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VOCATIONAL NEEDS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES: A
PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

by

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B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2006

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science

Department of Rehabilitation Counseling
in the Graduate School
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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Approved by:

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CHAPTER 1

CHOICE OR MANDATE?

Throughout history, the rights of individuals with disabilities were not freely given and had to be fought for. It wasn't until around the 1960s that things started to change for the better, as the movement for Deinstitutionalization, the release of institutionalized individuals from institutional care (as in a psychiatric hospital) to care in the community started to take place (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). While the changes that started to happen made things better than they were, there still needed to be more reform put in place before their rights started to match up to the rights individuals without disabilities had. It wasn't until 1990 that the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications (National Network Information, Guidance, & Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act, 2020).

Since the ADA first came into law, there have been many revisions and new laws that have come into play both federally and on a state level. Two current laws are the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Employment First Initiative (EFI). WIOA is landmark legislation that is designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce

system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers (Employment & Training Administration [ETA], n.d.). Employment First, means that employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly funded systems (Association of People Supporting Employment First [APSE], n.d.).

While such legislation such as WIOA and EFI, has set the course for what the government feels is the best plan for the vocational needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities, there are still many considerations that have not been made. Segregated employment (i.e. sheltered workshops) should never be the first option, but there are still considerations that need to be made. Some such considerations are the individuals' definition of what is their quality of life as well as how the geographic location of an individual will affect the ability to gain competitive employment (Work in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting and for which the client is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled) (Law Insider, 2013-2020). Many scholars and legislators feel that having individuals with intellectual disabilities work in a sheltered workshop is menial work, but just like all other aspects of their lives, there is no one plan that satisfies the needs of every person.

The purpose of this paper is to examine a series of journal articles that discuss various aspects of Vocational Topics for adults with intellectual disabilities. I hope to show that even though there are a great deal of individuals who would prefer or like to work in community integrated employment, there are also those that would not choose this for themselves. So,

pushing everyone to one option is not a correct solution for helping all individuals with intellectual disabilities with their employment needs. Taking on a Person-Centered Plan (PCP), a non-authoritative approach that allows clients to take more of a lead in discussions so that, in the process, they will discover their own solutions (Psychology Today, 2020), would be beneficial. Addressing supports needed to fulfill the requirements of the laws and taking the struggles of living in a rural area are two such aspects that need to be a part of the planning process.

Changes to integrate Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities are important, but just as in other aspects of their lives, changes typically prove to be more difficult for them than in the population of people who do not have cognitive impairments. I fear that by forcing sheltered workshops to close, they will be doing more than taking away work at subminimum wage. Forcing individuals, that may not be appropriate or desire to have competitive employment as their goal, from what is considered to be a “segregated environment” (that they are comfortable in) would just in turn segregate them in their own homes. This would also make the potential to set up the individuals that could succeed in competitive employment for failure due to the lack of supports needed to make the employment successful.

CHAPTER 2

INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT VS. SHELTERED WORKSHOPS

People with intellectual disabilities should be offered the same opportunities as the general population, regardless of their disability. Instead of having a one plan fits all approach, looking at the individual instead of the disability as a whole would help to enhance the quality of their lives. Even if the majority would choose to work, there is still a minority that would choose not to work. More consideration should be taken into the choices of the people with ID to allow them to be the author of their own story.

In order to show the importance of individual choice, I wanted to show current information for the State of Illinois for both preference over sheltered workshops and preference for integrated employment. The National Core Indicators™ (NCI™) program is a voluntary effort by state developmental disability agencies to track their performance using a standardized set of consumer and family/guardian surveys with nationally validated measures. The effort is coordinated by the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) and the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) (National Core Indicators [NCI], 2018).

NCI has developed more than 100 standard performance measures (or ‘indicators’) that states use to assess the outcomes of services for individuals and families, including outcomes in the areas of employment, rights, service planning, community inclusion, choice, health, and safety. In 2017-18 a total of 45 states, the District of Columbia and 22 sub-state entities participated in NCI. Not all states participate in the Adult In-Person Survey every year. Thirty-five (35) states and the District of Columbia administered the Adult In-Person Survey in 2017-18 and submitted valid samples for analysis. Together, they collected survey responses and

information from a total of 25,671 individuals (NCI, 2018).

First, let’s look at some data for the State of IL from the most recent report put out by NCI regarding employment for people with intellectual disabilities. In review of the data concerning employment that has been provided by the NCI, the results appear to be pretty consistent from the Illinois report to the reports provided by the whole country (NCI, 2018).

