure 6.)

Figure 31

Parental Perceptions of the Number of Times They Heard Children Talking About the Future After Camp

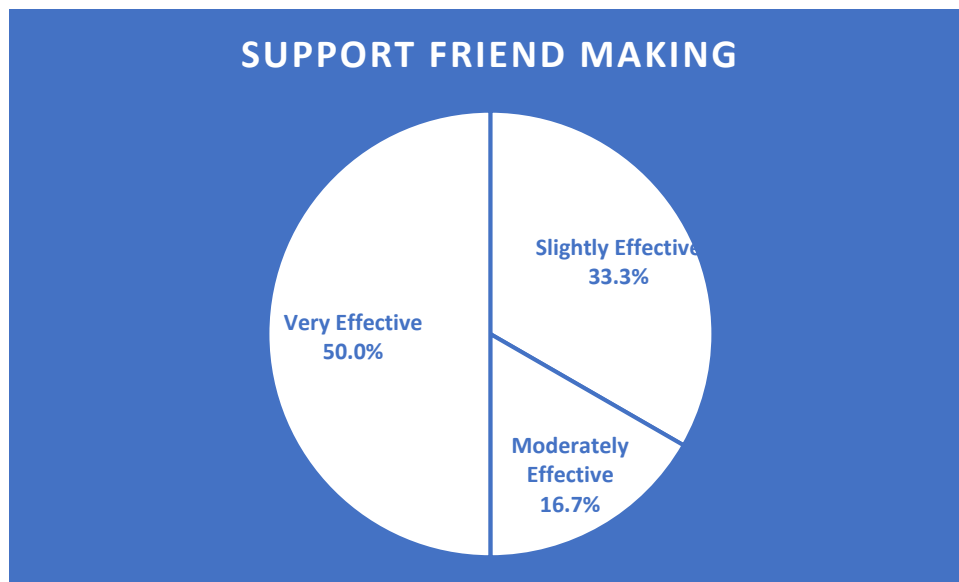


Question 6

How effective do you believe that camp was at supporting your student in making new friends. A total of six parents answered this question. Of those, three parents (50.0%) felt that the camp was very effective in helping their child make friends. One parent (16.7%) reported that the camp was moderately effective, while two parents (33.3%) felt it was only slightly effective in supporting their child's social connections (See Figure 7.).

Figure 32

Parental Perceptions on the Effectiveness Camp in Supporting Child's Ability to Make Friends



Question 7

A total of six parents answered this question. Of those, four parents (66.7%) felt that the camp was very effective in preparing their child to take on new challenges. One parent (16.7%) reported that the camp was extremely effective, while another parent (16.7%) felt it was only slightly effective in preparing their child to take on new challenges (See Figure 8).

Figure 33

Take on New Challenges

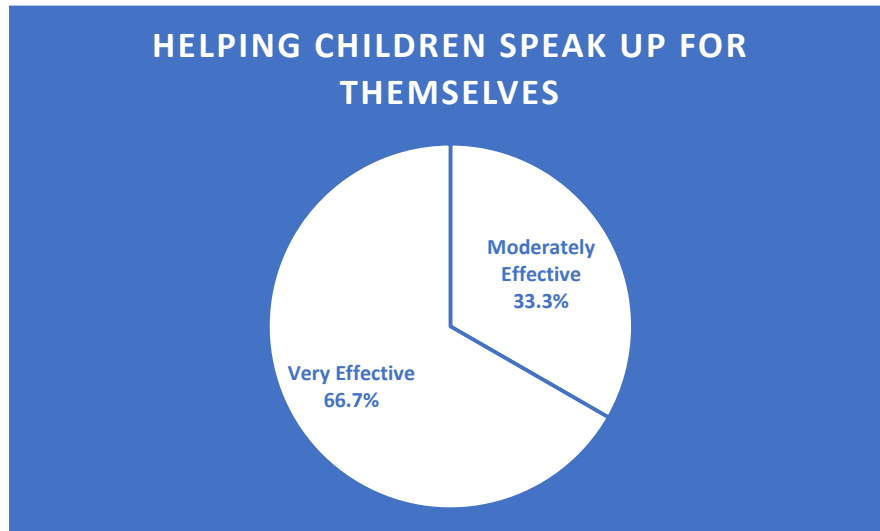


Question 8

How effective do you believe that camp was at supporting your child's ability to speak up for themselves? A total of six parents answered this question. Four parents (66.7%) said camp was very effective, while (33.3%) percent felt that camp was moderately effective.

Figure 34

Children Speaking Up for Themselves



Open-Ended Response Questions Analysis

In this section, we provide our analysis of the results from our survey questions and describe how we built themes from parental responses to fortify our analysis on the short-term impacts of the CPC on the CCR of camp participants particularly in areas of belonging, confidence, friend-making, and self-advocacy. Our considerations of parental feedback were twofold, first we aimed to understand how parents perceived the impacts of camp programming on their students' overall sense of belonging and career and college readiness. Second, we sought to understand the impact of their child's experience on parents themselves. Our open-ended questions were as follows:

- What did it mean to you as a parent to have your child participate in a college preview camp?
- Overall, how well do you feel the camp addressed the unique needs and abilities of your child? Please share any specific examples and suggestions for improvement.
- Would you recommend the camp to other parents or why not?

In order to support analysis of our parental responses, we utilized ChatGPT-4 to assist with thematic analysis by comparing primary researcher-generated themes with AI-generated themes, and in the facilitation of themes from qualitative data (Open AI, 2023). Researchers have demonstrated that ChatGPT-4 is a valuable tool in supporting primary coding, particularly in its earliest stages (Yan, 2024). We provide our process in a table to transparently describe the steps taken (See Tables 2 & 3). As the primary researcher (PR), I guided the use of ChatGPT-4 in this analysis. ChatGPT-4 was used to assist with tasks such as initial coding and pattern identification. However, all key decisions regarding data interpretation, theme development, and final analysis were made by the PR. ChatGPT-4 served as a support tool to aid understanding, while human judgment remained central to the research process.

Table 10

Thematic Analysis Process: Actions of Primary Researcher and Actions of AI

Thematic Analysis	Primary Researcher	ChatGPT-4
Data Analysis	Gathered qualitative responses from parents using post-camp survey regarding experiences and perceptions of student impacts from camp. De-identified data	Received de-identified data from primary researcher
Initial Review	Conducted manual review of	Automated coding conducted

	parental responses, identified initial codes, and reviewed and compared to AI codes	After researcher provided prompts to review data for themes
Theme Identification	Interpreted emotional nuances in quotes, used cognitive objectivity and subjectivity considering parents' feelings and concern	Employed sentiment analysis to interpret emotional tone looking at word patterns
Theme Refinement	Provided qualitative context and depth to each theme through additional insights	Received prompt to refine themes adjusted themes based on data frequency and emotional strength detected

Other researchers have described a similar research process to which was applied in our application (Nguyen-Trung, 2024; Lee et al., 2024). During this process we consulted several articles to better understand where the literature existed that could guide some of the decisions we took. Unlike many others, our data set was very small, and therefore provided some flexibility in making choice to proceed with the use of GPT assisted thematic analysis or reverting to a human researcher only process. We provide the outcomes of our theme development (See Table 3).

Table 11

Initial Codes with Primary Theme Development

Initial Coding	Description	Example	Final Themes
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Positive Experience	This code described the experience which indicated student, or parent satisfaction with the camp	“Very hopeful,” “Made me feel better about his future.”	Hope and Future Orientation
CCR Development - Autonomy - Social Skills - Self Advocacy - Confidence - Finance	This code described feedback which indicates parents’ perception of increased growth, and autonomy in their students.	“It was a great confidence-building time for her”, “Seeing Independence developing.”	CCR Development
Empowerment - Belonging - Understanding - Security	This code described feedback which indicated an intense emotional response to either the camp or their child’s experience.	“Amazing they even went as far as to get her gluten free food.”	Belonging (Security, Comfort, Support)
Concerns and Support - Physical - Emotional - Readiness	This code was used to identify areas of support which need improvement	“...I recommend getting a teachers recommendation for each student rather than relying on a parent’s assertion that their child has no behavior issues”.	Concerns
Communication Challenges - Disconnection - Parent / Child Dynamic	This code was used to describe feedback which demonstrated a need for increased communication, confusion in the parent, or insecurity.	“I don’t know what happened...[they] haven’t articulated anything, but [their] mood was very different from the first to second night.”	Parent / Child Dynamic

Following the analysis of the data and identification of the preliminary themes, at the request of the primary researcher generated a series of secondary themes. The preliminary researcher carefully reviewed these themes to determine how well they aligned with feedback

from parents. While the themes did indeed support the PRs initial considerations of parental data, the researcher recognized the importance of ensuring that the research tool effectively captured the nuanced constructs of human emotion. To enhance this human element, the researcher issued an additional command to re-check and refine themes related to emotion. Moreover, the PR looked for evidence in the literature base to better understand ChatGPT-4s capabilities in managing data of this nature.

