An Exploration of the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) Process on College Students with Intellectual Disabilities.

Alanna Haycock

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Under the supervision of Dr. John Kubiak.
Abstract

This research project is entitled “An Exploration of the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) process on College Students with Intellectual Disabilities”. The purpose of this study is to explore the engagement of students with intellectual disabilities (ID), their parents and a support worker to the PATH process. PATH is a planning tool used on the Certificate of Contemporary Living (CCL) programme and is implemented as students’ transition from this two year course. While anecdotal evidence suggests that the PATH experience is positive both for the student and the parents, no empirical evidence is available to support this. This study aims to explore the life experiences and future plans of students as they transition from the CCL, the responses of the study group to the PATH process and if PATH was an effective person-centred planning tool. A purposive sampling strategy was utilised in this study. The sample consisted of four students, four parents and one support worker. The participants were interviewed on three occasions. The first occurred on the day that they undertook their PATH project. The second took place three months after this date. The last set of interviews occurred six months after the initial interview. Semi-structured questions were used to interview these participants. The first and third set of interviews consisted of face-to-face interviews while the second set was conducted over the telephone. These interviews ascertained students’, parents’ and a support worker’s feelings on PATH as a planning tool. While exploring the PATH process, it was found that the CCL programme was more inclusive than students past educational experiences. Future plans of the students mainly encompassed aspirations for employment, further educational courses and sustaining friendships. The responses of the participants to the PATH process were in relation to: 1) their expectation of PATH, 2) who should be present for PATH, 3) over-lapping goals, 4) recollection of PATH and 5) the parent’s changed perception of their child. The concept of autonomy and empowerment was discussed in order to deduce the effectiveness of the PATH. All of the participants stated how beneficial it was for the student to make their own choices in relation to their futures. Furthermore, students and parents alike spoke about the need for independence and were striving to become more independent. Findings are presented using case study examples. Recommendations in relation to participants’ responses are outlined.
Declaration

I declare that this dissertation has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work. I agree to deposit this dissertation in the University’s open access institutional repository or allow the Library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

Signed: ____________________________________________

Alanna Haycock

Date: ____________________________________________
There is a course in Trinity College Dublin for people with intellectual disabilities. It is called the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL). It is a two year course and at the end of it students do a plan called Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) to decide what they would like to do in the future.

The researcher set out to explore how CCL students engaged with PATH and how this personal planning tool benefited them. The researcher spoke to four students who completed the PATH, their parents and one support worker.

By exploring the PATH process, it was found that students enjoyed their time in the CCL. They made friends and felt better about themselves.

It was shown that students liked the PATH. The students were worried however before they did the PATH. They thought it would be hard work but in the end they found that it was not hard work.

The PATH is drawn on a big, colourful poster and the students found this helpful. However, this poster can be quite big and students could not fit it on their walls.

The students learnt more about independence from doing the PATH. They said they would like to become more independent.

Students decided who to invite to their PATH. Three students in this study invited their parents. One student invited their support worker. Some students found that they did not like having their parents with them. They said this because they were worried their parents would not approve of some of their goals.

To make PATH better in the future this researcher recommends the following:

1. A meeting should take place for students and parents before the PATH so everyone knows what is going to happen.

2. Students should get a smaller version of their poster or a copy of it onto their computer.

3. The facilitators of the PATH need to ensure students’ responses are represented as honestly as possible.

4. That CCL staff could organise regular meet-ups for the graduates so they can stay in contact with their friends.

5. That meetings could be undertaken after the PATH so that the student can see if they are on track with their goals.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) process on students with intellectual disabilities. PATH is a person-centred planning (PCP) tool that aims to empower students to make decisions about their future aspirations. This topic is important as PATH is the main transitioning tool used on the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL). The CCL is a specifically designed course for adults with intellectual disabilities in Trinity College Dublin (TCD). The researcher wanted to establish how students engaged with the PATH process and whether it was a beneficial project for students to undertake. The study was qualitative in design and aimed to explore: 1) the life experiences and future plans of students as they transitioned from the CCL, 2) the responses of the study group to the PATH process and 3) if PATH was an effective person-centred planning tool. In order to meet these aims, the researcher interviewed four students, their parents and one of the student’s support workers. The student voice was considered important as a lot of research undertaken in the area of intellectual disability focuses on the views and opinions of professionals and parents. Consequently, the voices of people with ID can be marginalised in this process.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to enrol four students, four of their parents and one of the student’s support workers. The participants undertook three interviews each: one on the day of the PATH project, one three months after this date and the final one six months after the initial project took place. The first and last interviews comprised of face-to-face interviews while the second interview was over the telephone. All interviews were semi-structured in design. The interviews were transcribed verbatim in order to carry out data analysis on them. The transcriptions were coded and common themes were discovered.