Table 1.
NCI Has paid community job.

Table 29. Has paid community job

Employment categories changed in 2017-18; therefore, results should not be compared to previous years. Information may have been obtained through state records.

	Yes	N
IL▼	12%	357
NCI	18%	23,232

Note. Table 29 NCI, 2018.

Table 2.
NCI Type of paid community job.

Table 30. Type of paid community job

Employment categories changed in 2017-18; therefore, results should not be compared to previous years. Information may have been obtained through state records. Includes data from states with 25% or more missing or “don’t know” data.

	Individual Job With Publicly Funded Supports	Individual Job Without Publicly Funded Supports	Individual Job N	Group Job With or Without Publicly Funded Supports	Group Job N	Community Job in a Business that Primarily Hires People With Disabilities	Community Job N
IL	24%	51%	41	23%	43	15%	41
NCI	32%	33%	3,887	27%	4,150	16%	4,097

Note. Table 30 NCI, 2018.

Table 3.

NCI Most Common types of jobs among those with a paid community job (information may have been obtained through state records).

Table 34. Most common types of jobs among those with a paid community job (information may have been obtained through state records)

Employment categories changed in 2017-18; therefore, results should not be compared to previous years. Information may have been obtained through state records.

	Cleaning	Retail Job	Food preparation	Assembly	N
IL	47%	14%	28%	16%	43
NCI	30%	21%	20%	9%	4,283

Note. Table 34 in NCI, 2018.

Table 4.

NCI Employment goals and other daily activities.

Table 35. Employment goals and other daily activities

		Yes	N
Does not have paid community job, and would like a job in the community ⁹	IL	43%	204
	NCI	45%	9,941
Has community employment as a goal in their service plan (<i>information may have been obtained through state records</i>)	IL ▼	16%	359
	NCI	29%	23,118
Takes classes, training or does something to get a job or do better at current job	IL	26%	262
	NCI	20%	16,666
Attends a day program or workshop	IL ▲	79%	270
	NCI	57%	17,256
Volunteers	IL	31%	263
	NCI	31%	16,815

⁹ *Employment categories changed in 2017-18; therefore, results should not be compared to previous years. Categories are not mutually exclusive.*

Note. Table 35 in NCI, 2018.

As McDaniels (2016) suggested, consumers of employment services systems who have significant disabilities frequently report that no employment choices, or no meaningful choices, are made available to them. Providing consumers with more diverse employment opportunities and promoting vocational choice is not only consistent with current legislation, it is necessary for effective service provision and promotes more successful long-term outcomes for individuals with ID. The question of how to enhance consumer opportunities that result in purposeful and individualized employment remains the crux of the problem (McDaniels, 2016).

State and community systems that support the interests and service needs of people with a disability have a number of characteristics. The first is emphasizing access to services. For example, an individual who is currently receiving a center-based day service wants to move to a job in competitive employment. This individual needs supported employment to be successful. However, the public funds that are supporting the day service cannot be used for supported employment, and there are not alternative funds available. Access to the desired service is blocked because programs are funded, not people. Responsive systems fund people, not programs, by removing funding barriers such as mismatched rates that create financial incentives for one service over another (Wehman, 2011).

According to Wehman (2011), “Funding is a central tool for improving the quality and range of employment service options. While outcome-based funding models are more common in the Vocational Rehabilitation system, there is a need for funding structures in intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) service systems that signal a clear preference for high-quality, cost-effective integrated employment outcomes. In an environment of increasing fiscal demands and limitations, and expansion of self-directed services and individualized budgeting, state IDD systems must engage in rate-setting and funding discussions that are rooted in their priorities and long-term goals.”

Vocational outcomes are generally clustered in a narrowly limited range of positions that are characterized by low pay, low educational and skill requirements, and limited opportunity for career development or advancement. Despite the relatively high availability of such positions, it is critical to ensure that consumers are not limited to a restricted range of positions based simply on job availability, and that efforts are taken to expand employment choices and opportunities through effective employment services (McDaniels, 2016).

Although the reasons for the very low employment rates and particularly the low competitive employment rates among persons with ID are complex and multifaceted, data suggest that aspects of the provision of employment services contribute to the issue. Over the past two decades, researchers have examined various facets of the employment situation for persons with ID, and particularly the relationships between VR and other employment services and various employment outcomes. Among the consistent findings in this research is that persons with ID tend to be employed in a limited range of vocational settings and occupations (McDaniels, 2016).