A study, Elyoseph et al., (2023), looked at ChatGPT’s emotional awareness using the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS), they found that ChatGPT could produce appropriate emotional responses and, in one instance, even outperformed the general population on the LEAS. This finding suggests that while the tool does have the ability to recognize and respond to emotional content, it does this by looking for patterns in human language which represent emotion. It does not have the capabilities to fully understand the experiences of others. In short, it cannot emote, empathize, intuitively gather, or understand social cues; nor can it utilize subjectivity which is often considered the essence of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Ramirez-Serna, 2016). It does not have consciousness (OpenAI, 2024).

With that said, a benefit of AI tools like ChatGPT is that they can provide a level objectiveness that is often difficult for humans to achieve, however even this is subject to training bias. While we are certain many researchers will follow our pursuit for its inclusion in research, like any tool, we relied upon it as a complement, not the driving force to our research. We provide examples of prompts utilized to create analysis commands when interacting with ChatGPT in the table below (See Table 4).

Table 12

Example Prompts During Thematic Analysis

Prompt	Reason
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I am going to provide de-identified data, review the data and look for themes. Consider parental perceptions of the impact of a college preview camp on their children with IDD.	Look for initial themes
Review the themes provided, take into consideration the human qualities of emotion which may be expressed within the previously provided data.	Request additional analysis, look for emotional inference. Ensure ChatGPT takes into consideration the emotional nature of parental responses.
In looking at the theme of CCR Readiness, this theme should be considered a positive outcome, given this how could these themes be re-nested?	Primary researcher looks for alignments, notices that ChatGPT is interpreting the term “readiness” as a concern rather than a skills acquisition outcome within parental wording outcome new command is provided to correct logic, and re-requests nesting options.

Primary research questions (PR)

Primary Research Question 1

Based on parental perception, what was the impact of the college preview camp on their child's career and college readiness? Overall parents viewed the camps as having a positive impact on their students' career and college readiness. Factors such autonomy, social skills, and self-advocacy were the primary factors parents mentioned seeing the most growth in.

Primary Reach Question 2

Based on parental perception, what was the overall impact of the college preview camp on their child's sense of belonging? In general parents believed that students were well supported and listened to, parents generally believed that camp counselors and programming staff supported and listened to students well. Most mentioned their children felt a high degree of belonging, although friend making was more difficult for some attenders.

Primary Research Question 3

Based upon parental perception, what were the impacts to parental thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their child's future? The word most frequently utilized by parental responses was hope. Most parents had a stronger belief in their children's over strengths and capabilities, while others simply left more informed as to the areas which could be better supported in order to prepare them for transition after high school.

Discussion

Youth with IDD and their families often face unique challenges in the transition to adulthood including identifying appropriate post-secondary education goals, understanding, and establishing a student's preparedness for college. The study aimed to consider parents' perceptions of their children's experiences at camp, specifically focusing on how these experiences impacted the way their children thought, felt, or believed about their future. The insights gained highlight the role that such programs can play in supporting short-term impacts and parental perceptions of these impacts.

Descriptive statistics indicate that parents largely perceived the camp as beneficial in fostering their children's sense of adventure, belonging and college readiness. Notably, 50% of parents reported their students experienced a "great deal" of belonging and inclusion through camp activities. This finding underscores the importance of creating inclusive environments that invite students with IDD to experience the many dimensions of belonging and inclusion in classrooms and pre-college programming that have been presented here, but also in the voice of many researchers over decades of work in special education.

The camp also appeared to positively influence how parents viewed their children's ability to envision themselves in a college setting, demonstrating a positive trend in the number

of parents reporting an increase in their children's discussions about the future. This shift is essential and supports the goal of increasing both parental and student awareness of IPSE programming and its potential impacts.

Qualitative questions within the survey revealed that parents not only reflected on their children's experiences but also acknowledged personal emotional responses to the camp's impact. Themes of hope, empowerment, and belonging emerged prominently, illustrating that parents found the camp to be a source of reassurance regarding their children's futures. This dual perspective of parental and child experiences suggests that these programs do not merely support students but also address parental anxieties and knowledge, potentially fostering a more optimistic outlook on their children's' transition to adulthood.

Furthermore, comments regarding autonomy and self-advocacy suggest that parents recognize the camp's role in promoting essential life skills. Skills such as self-advocacy and confidence are critical for young adults with IDD as they navigate adult landscapes including employment and post-secondary education. The emphasis on these skills within the camp's programming appears to have been impactful at least in the short-term, but it is unclear if a return to a more directive environment may reverse such short-term findings.

Areas for Improvement

Despite the overwhelming positive feedback, some parents expressed concerns about their children's ability to make friends at camp. With 33% of parents feeling that camp was only "slightly effective" in fostering friendships, it is evident that social integration remains an area needing attention. Future iterations of the camp could benefit from structured social activities that facilitate peer connections, thereby enhancing the overall camp experience.

Additionally, addressing the insecurities parents' face regarding their child's well-being and readiness could be enhanced through education about the natural barriers that arise between parents and developing adolescents. Programs for parents provided for even an hour a day in an online format, might promote education on fostering open dialogues, as well as those that support parents in navigating the complexities of adolescence, are essential for preparing them for their child's future autonomy. As children grow, the likelihood of parents receiving detailed reports about daily activities may decrease, but this shift is a healthy step towards independent living. Other potential solutions might be participants uploading photos to a secure Instagram group page which would serve as a voluntary way for teens to "report" their wellness or implementing both formal and dynamic assessments at the beginning of camp to enhance parental understanding of their child's growth. In addition, supporting awareness of the "don't steal the struggle" approach to learning, allows parents to understand the very intentional process of allowing students to navigate problems as independently as possible so that when outside of a secure environment they have the skills to do so.

Finally, the camp itself could take on programming that works directly to construct activities around belonging, extending the camp timeline to support more meaningful time spent learning together to address all concerns by considering the 10 dimensions set forth by Carter et al. (2021), using guidance from the TIES approach to programming in school environments set forth by Carter & Biggs (2021).

The Role of AI in Research

The use of AI tools in research is growing, in our research we used tools like ChatGPT-4 to support our thematic analysis demonstrating appropriate and supportive role of technologies in the development of both research and manuscripts. The hybrid approach underscores the

importance of researching more to understand how AI tools may be effectively used to support analysis by combining human insight with technological assistance to enrich qualitative research particularly where subjectivity may benefit the broadly objective approach of AI, including ethical implications and bias which may arise.

Implications for Future Research

Due to the program specific nature of our outcomes, and the individualized nature and context specificity inherent to belonging results should not be considered generalizable. However, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the importance of college preview programs as effective introductions to post-secondary education for marginalized populations. It extends the research by including both parental impact perspectives on the impact of such programs on students with IDD and the overall career and college readiness through various pathways, but particularly belonging. Future research could further the long-term impacts of such programs on student outcomes and parental beliefs, as well as examine how different demographic factors influence parental perceptions and experiences.

Moreover, expanding the sample size and including diverse perspectives in the future, such as fathers and parents from various backgrounds, would enrich our understanding of these dynamics. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how the benefits of the camp experiences evolve over time, shaping student trajectories into adulthood.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our research illustrates the profound impact that college preview camps can have even as presented here as part of a small formative program evaluation. By fostering a sense of belonging, enriching college readiness, and providing emotional support, and opportunities for autonomy, these camps may play a pivotal role in preparing families for the

transition to post-secondary education and beyond. The findings underscore the continuous improvement in the areas of concern, ensuring the needs of all participants are met uniquely and effectively.

CHAPTER 5: Making Connections

This chapter synthesizes findings from the previous three manuscripts presented in this dissertation, focusing on the investigation of career and college readiness and sense of belonging during a college preview camp. Conducted as part of a broader program evaluation, the findings highlight the multi-faceted nature of belonging and the ways in which parents, students, and students as participant-coresearchers can support our understanding of both program and short-term impacts a newly formed college preview camp.