The exploration of the PATH process on college students with ID identified significant findings in relation to the life experiences and future plans of the students as they transitioned from the CCL. It was found that the experiences of students on the CCL programme were more inclusive than the past educational experiences of the students. There was a desire from parents for the development of longer and more advanced educational programmes and courses in inclusive tertiary education for people with ID. Future plans of the students mainly encompassed aspirations for employment, further educational courses and sustaining friendships. Concern was observed among the participants in relation to employment and future educational opportunities for the individual with ID. Similar worries were seen in regards to maintaining friendships. The parents and support worker showed that support was necessary in order for the individual
with ID to sustain their friendships. The responses of the participants to the PATH process were in relation to: 1) their expectation of PATH, 2) who should be present for PATH, 3) overlapping goals, 4) recollection of PATH and 5) the parents’ changed perception of their child. Most participants were unsure of what the PATH entailed but were pleased with how the PATH project transpired. Some students stated that they didn’t reveal all of their aspirations on their PATH for fear of what their parents and staff would think. Many of the students had similar goals in relation to: choice and decision making, independence, employment and courses, and friendships. The overwhelmingly similar themes throughout the students’ PATHs brought into question how the PATH was executed. After three/six months, many participants stated that they could not recall aspects of the PATH. The PATH enabled parents to gain a new perspective on their child. The concept of autonomy and empowerment was discussed in order to deduce the effectiveness of the PATH. All of the participants stated how beneficial it was for the student to make choices in relation to their future themselves. Furthermore, students and parents alike spoke about the need for independence and were striving to become more independent.

Recommendations in relation to the findings suggest that a pre-PATH meeting should take place with students and parents to learn about the PATH so they know what to expect. Furthermore, it will give the student the opportunity to think about and decide who should be present for their PATH. As students stated that the poster was too large to fit on a wall, it is recommended that the student receives a down-sized version of the poster or that a copy of the poster is transferred onto a computer so that it can be emailed to the students or stored on a USB. Common concepts that appeared throughout the students’ PATHs in relation to choice and decision making, independence, employment and courses and friends were noteworthy. The researcher wonders if the steps and questions used in PATH guide the students in such a way that they all end up with very similar goals. To deal with this it is important to examine the way in which PATH is executed and look deeply at each step to ensure they do not encompass too many leading questions. It was recommended by some of the parents that the staff of the CCL could organise class reunions at regular intervals during the year. By doing this, students have the opportunity to see class mates again and swap contact details which may encourage them to remain in contact. Parents also made recommendations on how to make the PATH more effective. One parent stated that because they were involved in this research that it encouraged herself and her son to stick to the PATH. She explained how conducting follow-up meetings at six month and one year intervals would be beneficial to the student.
### Tables

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Abbreviations

ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder

EPSEN – The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs

CCL – Certificate in Contemporary Living

ID – Intellectual Disability

NIID – The National Institute for Intellectual Disability

PATH – Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

PCP – Person-Centred Planning

REC – School of Social Work and Social Policy Research Ethical Approval Committee

SRA – The Social Research Association

TCD – Trinity College Dublin

U.K. – The United Kingdoms

U.S.A. – The United States of America

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1.0. Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to explore the engagement of students with intellectual disabilities (ID), their parents and one support worker to the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) process. PATH is a planning tool used on the Certificate of Contemporary Living (CCL) programme as students’ transition from this two year course. While anecdotal evidence suggests that the PATH experience is positive both for the student and the parents, no empirical evidence is available to support this. A purposive sampling strategy was utilised to enrol four students, four parents and one support worker. The participants were interviewed on three occasions. These semi-structured interviews consisted of face-to-face and telephone interviews. These ascertained the students’, the parents’ and the support worker’s feelings on PATH as a planning tool. This chapter will explore the background and rationale of this research, with explanations of the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID), the CCL programme and the PATH included. The scope and objectives of this research will be outlined with consideration to the position of the researcher being explored. This chapter will also contain an overview of the ensuing chapters in this project.