Unfortunately, employees with ID often do not receive the same employment benefits, amount of assigned work hours, and career advancement opportunities as those without ID (Do inclusive work environments matter?). For example, Blick et al. (2016) reported that employees with ID rarely receive raises unless they coincide with increases in state minimum wage. One possible reason for workplace inequality is that employees with ID often lack opportunities for career advancement, in part due to their status as part-time, low skill employees in the service industry (Blick et al., 2016).

Table 5.

NCI Receives paid time off at paid community job (information may have been obtained through state records).

Table 33. Receives paid time off at paid community job (information may have been obtained through state records)

Employment categories changed in 2017-18; therefore, results should not be compared to previous years. Information may have been obtained through state records. Includes data from states with 25% or more missing or "don't know" data.

	Yes	N
IL	35%	34
NCI	32%	3,402

Note. Table 33 in NCI, 2018.

Although persons with ID receive limited tangible incentives for their participation in the competitive workforce, community-integrated employment yields numerous opportunities for intrinsic rewards. One valuable benefit of community-integrated work is development of social capital, which is typically difficult for individuals with ID to attain (Blick et al., 2016). For instance, workers with ID frequently interact and build rapport with their co-workers and customers without ID. Through building these relationships, workers reported instances of being included in community activities outside of work, such as attending church functions. These affirmations have immense impact on recipients; employees with ID participating in these activities indicated feeling a sense of belongingness (Blick et al., 2016).

Social networks may serve a particularly valuable role when it comes to employment for persons with IDD. Usually, the social networks of persons with IDD are composed primarily of family members and professionals. The majority of people with IDD have very few connections to persons without IDD, and the more significant their disability, the less likely they are to have friendships at all. There is however, potential value even within these limited social networks (Petner- Arrey et al., 2015). According to Petner- Arrey et al. (2015), nearly half of the people who join the social networks of people with IDD were introduced to them by other members of their networks. Employment, therefore, can help persons with IDD to further develop their social networks. For instance, research has found that people with IDD often meet “friends” at work (Petner- Arrey et al., 2015). Even small social networks can increase in size and aid in the development of friendships for individuals with disabilities, and work seems to play a role.

Now that we have looked at integrated employment, let’s take a look at day program/ sheltered workshops. The data for the State of IL from the most recent report put out by NCI regarding day program/ sheltered workshops for people with intellectual disabilities. In review

of the data concerning day programs/ sheltered workshops that has been provided by the NCI, the results appear to be pretty consistent from the Illinois report to the reports provided by the whole country. Although there are not as many variations of questions that have been asked of individuals regarding their preference over day programs/ sheltered workshops that was asked of integrated employment.

Table 6.

NCI Amount of Time Person Wants to Spend at Day Program or Workshop

Table 45. Amount of time wants to spend at day program or workshop s/he attends

	Does Not Want to Spend Time There	More Time	Same Amount of Time	Less Time	N
IL	18%	67%	13%	1%	203
NCI	16%	71%	11%	2%	9,224

Note. Table 45 in NCI, 2018.

Individuals involved in sheltered workshops and adult day care programs may have reported high levels of satisfaction and little interest in changing their situation due to comfort, companionship, and a sense of competency they associate with their daytime activity. Blick et al. (2016), suggested that individuals feel anxious at the prospect of working in the community, which may explain why individuals did not want to leave their current program. This apprehension may stem from previous adverse experiences interacting with persons in the community or from a fear of failure due to a perceived lack of skills or competency (Blick et al., 2016). Moreover, individuals with ID who thrive in sheltered workshops occasionally feel inclined to stay in that restrictive environment so they can maintain their status as a competent worker and role model for their lower functioning peers (Blick et al., 2016).

Table 7.
NCI Friendships

Table 41. Friendships

		Yes	N
Has friends who are not staff or family members	IL	80%	265
	NCI	78%	17,085
Has best friend (<i>may be staff or family</i>)	IL	73%	256
	NCI	70%	16,412
Wants more help to meet or keep in contact with friends	IL	48%	258
	NCI	42%	16,282
Has friends (<i>may be staff or family</i>) and can see them when s/he wants	IL	79%	233
	NCI	80%	14,704

Note. Table 41 in NCI, 2018.

Research has indicated that attending adult day care is advantageous over spending time at home or in an institution. For instance, Makharadze et al. (2010) found that individuals who attended an adult day care program demonstrated more advanced language, skills, and reported having more friends than did those who did not participate in adult day care programs.