Synthesis of Findings

Photovoice study

In Manuscript 1, Chapter 2 we revealed that campers arrived at the college preview camp with high levels of belonging already present. We worked with participant-coresearchers with IDD to first ensure that considering the way belonging as experienced through the adventure (experience) of a college preview camp was a relevant topic for investigation based upon their interest. Working together we created a working definition to approach our research from, through this process we learned that belonging had both group and individualized meanings and reinforced the highly contextual nature of belonging. We learned that while most participant-coresearchers belonging was important both at the college preview camp and to their future, for some its importance was weighted more evenly against the overall outcome of college (getting a job). Understand belonging's importance within their pre-college programs and how it influenced the way they thought, felt, and believed in the future. Together, participant-coresearchers identified key themes that both defined and strengthened their sense of belonging, which they saw as central to their camp experience. The photovoice method provided rich qualitative data, which supported our analysis and development of themes further demonstrating

positive camp impacts to students, including a heightened feeling of belonging which was both stated enthusiastically, and visualized in smiling faces. During cross-analysis of themes related to their own experiences of camp programming, co-researchers emphasized many positive feelings, including feelings of welcome, the friendly nature of camp directors, staff, peers, and the inclusion of current IPSE students in administrating learning sessions. In addition, this manuscript provides specific feedback from participant-coresearcher on the ways in which theirs, and successive student experiences at the local college preview camp might be improved. Improvements included working to ensure that camp activities took into consideration the overall experiences of campers — generating more happiness, providing structured fun, with time for relaxation and exploration on campus. Because participant-co-researchers felt a strong connection to the IPSE students and were able to better visualize their own futures they suggested increasing the number of current IPSE students both leading and participating in camp sessions.

Further, participant-coresearchers felt that camp counselors should check in more with students and supervise dorm rooms more closely due to concerns that some peers were not following what they felt should be implied rules such as keeping their dorm rooms clean, being respectful of time spent in the shower, and to resolve other conflicts. The value of these suggestions is two-fold, first camp participant co-researchers made an impact on future camp programming ensuring that they were seen, heard, and valued. Second, participant-co researchers became better prepared, and stronger self-advocates as they experienced the power of drawing upon their own strengths to position their place in the future. Finally, they added their voice to the much-needed literature base, where students' voices are growing, but are still often overlooked or missing.

Student Perceptions Pre-Post Survey Design

In Manuscript 2, Chapter 3 we incorporated a pre-post survey design to provide a quantitative and reported our findings using descriptive measures providing valuable insights into the way that students' self-perceptions of their own career and college readiness changed before and after the college preview camp, in addition to sense of belonging. Although findings from this study demonstrated little statistical significance, we noted practical significance and gained a better understanding of the way various programmatic features such as learning what a goal was and having practice in writing goals could positively impacted students' confidence and beliefs in their power to impact their futures through taking of their own volition. Further the pre-post scores demonstrated an increased belief that they could successfully transition into post-secondary education. In addition to learning what students gained, we learned what could be improved or better supported, this included increasing activities that addressed the interests of students by providing more varied assessments and supporting student confidence that they could find jobs that met their interests through explorative activities perhaps with IPSE peers.

Parent Perceptions Post-Camp Survey

In Manuscript 3, Chapter 4, Our post-camp survey administered to was also helpful in understanding some of the potential impacts to students from the first-year college preview camp programming. The results of the survey indicate that parents perceived increased career and college readiness in several areas. First, parents reported that they perceived their children experienced an elevated sense of belonging, adventure, and inclusion. In addition to perceived increases in their student's belief that they could go to college. Parents reported increases in the time that their students spent talking about the future and felt that students were better prepared to take on new challenges. Many parents reported that their children came away from camp with

new friends. Finally, and what we found the most significant in our open-ended questions was the hope that it provided families. Many caregivers stated increased belief in their students' abilities to have a future that was different than what they had previously imagined. Concerns voiced by parents related to decreases in communication and feelings of disconnection caused by a lack of awareness related to their students' activities while at camp provides an opportunity to explore camp programming that includes learning sessions for parents as well providing support to parents as they incur their own transitions. Additionally, parent responses to stronger screening process agreed with our own observation where some camp attenders demonstrated a need for an environment with higher supports, decreased time in shared spaces, and increased soft skills training prior to attending a residential setting like the one we conducted our research in.

Synthesis of Findings

Belonging and CCR

Belonging is an essential need for all people, it is rooted in who we are and what motivates us. We see its possibility everywhere from senior prom to college classrooms, a new job, or even a first car --- somewhere the need to belong will be answered at least momentarily taking us from where we are to where we long to be. Students with intellectual disabilities are no different, their desires, and interests laying the foundation for one of humanities greatest needs (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Maslow, 1943).

Our research focused on the impact of a college preview camp (CPC) on the career and college readiness and sense of belonging for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) an indicator described in Morningstar et al. (2017) CCR Framework. As previously reported, shifts in mindset were evident in several areas but were particularly notable

through: (a) increased confidence in transitioning to college, (b) increased belief by students in their ability to impact future outcomes (goal setting) and (c) increases in self-advocacy.

While our findings suggest that the camp generated many of the components which can facilitate belonging --- safety, connection, and agency (Allen et al., 2018; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Strayhorn et al., 2012). Student participant-coresearchers and their families reinforced that it is not a static concept, but a dynamic and evolving state influenced by social, environmental, and personal factors. Belonging is not just about inclusion, rather it is about creating environments where individuals with IDD can thrive as active participants, decision-makers, and community members, as well as spaces where students and families can feel secure and relate to those they choose (Allen et al., 2018; Carter & Biggs, 2021; Strayhorn, 2012; Wehmeyer et al., 2017). One statement clarified this distinction more than any other, belonging --- "it's not make or break", and the unstated part of this perhaps... its only important when I choose.

After all belonging can be a place, a group, a deep connection to our culture through arts & music, it is sometimes born through meaning making within a group and other times through unstated, silent connection (Frankl, 1986; Inspiration, 2023; Liebenberg et al., 2019, Parsley et al., 202; Wood & Tribe, 2016). Feelings of belonging come and go in innumerable ways, and that we observe in our findings. Some students deeply connected engaging with the campus surroundings and other CPC attenders, while others sat in classrooms, simply smiled, contently and observed.

Based on these considerations, one thing is certain, belonging is a self-determined process, as much as it is an experience, or anything else (Allen et al., 2021; La Guardia & Patrick, 2008). Hence, for those who value belonging highly, a lack of meaningful connection in pre-college programs might hinder their confidence and readiness to transition into new

environments. On the other hand, participants who see belonging as secondary may be more focused on gaining independence or developing competence. These differences challenge educators and program designers to rethink how they frame programs to support sense of belonging—not as a universal outcome, but as one piece of a larger puzzle that must align with each participant's academic, cultural, and socio-emotional needs.

The best way to understand what a student needs is to ask...and that is where our recommendations start. Provide an accessible pre-camp interview, or even a few zoom sessions where students can meet and dream, provide recommendations based upon their interests and engage in the first step of setting goals and choice making, a dangerous suggestion, let them rule the roost, or at least meaning fully contribute to it. Like every self-determined process, students should come first in describing what is important to them. This step alone supports several key dimensions of belonging including being invited, welcomed, valued, known, heard, and included six of the key dimensions of belonging (Carter et al., 2021).

Going in, we wrongly believed that somehow belonging could be constructed, and it can, but only through and with those experiencing it. The longer we researched, the more we sat and questioned ourselves, the literature, considered observations, methods and instruments at camp the more both questions and answers simultaneously gave way. In pre-college programs, just like everywhere else, belonging is closely tied to internal beliefs and identity. It is felt more completely when wherever students are, whatever they are doing links them to their values, culture, and goals either as an individual or as a group regardless of external validation. Conversely, if students feel that their authentic self does not match their expectations of the group, a question may be raised, and they may choose not to belong to that group and seek to identify elsewhere.

Belonging, and sense of belonging within it often requires a making this critical choice about which groups to engage with where students, like those in our study decide where to invest their time, energy and emotional resources all of which are influenced by their interests, needs and goals which change based on a number of factors.

Belonging is not always about being accepted by others but rather accepting students accepting themselves in a given context. For example, when considering an IPSE setting a student with IDD might feel a deep sense of belonging even if still recognized as an individual from within a marginalized group within the broader campus population particularly if they have been supported in validate their own experiences even when others do not. - A skill? A trait? byproduct of a skill? Students with IDD, just like all people, will work to maintain their own sense of belonging even when external forces push against it.