1.1. Background and Rationale

The NIID has been established at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) to promote the inclusion of people with ID and their families (TCD, 2014). The NIID state that their vision is inclusion through education, research and advocacy. Their mission is to enable people with ID to develop their potential by a combination of high quality research, distribution of new knowledge, lifelong learning and professional training (TCD, 2014). The NIID aims to improve inclusive research policy and practice for individuals with ID and their families though their research centre.

The NIID promotes lifelong learning for people with ID in a variety of ways including an inclusive education programme entitled the CCL. This is an innovative course for adults with ID and was the first full time course for adults with ID in Ireland. It is a specially designed programme, provided in a tertiary setting, aimed at supporting students as they make transitions towards independence, lifelong learning and employment (O’Brien, O’Keeffe, Healy, Kubiak, Lally & Hughes, 2009). The underlying principles of the CCL are a belief in the capacity of people with ID, a respect for the contributions of people with ID and a belief in equality of opportunity for people with ID. The CCL is
comprised of eleven modules that enable students to engage with expressive arts, the humanities, sports and recreation, and transferable skills. The modules are:

1. Communications
2. Research
3. Information and Communication Technology
4. Personal Effectiveness
5. Applied Learning Skills
6. Learning to Learn
7. Career Development
8. Social Sciences: an International Perspective
9. Work Placement
10. Sports, exercise and nutrition

An evaluation of the course in 2008 found that being a student in a third level setting provided the individual with confidence and enhanced self esteem, independence and positive expectations for the future (O’Brien, O’Keeffe, Kenny, Fitzgerald & Curtis, 2008).

It was also found that tutors and parents of these students experienced the need to let go. It was discovered that the participants were anxious about the longevity of these benefits unless there was transition planning and implementation (O’Brien et al, 2008). Upon completion of the course the students do undertake a person-centred transition plan called Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH). PATH is a very focused planning tool which helps to establish the students desired future and plan how to achieve it (Pearpoint, O’Brien & Forest, 2003). PATH begins at the future and backward planning is used to state the actions required in order to obtain the individual’s goals. It consists of seven steps: values, setting long term goals, now, enrol/who’s on board, keep strong, three/six month goals and first steps (Pearpoint, O’Brien & Forest, 2003). It is a tool that encourages supporting people with disabilities to work toward inclusion by planning for their futures and ensuring that the individual most affected by the plan is at the centre of it (Pipi, 2010).

Researchers have identified that there is almost no evidence of the efficiency of person-centred planning (PCP) in comparison to other approaches (Rudkin & Rowe, 1999; Kinsella, 2000; Wigham, Roberston, Emerson et al., 2008). The evidence that is available comprises mainly of individual case studies that refer to the process and desirability of the PCP (e.g. O’Brien & Mount, 1989; Certo, Lee, Mautz, Markey, Toney, Toney & Smalley, 1997; Everson & Reid, 1997). More recently, a longitudinal study of the impact of PCP on
the lifestyles of people with ID has been completed in the U.K. and quantitative findings have been presented in a series of publications (Robertson, Emerson, Hatton et al., 2005; 2006; 2007a; 2007b). The researcher found a scarcity of evidence-based research in relation to PATH alone. Anecdotal evidence from the NIID suggests that students are fulfilling their aims as outlined in their PATH projects. However, no empirical study has been carried out to evaluate this, which gives justification to this current study.

1.2. Scope and Objectives

Through the CCL, the NIID aspires to instil independence, lifelong learning and employability into their students. The PATH as a tool endeavours to help the student plan towards these goals and others that they may have. In order for the NIID to meet their mission it is vital to know how the students transition from this programme. The PATH is the main planning tool used by the CCL students and their parents to guide them towards goals they wish to have completed in one year following their graduation from the CCL. As this is the main planning tool used it is of the upmost importance to see if it is an effective tool. In order to establish the effectiveness of PATH, this researcher will be capturing the thoughts of the students, their parents and a support worker.