Moreover, Campbell (2012) observed that individuals involved in adult day care programs valued its proxy as a socialization center and appreciated the sense of safety adult day care programs provided (Blick et al., 2016).

Akkerman et al. (2016), found a significant negative relationship between job stressors (rotating work shifts, work load, excessive responsibility, repetitive tasks, lack of training, daily production, reduced breaks, relationships with supervisor, relationships with coworkers, lack of feedback on performance, absence of rotation at job place) and job satisfaction (in the study called quality of working life), in integrated and sheltered employment, as well as a significant negative correlation between psychological demands (quantitative or qualitative work overload)

and job satisfaction.

IQ has been found to negatively associate with overall job satisfaction, and that those with mild/ borderline intellectual disabilities in sheltered employment reported lower levels of job satisfaction than those with moderate/ severe intellectual disabilities. Apparently, the relationship between variables associated with (dis-)ability and job satisfaction is not straight forward. Different skills and capabilities are possibly related to job satisfaction in different ways, and other variables may moderate or mediate the relationship. Lam and Chan (1988) for instance suggested that persons with lower IQ scores may have preferences that are less well defined, resulting in higher job satisfaction levels. Or that people with higher IQ scores are more likely to compare their job with those of nondisabled workers scores, have higher expectations about it and hence see their sheltered work environment as less desirable, resulting in lower job satisfaction scores (Akkerman et al. 2016).

Studies have attempted to determine which type of setting yields the highest quality of life for individuals with ID but have provided inconsistent evidence. Community-integrated employment correlated with a greater sense of social belonging and empowerment than did sheltered workshops. Furthermore, community-integrated employees reported a greater objective quality of life - specifically in the domains of health, productivity, and emotional well-being - than did those involved in less-inclusive activities. However, in an alternative study, community-integrated employment did not exclusively associate with superior quality of life. These mixed results are possibly due to the heterogeneity of constructs used to quantify quality of life (Blick et al., 2016).

PCP is a multi-component complex intervention which has the potential to impact on a range of different outcomes relevant to an individual's quality of life. However, it is not a

standardized intervention, but an umbrella term which is often used to describe approaches and techniques that share common characteristics. Although these approaches may differ in their practical application, according to the context and purpose for which they are adopted, their underlying aim is the same, and it is generally agreed that the common denominator between the variations of PCP is to support people with ID to build a lifestyle based on choices, preferences, shared power, rights and inclusion (Ratti et al., 2016). Ratti et al. (2016) described five key features of PCP: (a) the person is at the centre, (b) family members and friends are partners in planning, (c) the plan reflects what is important to the person, his/ her capacities and what support he/ she requires, (d) the plan results in actions that are about life, not just services and reflect what is possible and not what is available, (e) the plan results in ongoing listening, learning and further action.

In PCP power is shifted from staff and stakeholders to individuals and their families, setting it apart from traditional approaches such as Individual Personal Planning and Individual Habilitation where individuals are passive recipients of care and professionals make decisions and plans for them. In PCP decision making is driven by the individuals themselves and by those who care about them, with particular emphasis on self-determination, choice and autonomy. It is a crucial aspect of PCP that the person with an ID and his/ her support network play a primary role in the planning process which is driven by the person's skills and abilities rather than their deficits and impairments (Ratti et al., 2016).

Now, let's look at the data for the State of IL from the NCI regarding service planning for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Table 8. NCI Service Coordination

Table 47. Service Coordination

		Yes	N
Has met case manager	IL	94%	257
	NCI	94%	16,705
Case manager asks person what s/he wants	IL	89%	242
	NCI	88%	15,849
Able to contact case manager when s/he wants	IL	88%	232
	NCI	88%	15,374
Staff come and leave when they are supposed to	IL	94%	232
	NCI	92%	14,098
Took part in last service planning meeting, or had the opportunity but chose not to	IL	98%	233
	NCI	98%	14,558
Understood what was talked about at last service planning meeting	IL	88%	219
	NCI	84%	13,651
Last service planning meeting included people respondent wanted to be there	IL	95%	223
	NCI	93%	14,079
Person was able to choose services they get as part of service plan	IL	82%	218
	NCI	79%	13,905

Note. Table 47 in NCI, 2018.