So, what is belonging in relation to Career and College Readiness and its importance in impacting students' experiences and the short and distal impacts of a residential college preview program? We underscore that belonging is not just a feel-good concept; it has real implications for how students transition into adulthood and how pre-college programs support them. For some, belonging can serve as a foundation for identity, confidence, and resilience, enabling them to navigate challenges in college, work, and beyond. For others, belonging may be a secondary or indirect outcome that complements their drive for autonomy and achievement. Recognizing diversity in perspectives of the purpose of pre-college programs and IPSE programs later is critical for future research to support designing programs that are inclusive, equitable, and effective.

For students with intellectual or developmental disabilities, is not one size fits all, the opportunity to experience belonging in a pre-college setting may provide a rare chance to feel

fully included and valued. This can have a profound impact on how they view themselves and their potential in broader societal contexts. However, if belonging is treated as a universal priority, particularly in programs that group students by disability identity without considering individual preferences, experiences and goals, programs risk alienating those who feel differently, potentially undermining the very inclusivity they aim to promote.

As stated earlier, the first step is always the students, just as in a student-led IEP. The second step is to understand that perhaps rather than a starting point, belonging is a byproduct constructed differently, by each participant, while institutions of higher education will always have a responsibility to support belonging, students themselves should be prepared and armed to seek and construct it themselves when they lack some portion of the skills to do so.

For us future research is not necessarily about researching without but rather researching with. We could say conduct longitudinal research, but this would be worthless without the only lens that can focus and frame the contexts, experiences, and choices that students made along the way – the person with IDD themselves. So, this is our future recommendation about belonging. If you want to know what it is, ask the person whose experience you're interested in. If you want to see how it changes get permission to walk along side, not to monitor with them. If you want to create a camp program for students with IDD, support belonging through the self-determined practices, ask them to work with you, consider all interests, include and listen to them.

Hope

Shifts in mindsets were not limited to students, but to mothers who participated in our survey as well. Although our study focused on perceptions of career and college readiness, and sense of belonging, we had one particularly striking outcome--- increased hope. Mothers almost

unanimously reported a heightened belief in their children's potential for a future beyond what they had previously imagined, using a single word of hope to describe their feelings.

Hope, as a construct, plays a critical role for children with IDD and their families in navigating the challenges of education. It fosters resilience, motivation, and a belief in future possibilities. Snyder's Hope Theory emphasizes two essential components of hope: agency (the motivation to set and pursue goals) and pathways (the capacity to identify strategies for achieving those goals). These constructs are particularly relevant for students with IDD, who face systemic and situational barriers requiring adaptive resilience and goal setting. Evidence supports those interventions emphasizing hope—such as goal-setting programs and supportive educational environments—can enhance self-determination and transitional outcomes for students (; Wehmeyer et al., 2017).

In alignment with Snyder's (2002) framework, and building on prior research (Marquez & Lopez, 2017; Wehmeyer et al., 2017) our findings suggest that the camp may have fostered hope-agency by emphasizing self-advocacy, goal setting, and autonomy. Additionally, the development of hope pathways—characterized by identifying multiple strategies to achieve goals despite encountering obstacles enabled students and their families to envision actionable steps within a structured program setting for future-oriented visioning, fostering a shared sense of possibility and purpose for both the students and their families.

This provides a compelling basis for future research of pre-college programs that not only support career readiness but further support critical psychological constructs like hope in parents who desperately need such support. Future studies could investigate how specific camp features contribute to these outcomes and whether these changes translate into long-term impacts on post-secondary success of students and caregivers' long-term psychological outcomes.

If parents serve as the first agents of hope for their children (Marquez & Lopez, 2017), shaping how students envision and pursue their futures, this raises critical questions: How important is cultivating hope in transition practice as a factor in career readiness? And when given the chance, why aren't we already doing so through pre-college programs? Pre-college programs, including the CPC studied here, may provide an opportunity to engage families in cultivating hope together, yet minimal direct engagement or structured support was offered to parents in this case. This oversight represents a missed opportunity to empower families as active partners even further in the goal setting and transition process. Future pre-college programs could further research, and potentially address this gap by adopting intentional practices during these brief introductions to support families further in building pathways of both belonging and fostering hope by offering focused programming while their students are attending programming, these could include:

Educational Workshops for Caregivers (Parents)

- I. Workshops which introduce the CCR Framework, emphasizing the role parents can play in supporting students both academic and non-academic constructs such as self-determination, belonging, and even hope (Idan & Margalit, 2013; Morningstar et al., 2017).
- II. Training on navigating college systems, including financial aid, disability services and transition resources (Lombardi et al., 2017).
- III. Tools and activities for parents to collaboratively set goals with their children

Peer Mediated Support Networks

- IV. Facilitated opportunities for parents to connect, share experiences, and build community with parents whose children have already successfully navigated IPSE programming fostering hope and reducing parental feelings of isolation (Chakraborti, 2021).

Transition- focused Check-in and Checkout Procedures

- V. Evaluative and observational practices conducted in the camp setting by camp staff which includes an end of consultation with both the parent and student.

Future Research Directions

Future research on hope and belonging in pre-college programs should expand upon our findings and address the limitations of our current study. A key area for exploration is the role of parent-child interactions in fostering hope and its impact on post-secondary success. Researchers should investigate how cultivating hope in both students and parents during pre-college experiences translates to sustained resilience and success in higher education, examining the interaction of hope agency and pathways between parents and students over time. Additionally, studies should consider the complementary nature of hope and belonging, exploring how hope drives goal setting and perseverance while belonging creates the psychological safety and community needed to sustain hope. To enhance the effectiveness of pre-college programs, future studies should focus on inclusive camp design, evaluating various program features such as length, parent sessions, and peer engagement activities. This research could determine which specific elements are effective in fostering hope and career and college readiness in both students and their families. To address the limitations of our small-scale study, comprehensive studies should be conducted, including the development and implementation of interventional curricula that emphasize various dimensions of belonging. Creating tools for measuring belonging across larger population sets and diverse settings, as well as conducting longitudinal studies, could

provide valuable insights into the long-term impacts of pre-college programming on student success and well-being. Researchers should also consider expanding the length of residential experiences to examine stressors that may appear over time and their impact on belonging, test and implement effective support strategies, and investigate how extended programs influence the development of coping mechanisms and resilience. Finally, future studies should explore the impact of college preview camps on parental hope and adjustment, how parental hope influences student outcomes and belonging, and the development of interventions specifically targeting parental concerns during the transition process. By pursuing these research directions, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how hope and belonging interact in pre-college experiences and their long-term effects on student success, ultimately leading to more effective interventions and support systems for students transitioning to higher education

Limitations

As previously stated, collected as part of a larger program evaluation our data and findings are bound to time, place, and the people that experienced this inaugural moment of the college preview camp at our study site. While we worked to gather data and insights our population size provided low statistical power, given this, other methods like focus groups would have been preferable. The impact variable of belonging is particularly contextual, even day to day. It is like feelings or emotions, is difficult to measure, what was felt, or perceived today, could change tomorrow. Further long-term outcomes were not considered for this study; hence we are unaware if the feelings that campers experienced while at camp, or the perceptions parents saw a month after camp were lasting. Other challenges included study equipment, where students' own technology would have been preferred to the IPADs we provided, scheduling, and time limitations like many studies provided some concerns as at times. With deep respect and

consideration we mention our studies co-researchers and their lived experience of intellectual disability while their contribution was very impactful, as other researchers have mentioned working with Photovoice takes training and time, for our participants we would have preferred much more time as it would have allowed our participant-coresearchers greater opportunity to explore not only the concepts of photovoice, but preferred technology, exploration and development of an initial research questions and expanded power and involvement. This has more to do with lead time, planning and execution than it does with disability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation underscores the critical importance of fostering a sense of belonging for students with IDD in higher education settings. By integrating student experiences, survey data, and parental perceptions this research highlights the need for inclusive practices like college preview camps to support the career and college readiness of students. Though case limited, the findings contribute to the program and add the voices of students with IDD to the academic discourse surrounding constructs of belonging, career readiness, pre-college experiences, and, perhaps, even hope.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Outcome Letter



Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Annual Check-In Form

Date: April 05, 2024

IRB#: 16042

Principal Investigator:

Kerry N Schubert-Frank

Status Report Due: 03/31/2025

Approval Date: 04/05/2024

Expedited Category: 6 & 7

Study Title: Pathways of Adventure: Understanding Residential College Preview Camps and the Career and College Readiness of Students with Disabilities - A Mixed Methods Design using Photovoice.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and approved your annual check-in form. To view the documents approved for this study, open the study from the *My Studies* option, and click on either "Study Application," "Informed Consent," or "Other Study Documents" for a list of approved documents.