The researcher is interested in this area as a topic of research due to her professional connection to the NIID. After a successful work placement in the NIID, the researcher began to work as a Student Support Officer on the CCL. During her placement she worked with final year students of the CCL. Before this placement, the researcher worked in a residential house for adults with ID that revolved around the caring of adults with ID. During her time working in this setting, she saw very little that empowered the people that she worked with. Her work placement in the NIID made her reflect on her work with people with ID thus far and changed her perspectives on people with ID. During her placement she encountered many adults with ID who were striving for independence and meaningful employment. The PATH as a PCP tool encourages students to make steps that will enhance their chance of achieving the goals they desire. A particular objective of this research is to see how students, parents and professionals engage with this tool in order to establish its effectiveness in relation to the students’ life after they leave the CCL. It is important to know how the student is progressing once they transition from the CCL especially in relation to their independence and employability which are two of the main aims of the CCL. Considering that no empirical evidence on the experience of the PATH process on students with ID has been completed, the researcher feels this is an extremely important and practical project to undertake.
1.3. Overview of Chapters

The second chapter will consist of a review of the relevant literature in relation to the PATH process. Humanistic psychology and how it has influenced the concept and processes of PATH will be examined. The impact of humanistic psychology on education and how PATH can be a valuable method to aid the transition process out of education will be explored. PCP as an approach will be explained and research conducted on PCP will be outlined. The PATH process will be described further and its main characteristics explained. It will be argued that the paucity of evidence-based research in the area of PATH justifies the necessity and importance of this current study.

Chapter three will reiterate the research question, aims and objectives. The justification for using a qualitative approach will be explained. The sampling technique and research tool that were utilised in this research will be outlined. The data analysis method will be described. Some ethical issues that needed to be addressed in order to carry out this research project appropriately will be highlighted and limitations of this research project will be outlined.

Chapter four will discuss what was found upon data analysis of the interviews. The three cases of students, parents and support worker will be looked at separately. The common themes that occurred throughout the interviews will be explored.

Chapter five will consist of a discussion in relation to the findings in order to assess whether the research question posed has been answered. This section will include an interpretation of the findings in relation to the existing literature on this topic. The relevance and impact of this study will be explained. Recommendations for future research will be explored and a brief reflection on the researcher’s learning process will conclude this chapter.
2.0. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by examining how the concept and processes of PATH are informed by the perspective of humanistic psychology, an approach that values the potential of people to discover within themselves the capacity for growth, change and personal development. Secondly, the effect of humanistic psychology on education is explored and the importance of the learner as the source and motivator of his/her own education is highlighted. Thirdly, it is argued that as a planning tool, PATH is a valuable method to form the transition process for people with ID and empower them in this important journey. Before concluding, PCP as a concept is clarified and research conducted on PCP is outlined. Finally, PATH is described and its key features of self-efficacy and creativity explained. In conclusion, it is argued that the paucity of evidence-based research in the area of PATH justifies the necessity and importance of this current study.

2.2. Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology relates to an approach that studies the whole person and the individuality of each person. Humanistic psychology emerged during the 1950’s as an opposition to the prevailing psychoanalytical and behavioural paradigms (Shaffer, 1978). Psychoanalysis concentrated on comprehending the unconscious motivations that generated behaviour. Behaviourism focused on the conditioning processes that created behaviour (Shaffer, 1978). Humanist thinkers felt that both psychoanalysis and behaviourism failed to take into account the role of personal choice. Humanistic psychologists view human behaviour not just through the eyes of the observer, but through the eyes of the individual doing the behaving. They believe that a person’s behaviour is related to their inner feelings and self concept (McLeod, 2012). Personal agency is the term used by humanistic psychologists to denote how an individual exercises his/her free will (McLeod, 2012) Another assumption is that individuals are innately good and have instincts to make themselves and the world better. This is achieved through self-actualisation, which is about psychological growth and satisfaction in life (Maslow, 1943). This need for fulfilment and personal growth is an essential motivator of all behaviour. Bugental (1964) encapsulates five basic postulates of humanistic psychology which encompasses the principles of humanistic psychology.
Maslow (1943) wanted to understand what motivated people. He believed that individuals are motivated by achieving certain needs and once one desire is fulfilled, one seeks to satisfy the next one until self-actualisation has been attained. Maslow’s original hierarchy of needs included five motivational needs. The 5 stage model is comprised of basic needs (psychological, safety, love and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualisation). One must satisfy lower level basic needs before one is able to fulfil higher, growth needs (Maslow, 1943). Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy was subsequently expanded to include three more needs, namely, cognitive, aesthetic and transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970a; Maslow, 1970b).