Table 9. NCI Choice and Decision-Making

Table 28. Choice and Decision-Making

		Yes	N
Chose or had some input in choosing where they live (<i>if not living in the family home; proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)	IL	59%	189
	NCI	57%	13,245
Chose or had some input in choosing their housemates or chose to live alone (<i>if not living in the family home; proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)	IL	42%	194
	NCI	43%	13,016
Chose or has input in choosing paid community job (<i>proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)*	IL	92%	36
	NCI	87%	3,847
Chose or had some input in choosing day program or workshop (<i>proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>) ⁹	IL	56%	248
	NCI	56%	11,831
Chose staff or were aware they could request to change staff (<i>proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)	IL	58%	318
	NCI	65%	20,614
Decides or has input in deciding their daily schedule (<i>proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)	IL	84%	350
	NCI	85%	24,029
Decides or has input in deciding how to spend free time (<i>proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)	IL	93%	357
	NCI	92%	24,062
Chooses or has input in choosing what to buy, or has set limits on what to buy with their spending money (<i>proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)	IL	86%	352
	NCI	87%	23,918
Can change case manager/service coordinator if wants to (<i>proxy respondents were allowed for this question</i>)	IL ▼	81%	258
	NCI	89%	21,391

* Note on OR and WI data: OR and WI data on type of community employment captured "no" and "don't know" responses together (NCI states typically collect this information separately); therefore, their data are not comparable to other states and are not included in the NCI Average.

⁹ Analysis of this question changed from previous years; now based on those determined in the Background Information to attend an unpaid community activity, unpaid paid facility activity, or paid facility activity

Note. Table 28 in NCI, 2018.

In order for PCP to be successful, it should not be only frontline staff who adopt it, but the approach should not only frontline staff who adopt it, but the approach should be embraced at

all levels of the organizations providing care, from direct-carers to service planners. In agreement with this notion, there are arguments that PCP can only truly influence outcomes for people with ID if all stakeholders fully embrace it as an integral part of service delivery and fully commit to its implementation; PCP is an evolving and on-going process which has to be substantiated overtime so if it is not supported and adopted as part of the services' culture it will most likely incur the risk of losing effectiveness and eventually fail to have any meaningful impact (Ratti et al., 2016).

Care-givers constitute a major influencing factor on the success of PP and they play a vital role in shaping the lives of people with ID through the quality of support they provide. It was found that individuals with ID regarded staff's instrumental and emotional support as the single most important facilitator of goal attainment. Arguments that individuals with ID do not perceive having a plan as the main cause of change, but in fact responsibility for change, achievements and failure to achieve is attributed to the PCP facilitators who commitment to PCP has been considered the most powerful predictor of successful outcomes for people (Ratti et al., 2016).

There was a study completed on an agency in a metropolitan area in Burlington, Virginia. The agency that was studied, was the last remaining sheltered workshop in the state. The administration decided to go ahead and shut this workshop down as well. This study followed 12 individuals who were participants in this program. Due to the closing of the agency, a person-centered approach was used to develop a community-based model of service for the individuals.

Findings from this study reveal how participants and families navigated the sheltered workshop conversion process. While the initial transition was difficult, most families and

participants were satisfied with the conversion process as long as they could maintain previous social networks and find acceptable employment in the community. Getting to that point involved mixed feelings for many. Conflicting issues emerged as families had different histories, culture, values, philosophies, and expectations of their children and their inclusion in community. There were initial fears by some regarding safety and consistency, exploitation in the community, and loss of friendships, while others welcomed and expected inclusion in the community (Dague, 2012).

Parents expressed fear of a future without the sheltered workshop, “That’s what I’m a little nervous over, after it’s closed. If we don’t have the workshop and we don’t have training for them for a while what are we going to do?” Another stated, “I can’t visualize it. I’m having a terrible time visualizing how this is going to happen”. The parents expressed concern about losing the social connection, community, and sense of place developed over 35 years, “My biggest fear is that they’ll separate these kids. If they get to attend occasional parties it will not be the same as being there every day. They like being together. Eliminating the workshop is eliminating the day-to-day interaction”. Parents expressed hope to maintain that sense of connection, community, and place (Dague, 2012).

Four years after the sheltered workshop closed, the families were revisited and interviewed to get their current perspectives. The four previous families with a long history of sheltered employment, plus four additional families without that long history were interviewed. Differences and some similarities were noted between these two sets of families. Although the long-time families had been resistant and fearful of the workshop closing down and reported regrets, they also reported positive outcomes. The newer set of families reported being pleased with the current services (Dague, 2012).