You are reminded that, as principal investigator of this research, it is still your responsibility to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Obtain informed consent and research privacy authorization using the currently approved, stamped forms and retain all original, signed forms, if applicable.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications.
- Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related, per HRPP SOP 407.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- **Submit an annual status report to the IRB to provide the study/recruitment status and report all harms and deviations that may have occurred.**
- **Submit a final closure report at the completion of the project.**

You will receive notification approximately 60 days prior to the status report due-date noted above. You are responsible for submitting check-in forms in a timely fashion in order to maintain continued IRB approval.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

Graduate Student as Principal Investigator

**University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus
Office of Human Research Participant Protection
Graduate Student as Principal Investigator**

Title of the IRB Submission: Pathways of Adventure

Name of the Graduate Student who is the Principal Investigator: Kerry Frank

Graduate Student's Degree Program: _____ Masters ☒ Doctoral

Name of the Faculty Advisor overseeing the research: Kendra Williams-Diehm

Submitting this document confirms that the graduate student is qualified to conduct independent research based on the following credentials. Check all that apply:

- ☒ has completed a graduate research methods course
- ☒ has completed the training in Responsible Conduct of Research
- ☒ has experience as an independent or closely supervised research team member. Describe below and include the name of the researcher who supervised your activities.
- Student is currently PI on an independent study; student has participated in other studies.
- _____ Other—describe below
-

IRB NUMBER: 16042
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/14/2023



On this date 06.07/11, the graduate student and faculty advisor have **reviewed and discussed** the IRB submissions materials and have determined that the scope, anticipated risks and benefits, and methodology are appropriate for this research.

Please indicate which documents were reviewed by the graduate student with the faculty advisor. Check all that apply:

- ☒ Online IRB Application
- ☒ Recruitment Document(s)
- ☒ Consent Document(s)
- ☒ Debrief Document (if applicable)
- ☒ Data Collection Document(s)
- _____ Referral List for Studies with Psychological Risks (if applicable)
- _____ Student as Principal Investigator Form

GRADUATE STUDENT'S ASSURANCE

By my signature as a student principal investigator on this application, I assure that:

If I am using IRB-provided document templates, I have checked the IRB website to ensure that I am using the most up-to-date document templates.

I have met with my faculty advisor, discussed the research design and the IRB submission documents, and have received their permission to submit this application to the IRB.

I will meet with my faculty advisor regularly to monitor study progress.

I will monitor the data collection process to assure that I do not over-enroll participants and that the compensation is paid appropriately (if applicable).

I will promptly report unanticipated problems or protocol deviations to my faculty advisor and the OU-NC IRB. I will also adhere to all requirements for submitting protocol deviations, modifications, continuing review, and study closures.

I will work with the OU-NC IRB to close the study or change my researcher status once the research is complete or I leave the university, whichever comes first.

Student PI Signature



Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

06/07/2023

FACULTY SPONSOR'S ASSURANCE

By my signature as sponsor on this research application, I certify that the graduate student is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this study following the research protocol. Additionally,

I have met with the graduate student, discussed the research design and the IRB submission documents, and have given them permission to submit this application to the IRB.

I will meet with this graduate student regularly to monitor study progress.

I will oversee the data collection process to assure that the graduate student does not over-enroll participants and that the compensation is paid appropriately (if applicable).

I will make sure the graduate student promptly reports unanticipated problems and protocol deviations and adheres to all requirements for submitting protocol deviations, modifications, and continuing reviews.

If I am unavailable, e.g., sabbatical leave, vacation, or resignation, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence, and I will advise the OU-NC IRB of such changes.

If the graduate student leaves the university, I will work with the OU-NC IRB to close the study or change my researcher status to continue data collection or analysis.

Faculty Sponsor Signature



Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

6/7/2023

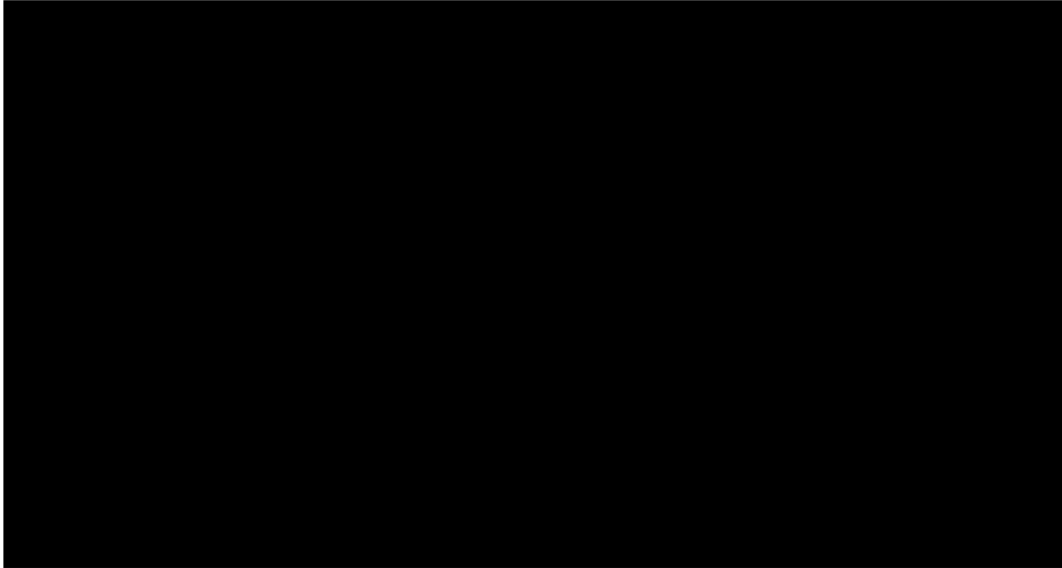
Revised November 2021

APPENDIX C

College Preview Camp Application

6/6/23, 9:34 AM

Qualtrics Survey Software



Application for Admission

Thank you for your interest in the ██████████ Summer Camp. We are very excited to offer this program in conjunction with the ██████████ or Rehabilitation Services. The ██████████ serves high school students with a documented intellectual (ID) or developmental disability (DD) who seek to enhance their independent living, academic, career development, and social skills while learning about the opportunity of college after high school graduation. The ██████████ program serves students who are approximately 15-19 years old, who have completed their first year in high school but have not graduated. This program is affiliated with the ██████████ Education

We will admit up to 16 students (8 male, 8 female) for the inaugural ██████████ Summer Camp. The total cost for camp is \$925 and covers everything. Individuals who are residents of ██████████ or DRS services may attend camp for FREE. (Cost paid through ██████████) Non-resident students must pay the \$925 to attend camp.

In order to be sure that the ██████████ Summer Camp is a good match for students, we require an application packet be completed for each student. Upon entering, it is



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expected that students will demonstrate the following minimal requirements:

- *A high school student between the ages of 15-19*
- *Independence in personal hygiene and bathing activities*
- *Basic functional reading ability*
- *Basic functional math ability*
- *Ability to eat independently*
- *No severe behavior or emotional concerns*
- *Can handle and adapt to change; is not overly stressed with change*
- *Potential to be successful in competitive employment situations*

This is a full three-day camp experience where students will focus on pre-employment transition skills from the areas of 1) career exploration, 2) work-based readiness, 3) post-secondary education opportunities, 4) self-determination, and 5) independent living. Upon completion of the program, students will leave with a complete transition assessment battery and suggested goals to address while in high school to meet their articulated post-school plans.

Note: Because of space limitations, not all applicants who complete the application and meet the "criteria for admission" will be granted admission. We will admit qualified students on a first-come, first-served basis, giving priority [REDACTED] residents.

Please email s [REDACTED]

Application Screening Process

An Application Screening Committee will review applications on a rolling basis until all camp spots are filled. You will be notified by email regarding the receipt and completion of the [REDACTED] application and if you are selected to attend the camp.

Note: Only 16 students will be accepted Summer 2023 (8 males, 8 females).

Selection will be based on the following criteria:

- Applicants must be between the ages of 15-19, having completed at least 1 year of high school but not graduating.



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Approved on 6/1/2023

- The applicant must have an intellectual (cognitive) and/or developmental disability and qualify for special education services under IDEA
- The applicant must have sufficient emotional and independent stability to participate in all aspects of [REDACTED]
- The applicant should be able to sit through 60-minute hands on transition activity and function independently in campus settings (e.g., class, work settings, dorms).
- The applicant must demonstrate the ability to accept responsibility for his/her actions and maintain respect for him/herself and others.
- The applicant must have no history of disruptive or aggressive behaviors. **Note: Sooner Works does not have the personnel necessary to manage behavioral issues.**
- The applicant must have the potential to successfully achieve competitive employment and a desire to live as independently as possible. .