Despite the longtime family fears, they reported that their daughters and sons were doing well in their new community-based lives. One parent who was resistant to the conversion said, “But as far as (my son) goes, he loves it. He likes his job very, very much”. She reports that her son’s life revolves around his new job and he gets upset if a holiday interferes with his work schedule. She didn’t want to drive back one Sunday after a weekend trip and he said, “No, we’ve got to. I have to work Monday” (Dague, 2012).

CHAPTER 3

NEED FOR PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING

In order to make this review of literature more pertinent in terms of those we support in the State of Illinois, the review of the information found in the National Core Indicators Survey was the most pertinent information I could find. In review of this information, it was able to show that while many individuals would prefer to work in an integrated employment setting, there are still a great number individuals who would not prefer this for themselves and instead would like to remain in sheltered workshops. Another reason that I prefer this survey for an understanding of what individuals in IL prefer with regards to their lives, it also shows how IL is in comparison to the rest of the country. While we were not exactly on target with where the country is, we were pretty close to the averages that they are seeing and, in some cases, surpassed the percentages that were reported nationwide.

I was able to find more information regarding the support of integrated employment than I was on support of sheltered employment. I believe this is the case due to the current shift of laws that have been and are being implemented for individuals with disabilities. Although this is the case, I believe there are very strong points to support both of these as options for individuals when considering a person-centered approach to services.

In review of the literature for integrated employment, there are varying views that can be found to support or negate this idea. Some suggestions were that regardless of satisfaction, money should be the determining factor. There was also information to show that within integrated employment, there tends to be a social factor among these individuals that helps to bridge a gap that they typically miss out on within sheltered employment. There tends to be more socialization by people other than staff or family and in turn gives them more of a sense of

belonging. Also, in reviewing the literature for support of integrated employment, there tends to be a strong focus on the term satisfaction. While most studies agreed that there are not concrete criteria to define satisfaction, they did mainly correlate that individuals were more satisfied with integrated employment. Another correlation that I found in regards to satisfaction, suggested that the IQ scores of individuals was also a determinant with how satisfied they were within their life courses.

On the other side of research, I wanted to show that there are individuals who would choose to continue with sheltered employment. While there is definitely not the amount of studies in place to show the benefits associated with this type of structure for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the few that I did find had some strong points in support. One such study focused on the demands that individuals feel are placed on them as a part of integrated employment. While some would argue that “demands” are a part of the integration, it still adds as a factor that keeps individuals with intellectual disabilities from pursuing this. Although employment is a big reason for the use of sheltered workshops, there are so many more reasons why they are a benefit to individuals. Friendships are developed, a sense of belonging, and the ability to build their skills of daily living are just to name a few.

My main point of my research is to show that neither option is the best option for all individuals with intellectual disabilities. According to the research I presented above, having a person-centered approach takes each individual into account for their own life! Just as the rest of us, being treated as an individual is one of the greatest rights that we can have. No two people are the same in this world so to think clumping individuals with intellectual disabilities under a different guideline is saddening. I agree that there are so many individuals who can and should be engaged in integrated employment. However, many individuals instead limit themselves to

remaining within the walls of sheltered employment. The process behind person-centered planning takes into account the individual as a whole. Evaluations should be done that help to support what the individuals are capable of and what types of supports can make the plan into fruition. Then on the other side, individuals who may not be interested in integrated employment should not feel the only other option available to them is a life sitting at home. There needs to be a balance between the services that individuals are allowed to choose for themselves and the assistance of legally responsible parties.

While laws need to be followed, we must also still advocate for the individuals that are served to ensure they get to be the author of their lives! More research into ways to ensure that this right, that all people should have regardless of disability or lack of, should be given. Another part of this research needs to be how your geographic location affects the ability of these choices for individuals as well. While there are a great number of individuals that are interested in integrated employment, individuals residing in rural areas have a lot less opportunities for them to make their goals happen. Due to a limited amount of jobs being available for everyone, along with a limitation on transportation to another town or area that may have jobs available, employment may sometimes not be an option for everyone. Avenues that may be able to be explored in more metropolitan areas are not feasible for rural areas.

While helping individuals to develop the plan for their lives, thorough consideration needs to be made as to what type of supports are going to be needed for the success of each person as an individual. Community integrated employment is so much more than being integrated in the community. Most individuals will need supported employment services need to be delivered along side the individual working to give them the best chance at success within their employment. Along with the theory of person-centered planning, the services that each

individual will need should be based off of their level of support needed.

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