Phases of Application Process

1. Applications open March 21st to resident [REDACTED]
2. Applications open April 11th to non-resident applicants (out-of-state)
3. Admission granted on a rolling, first-come, first-served and qualified basis
4. Camp fees collected for non-resident applicants by [REDACTED]
5. Camp begins on [REDACTED]

Please complete all sections of this application. All information is confidential and will not be shared with any outside agencies unless a written agreement is provided by those filling out the application. Information will not be returned or duplicated for any purpose. The application is estimated to take 30 minutes to complete and may be saved and completed at different times.



The total, all inclusive, amount of camp [REDACTED] housing, meals, camp materials, camp goodies (bag, t-shirt, water bottle, etc), and field trips. Additional money is not needed and campers will have limited time to spend additional money.



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increased staff to student ratio of 6:1. All camp counselors will be screened, background checked, and specifically chosen.

These amounts are based upon standard summer housing and food costs.

Total per student cost:

For in-state students will pay the per student cost. Meaning you can go to camp FOR FREE.

I have read the costs of camp, and agree it will be our financial responsibility to cover those costs if living out-of-state.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐

Student Information

Last Name

First Name

Nickname (if does not go by given name)

Legal Sex

☐ Female

☐ Male



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Gender Identity

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Genderqueer/Non-binary
- ☐ Another gender non listed
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Home Phone

Student's Cell Phone Number

Street Address

Birthday (MO/DAY/YEAR)

City

State

Zip Code

Student Email Address



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Student Age

- ☐ 15
- ☐ 16
- ☐ 17
- ☐ 18
- ☐ 19
- ☐ other

Current Grade (for 2023-2024 school year)

- ☐ 10th Grade
- ☐ 11th Grade
- ☐ 12th Grade
- ☐ Already completed 12th grade, still in high school

Student receives support or services from: (please check those that apply)

Please Check Those That Apply

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Supplemental Security Income | ☐ |
| Division of Developmental Disabilities | ☐ |
| Medical Assistance | ☐ |
| Social Security Disability Insurance Division | ☐ |
| Vocational Rehabilitation-DRS | ☐ |
| Other | ☐ |

Family Information

Student lives with:

- ☐ Both Parents



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- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Guardian(s)
- ☐ Other

Mother/Guardians Information

Last Name

First Name

Home Address (if different from student)

City, State, Zip Code

Cell Phone

Work Phone

Email Address

Father/Guardian Information

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Last Name

First Name

Home Address (if different from student)

City, State, Zip Code

Cell Phone

Work Phone

Email Address

What work experiences has the student had interest in or enjoy?

Is the student able to stay by themselves for any length of time?



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- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Housing

Do you have any limitations or support needs that require ADA accessibility for housing?

Note: this would include bathroom and shared living spaces. All camp participants stay in an [REDACTED] sharing a room with another camper in the [REDACTED] Summer Camp and a bathroom with two additional campers in the [REDACTED] Camp. All roommates and/or suite mates must be the same gender.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please describe limitations or support needs (if attendant support is needed, [REDACTED] is not responsible).

The [REDACTED] Camp program stays on the [REDACTED] campus and will either walk and/or use public transportation around campus, as well as other activities.

Does the student have any limitations, support needs, or other issues related to using public transportation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please describe limitations, support needs, or other issues related to using public transportation.

http://



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transportation.



Medical History

Please give a brief description of the student's medical history including any disability diagnoses that you may have:

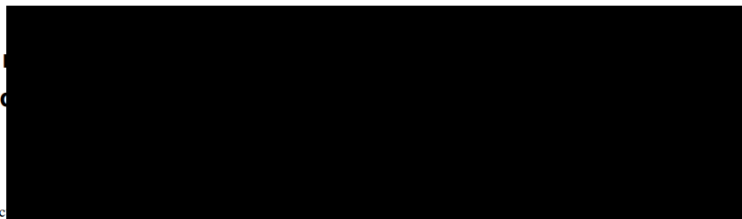


Please list any significant medical or physical conditions, including severe allergies, which may affect the student's participation in classroom, social, or recreational activities on campus:



Please list any current medications and indicate for what purpose the medications are taken:

Note: If the applicant is a minor, the parent/guardian must provide consent, and he/she release all medical information.



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medication will then be disbursed following doctors' directions. Campers may not keep individual medication while at camp.



Is the student independent in self-care such as toileting and basic hygiene?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

List limitations in self-care.

Note: If not, the applicant will need to arrange for personal assistance services in order to attend the Sooner Works program. This is not included in any of the



Personal Support Inventory

(to be completed by a family member or guardian)

Please rate the applicant in the following areas. If you are unsure about a skill, please indicate by selecting the "?" box.

Independent Living Skills



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	Requires complete assistance	Needs moderate assistance	Needs some assistance	Needs minimal assistance	Completely independent
Negotiating/finding way around campus and community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ordering from a restaurant, cafe, or store	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Caring for personal hygiene and grooming needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cleaning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Managing personal belongings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of good judgment skills in an emergency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Coping well with stress and anxiety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adjusting to new situation or environments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please leave any comments on above ratings you feel important.



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Please rate the applicant in the following areas. If you are unsure about a skill, please indicate by selecting the "?" box.

Social Skills and Communication

	Requires complete assistance	Needs moderate assistance	Needs some assistance	Needs minimal assistance	Completely independent ?
Communicating needs in an appropriate manner	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relating to others in a socially appropriate manner	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Handling conflict with another person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Respecting persons in authoritative positions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sending and receiving text messages	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using email	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using social networking sites: Facebook, Twitter, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



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	Requires complete assistance	Needs moderate assistance	Needs some assistance	Needs minimal assistance	Completely independent	?
--	------------------------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------	---

Verbalizing
and/or writing
personal
information:
name, address,
phone number

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Please leave any comments on above ratings you feel important.

Please rate the applicant in the following areas. If you are unsure about a skill, please indicate by selecting the "?" box.

Academic Skills

	Requires complete assistance	Needs moderate assistance	Needs some assistance	Needs minimal assistance	Completely independent	?
--	------------------------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------	---

Understanding
the value of
money

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Handles
money to
make
purchases

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Counting bills,
change

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Using a
computer

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------



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	Requires complete assistance	Needs moderate assistance	Needs some assistance	Needs minimal assistance	Completely independent	?
Navigating the Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Following verbal instructions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Following written directions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Demonstrating motivation to learn and persist on new tasks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Maintaining and following a daily schedule	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please leave any comments on above ratings you feel important.

Does the student utilize assistive technology (e.g., voice recognition, dictation, iPad, etc.) for any daily activity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please list what?



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Additional Comments: Please list/discuss any physical, intellectual, social, or emotional conditions that may need to be considered when planning a postsecondary experience.



VIDEO Upload

Please make a short video of the student explaining why they want to go to [REDACTED]. Also include what "job" they want after finishing high school or college. The video can be easily taken with a smart phone, but should not be longer than 3 minutes.

Upload Video here

Please use this space to provide us with any additional information about yourself that you wish to share.



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Thank you for submitting the

Parent/Guardian Signature

×

SIGN HERE

clear

Applicant Signature

×

SIGN HERE

clear

Note: Appreciation is given to

Powered by Qualtrics



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APPENDIX D

Email Recruitment Document Wording

RECRUITING EMAIL TEMPLATE WORDING:

Greetings,

I am Kerry Frank, M. Ed, I am a doctoral scholar working with [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED]

This summer during [REDACTED] I will conduct research to understand how residential college preview experiences like [REDACTED] Camp impacts the career and college readiness of students with intellectual disabilities (and other developmental disabilities).

You and your child were selected as possible study participants because your child will be attending [REDACTED]. Please feel free to review the study information and consent forms; we will provide paper copies [REDACTED]. For more information please reach out to myself by email at kerryfrank73@ou.edu, or my faculty advisor Kendra - Williams Diehm; klwd@ou.edu

Thank you.



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APPENDIX E

Camp Child Parental Consent

Camp Child Parental Consent

Parental Permission for Child(ren)'s Participation in Research University of Oklahoma

Would you allow your child to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma?

My name is Kerry Frank, M. Ed, ABD; I am a doctoral scholar from the Department of Educational Psychology, and I invite your child to participate in my research entitled "Pathways of Adventure: Understanding Residential College Preview Camps and the Career and College Readiness of Students with Disabilities – A Mixed Methods Design using Photovoice." This research is being conducted at [REDACTED] child was selected as a possible participant because they are a student [REDACTED] study will be conducted.

Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions you may have BEFORE agreeing to participate in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? This research seeks to understand how residential college preview experiences [REDACTED] impact the career and college readiness of students with intellectual disabilities (and other developmental disabilities). It also seeks to understand the way college preview camps (by way of adventure and belonging) may or may not impact the way students learn, think, or feel about college, and what motivates their future choices. Finally, through a participatory design, this research seeks to ensure that student voices are part of the existing research base which guides and informs future research and program-based decisions.

How many participants will be in this research? About 35 people will take part in this research.

What will my child be asked to do? If you agree for your child to participate, if your child participates in the camp, they will be given up to four simple paper and pencil surveys. At the beginning of the camp, I will read the surveys to your child, and they can use a pen or pencil to mark their responses. This will take approximately 45 minutes in total.

During the camp, we will use a research method called Photovoice, which allows students to become researchers and share their input by taking photos using iPads in response to simple prompts. Every evening, we will gather as a group during reflection time to look at the photos together and discuss our thoughts. We will have three in-person reflections and one final reflection session online via Zoom after the camp ends. During the final reflection, we will decide as a group how to present what we have learned together and if there is any message the group would like to convey to the world through their art. Depending on what the students decide to do as part of this final project, student work, including photos could be shared publicly; we will request any additional consents that are needed or required at that time. Your student does not have to participate in the final project to participate in this research.

How long will this take? Your child's participation will last for the duration of camp, after camp they will be asked to participate in the final focus group via ZOOM which will take about an hour. The final project will be decided during our last reflection on Zoom, there could be additional time devoted based upon student interest; should students wish to work together on the final project, the amount of time will be aligned to the groups' availability, and the mode they choose to present, all students regardless of location will have activates they can choose to participate in as part of the final project which match their availability.



What are the risks and benefits if my child participates? As with any experience, students could feel happy or sad during group reflections, they may or may not like the photovoice activity.

To reduce these risks all group discussions will be facilitated by the primary researcher who has extensive experience, training, and education working with students with disabilities, and a background in vocational counseling, educational counseling, and special education.

There will be a second doctoral student present during all research-based activities, also has broad experience in working with students with disabilities.

Any student who becomes upset will be provided with support, and/or the opportunity to leave, or discontinue participation in research at any time having the full support of the both the researcher, and the secondary observer.

There are no tangible benefits to participants.

Focus group participation: Participation in a group discussion includes the risk that others may share your child's statements with people who were not involved in the discussion. To minimize the risk of identifying your child, we will remind everyone that what is said here is confidential and should not be shared with anyone else.

Audio or video recorded data collection: There is a risk of accidental data release if we collect your child's data using audio and video recordings. If this occurred, your child's identity and statements your child made would become known to people who are not on the research team. To minimize this risk, the researchers will transfer data to, and store your child's data on, a secure platform approved by the University's Information Technology Office.

Data collected online or by a device and transmitted electronically: Your child will be asked to participate in online Zoom session as part of this research. The organization hosting the data collection platform has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your child's information confidential. There is a risk that the external organization, which is not part of the research team, may gain access to, or retain your child's data or IP address which could be used to re-identify your child. No assurance can be made as to their use of the data your child provides for purposes other than this research.

Will your child be compensated for participating? Your child is not reimbursed for participation in this research.

Who will see your child's information? There will be no information in research reports that will make it possible to identify your child without your permission. Research records will be stored securely, and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records.

Does your child have to participate? No. If your child does not participate, they will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If your child decides to participate, they don't have to answer any questions and can stop participating at any time.

Will my child's identity be anonymous or confidential? Your child's name will not be retained or linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified.

Please check all the options that you agree to:

I agree for data records to include my child's identifiable information. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to be quoted directly, without the use of my child's name. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to have my child's name reported with quoted material. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Revised June 2022



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I agree for my research to be archived for scholarly and public access. ☐ Yes ☐ No

What will happen to my data in the future?

We might share your child's de-identified data with other researchers or use it in future research without obtaining additional permission from you.

Will my records be accessed? If you approve, your child's confidential records will be used as data for this research. The records that will be used include (camp application, demographics). These records will be used to help us understand some of the similarities and differences that happen within the participant group. For example, students who are live in rural locations may have less experience with public transportation than those who live in the city. This is a good representation of differences that could occur that would impact career and college readiness (transportation).

I agree for my child's records to be accessed and used for research purposes. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Audio Recording of Research Activities To assist with accurate recording of your child's responses, during reflection time, or as part of a photovoice activity there may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty – If you do not agree to audio-recording, you child cannot participate in this research.

I consent to audio recording my child. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Video Recording of Research Activities To assist with accurate recording of your child's responses during reflection time, or as part of a photovoice activity may be recorded on a video recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording.

Please select one of the following options:

I consent to video recording my child ☐ Yes ☐ No

Photographing of Research Participants/Activities To preserve an image related to the research, photographs may be taken of participants. You have the right to refuse to allow photographs to be taken without penalty. – If you do not agree to photography, you child cannot participate in this research.

Please select one of the following options:

I consent to photographs of my child. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Your child's photographs or audio or video records may be used in university research reports unless you tell me not to do this.

Will I or my child be contacted again? The researcher might contact you or your child to gather additional data or recruit you for new research.

I give my permission for the researcher to contact me or my child again. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Who do I contact with questions, concerns, or complaints? If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research or your child has experienced a research-related injury, contact me Kerry Frank at kerryfrank73@ou.edu, or 405-856-4483, or my principal advisor Dr Kendra – William's Diehm at klwd@ou.edu, 405 - 325-5848

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your child's rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) or if you cannot reach the researcher(s).



You will be given a copy of this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I agree to participate in this research.

Parent's Signature	Print Name	Date
Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent	Print Name	Date
Name(s) of Children		



APPENDIX F

Child Assent to Participate in Research

Child Assent to Participate in Research University of Oklahoma

I am doing research to learn about the experience of students like you that are attending [redacted] want to learn about the way your experience at camp, may or may not help you to learn, think, or feel differently about school, college, work, your relationship with yourself, and others. I am also interested adventure and belonging.

I asked your parents if you could be in the research. They said it would be ok if you wanted to do this. If you tell me that you want to be in the research, I am going to ask you to complete some surveys, you will have a chance to take pictures of things that may represent a feeling, thought, or idea using IPADs. We will also talk together as a group, and perhaps individually to understand what you think about the research.

At the end we will decide how we want to share what we learned together as part of a project. I may use what you tell me, your photos, audio, and videos in the research report. I may also use your [redacted]

These things might happen during the research: You may have good or bad feelings. You may learn new things, or feel differently about school, college, work, your relationship with yourself, or others. You will get to explore and make choices each step of the way.

If you decide to be in my research and then change your mind, just tell me. We can stop at any time, and I won't get upset with you.

If you feel angry, upset, or unhappy while you talk to me, we can stop for a moment. Then you can decide if you want to start again. If you are really upset, I would ask your parent, or Camp Counselor to help you until you feel better.

You don't have to do this if you don't want to. No one will be mad or upset with you if you don't want to be in my research. If you do not want to be in the research or do not want me to use your photos, audio, or videos in my reports, just tell me that now.

If you have questions, please ask them now.

I agree to be in this research.

Name of Child

Signature of Child

Date

Name of Parent Providing Permission

Signature of Person Conducting Assent Discussion

I have explained the research to _____
(child's name) in language s/he can understand, and s/he has agreed to be in the research.



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Name of Researcher conducting Assent discussion

Researcher Signature

Date



IRB NUMBER: 16042
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/14/2023

APPENDIX G

Parent Consent

Signed Consent to Participate in Research University of Oklahoma

Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma?

I am Kerry Frank from the Department of Educational Psychology, and I invite you to participate in my research entitled, "Pathways of Adventure: Understanding Residential College Preview Camps and the Career and College Readiness of Students with Disabilities – A Mixed Methods Design using Photovoice." This research is being conducted at The University of Oklahoma - Norman. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the parent, or guardian of a child participating in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and your reflections about your child's experience at camp will help us understand more about the way the camp impacts individuals with intellectual disabilities and the people who work with them. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this research.

Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions you may have BEFORE agreeing to participate in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? This research seeks to understand how residential college preview experiences like [REDACTED] impact the career and college readiness of students with intellectual disabilities (and other developmental disabilities). It also seeks to understand the way college preview camps (by way of adventure and belonging) may or may not impact the way students learn, think, or feel about college, and what motivates their future choices. Finally, through a participatory design, this research seeks to ensure that student voices are part of the existing research base which guides and informs future research and program-based decisions.

How many participants will be in this research? About approximately 16 students, 20 parents, and 3-6 counselors will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will be emailed a brief survey at the end of camp which describes your perceptions of the camps impact on your child and have an opportunity to share any additional reflections you may have about your own experience of camp.

How long will this take? Your participation will take approximately 15 minutes.

What are the risks and benefits if I participate? There are no risks and no benefits from being in this research.

Data collected online or by a device and transmitted electronically: You will be asked to complete an online survey as part of this research. The organization hosting the data collection platform has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. There is a risk that the external organization, which is not part of the research team, may gain access to or retain your data or your IP address which could be used to re-identify you. No assurance can be made about their use of the data you provide for purposes other than this research.



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Will I be compensated for participating? You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research.

Who will see my information? There will be no information in research reports that will make it possible to identify you without your permission.

Research records will be stored securely, and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records.

You have the right to access the research data that has been collected about you as a part of this research. However, you may not access this information until the entire research has finished and you consent to this temporary restriction.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any questions and can stop participating at any time.

Will my identity be anonymous or confidential? Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses. Only de-identified data will be used. Please check all the options that you agree to:

I agree to be quoted directly, without the use of my name. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree for my research to be archived for scholarly and public access.

☐ Yes ☐ No

What will happen to my data in the future?

We might share your de-identified data with other researchers or use it in future research without obtaining additional consent from you.

Will I be contacted again? The researcher might contact you to gather additional data or recruit you for new research.

I give my permission for the researcher to contact me in the future. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Who do I contact with questions, concerns, or complaints? If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at contact me Kerry Frank at kerryfrank73@ou.edu, or 405-856-4483, or my principal advisor Dr Kendra – William's Diehm at klwd@ou.edu , 405 - 325-5848

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) or if you cannot reach the researcher(s).

You will be given a copy of this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature



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IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/14/2022

Print Name

Date

Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent



IRB NUMBER: 16042
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/14/2023

APPENDIX H

Photovoice Directions and Instructions, w Paper Prompts

Photovoice Directions and Introduction

Welcome! You are now participant researchers working with me to answer questions about the way your camp experience may make you learn, think, or feel differently about college , post-secondary training, work and your future plans. Each day you will use your IPADs to take a photograph of something related to the prompts below.

We will practice together. If you get stuck, don't worry. We will work together during our reflection time.

What is reflection? We will use reflection time as a group to talk. Each person will have a chance to present their picture and state why they took it and what it meant to them. Then as a group we will look to see what we see in each of the pictures, and what they might mean to us as a group.

We will have three reflection times on campus, and one after camp on a Zoom. During the final Zoom, we will talk about a final project.

Our final project will talk about how we present what we found out about our College Preview and yourself, each other, and any knowledge you may have formed, or what you want to share if anything.



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Last Name

Grade

Age

Day 1, Tuesday:

Adventure - Take a photo, or photos that represent a feeling of adventure during your college preview experience. It could be a picture of an activity, a place, or something that made you step out of your comfort zone, learn something new, or grow. Write a sentence or two explaining why this photo represents adventure to you.

Add a picture below:

Say something about your picture and what it means to you:



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Day 2, Wednesday:

Belongingness - Capture a moment, or moment that made you feel a sense of belonging during the college preview camp. It could be a photo of a group activity, a supportive friend, or a place where you felt a sense of inclusion. Write a sentence, or two to tell us what is happening in your picture and why this photo reflects a sense of belongingness.

Add a picture below:

Say something about your picture and what it means to you:



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Day 3, Thursday:

What Motivates Me - Take, or share a picture of something that represents what you think about when making a choice about college. Write a few words to describe what is happening in your photo, and why it represents what motivates you about your future.

Add a picture below:

Say something about your picture and what it means to you:



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Appendix I

Pre-Post Belonginess Survey

1st Day of Camp Pre-Assessment / Belonginess

Adapted Scale of Belonging for ██████████ Camp
(Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002)

Circle the answer that shows how much you agree with the following statements.

- Big NO! means you disagree a lot.
- Little no means you somewhat disagree.
- Little yes means you somewhat agree.
- Big YES! means you agree a lot

1.	I feel that I will be comfortable at ██████████ Camp.	NO!	no	yes	YES!
2.	I feel that I am a part of ██████████ Camp.	NO!	no	yes	YES!
3.	I am committed to ██████████ Camp.	NO!	no	yes	YES!
4.	I feel that I will be supported to ██████████	NO!	no	yes	Yes!
5.	I feel that I will be accepted at ██████████	NO!	no	yes	Yes!

Post Camp Assessment / Belonginess

Adapted Scale of Belonging for ██████████ Camp
(Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002)

Circle the answer that shows how much you agree with the following statements.

- Big NO! means you disagree a lot.
- Little no means you somewhat disagree.
- Little yes means you somewhat agree.
- Big YES! means you agree a lot

1.	I felt comfortable at ██████████ Camp.	NO!	no	yes	YES!
2.	I felt I was a part of ██████████ Camp.	NO!	no	yes	YES!
3.	I felt committed to ██████████ Camp.	NO!	no	yes	YES!
4.	I felt supported to ██████████	NO!	no	yes	Yes!
5.	I felt accepted at ██████████	NO!	no	yes	Yes

APPENDIX J

Career Readiness Survey

Last Name _____ Grade _____ Age _____

1

Pre-Post
COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS
Middle & High School Student Version

1. What I learn in school will help me prepare for college.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I set goals that will help me get to college.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I am confident that I will go to college.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I am confident that I will get the job I want.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. I am aware of careers that match my interests.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Adapted From: Community and Youth Collaborative Institute School Experience Surveys - Motivation / Confidence



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Last Name _____ Grade _____ Age _____

2

6. I am taking courses now that are needed to go to college.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. I believe I can successfully transition to college after high school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Thank you



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IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/14/202

2

APPENDIX K

Parent Survey

6/6/23, 8:58 PM

Qualtrics Survey Software

Default Question Block

Parents Name (Last, First)

Students Name (Last, First)

Based upon your perception, how much did the camp activities promote a sense of adventure and exploration for your child?

None at all

A little

A moderate amount

A lot

A great deal

Based upon your perception, how much did the camp actives promote a sense of belonging and inclusion for your child?

None at all

A little

A moderate amount

A lot

A great deal

Based upon your perception, how much did the camp foster your child's ability to see themselves in college?

None at all



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- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

Before camp, how often did you hear your child discussing topics related to their future?

- Never
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Daily

Since leaving camp, how often have you heard your child discussing topics related to their future?

- Never
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Daily

How effective do you believe camp was at supporting your child in making new friends?

- Not effective at all
- Slightly effective
- Moderately effective
- Very effective
- Extremely effective

How effective do you believe camp was at preparing your child to take on new challenges?

- Not effective at all
- Slightly effective
- Moderately effective



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Very effective

Extremely effective

How effective do you believe the camp was at supporting your child's ability to speak up for themselves?

Not effective at all

Slightly effective

Moderately effective

Very effective

Extremely effective

What did it mean to you as a parent seeing your child participate in a college preview camp?

Overall, how well do you feel the camp addressed the unique needs and abilities your child? Please share any specific examples or suggestions for improvement.

Would you recommend this camp to other students with similar needs? Why or why not?

Powered by Qualtrics



IRB NUMBER: 16042
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APPENDIX L

SUMMER CAMP SCHEDULE				
	TUES 6/20	WED 6/21	THURS 6/22	FRI 6/23
7:00		WAKE UP	WAKE UP	WAKE UP
7:30		BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST
8:30		ROOM CHECKS	ROOM CHECKS	ROOM CHECKS
9:00		SESSION #1	SESSION #3	SESSION #5
11:45		LUNCH	LUNCH	CAMP AWARDS: 11AM
1:00	CHECK IN: 2:30 - 4PM	SESSION #2	SESSION #4	OPTIONAL LUNCH
3:00	OPENING MEETINGS: 4-5PM	AFTERNOON RECREATION	AFTERNOON RECREATION	DEPARTURES
5:30	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	
6:45	EVENING RECREATION	EVENING RECREATION	EVENING RECREATION	
9:00	REFLECTION TIME	REFLECTION TIME	REFLECTION TIME	
10:00	RETURN TO DORM	RETURN TO DORM	RETURN TO DORM	