Carl Rogers, a humanistic psychologist, conceded with Maslow’s beliefs but stated that in order for an individual to reach self-actualisation they need a setting that provides them with genuineness, acceptance and empathy (Rogers, 1995). His overall hypothesis was that if he could provide a certain type of relationship, the other person would discover within themselves the capacity to use that relationship for growth and change, and personal development would occur (Rogers, 1995). Roger’s called his approach person-centred therapy because of the focus on the individual’s subjective view of the world (Rogers, 1995).

2.3. Humanistic Psychology Today

The question has been raised by many writers on the contemporary relevance of humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology has developed to encompass a wide range of subjects such as ecology, research, managed care, education, and social action (Whitton, 2003). Many offer recommendations in which to strengthen and encourage the growth of humanistic psychology with Criswell (2003) stating that the need for humanistic psychology is greater than ever. In order for humanistic psychology to fulfil its potential, Criswell speaks of the necessity of education on humanistic behaviour, humanistic research and media coverage (Criswell, 2003). Just like Criswell (2003), Friedman (2011) explains that humanistic psychology is not obsolete and needs to remain viable by continuing to be innovative in promoting a holistic outlook in diverse areas, such as those outlined by Whitton (2003) above. Serlin (2011) and DeRobertis (2013) also state that humanistic psychology is more relevant than ever and maintains its contemporary relevance with regard to education and the learning process.
2.4. Humanistic Psychology’s Influence on Education

A humanistic approach to education perceives learning as an experience of pleasure rather than a means of competing with others. This emphasises the importance of person-centeredness, that learning should be stimulating and meaningful to the individual (Shaffer, 1978). Humanistic approaches also endeavour to provide an education that encapsulates personal meaning for the learner. Therefore, the educator should note a learner’s emotional response to what he/she is learning in order to gauge the learner’s holistic need to integrate feeling with thought (Shaffer, 1978). An educator is not perceived as authoritarian in a humanistic approach to education; the learner is viewed as the source and motivator of his/her education. There is a consistent respect for the learner’s individuality and autonomy (Shaffer, 1978). In regards to the humanistic influence on education in contemporary society, DeRobertis (2013) speaks of a contextual revolution in the psychology of education in which the social constructionist movement is advancing. There is a holistic paradigm appearing in education that is nondirective and person-centred in orientation (Miller, 1990). Facilitating a sense of personal meaning in education and inciting the student with respect for social, cultural and historical diversity are significant to this paradigm. Packer & Greco-Brooks (1990) establish that the learning process is a thoroughly interpersonal method where learning transforms both self and world simultaneously. Sullo (2009) observed that educators can optimize a student’s enthusiasm for learning if they create relevant lesson plans that encompass a strong sense of personal and professional identity. These encompass traditional humanistic beliefs and show that humanistic psychology is having an influence on the educational sphere today.

2.5. The Future of Humanistic Psychology

Totton (2013) outlines two possible futures for humanistic psychology. The first, which he describes as less desirable, comprises of conformity to the social mainstream and thus a loss of much of what makes humanistic work worthwhile. The second, more attractive future that Totton (2013) suggests is one in which humanistic practitioners and organisations reaffirm the principles on which their practice is based. Namely, acknowledgment of the client’s innate tendency to grow, appreciation of the client’s inherent intellect and autonomy, and assimilation of the diverse aspects of being human (Totton, 2013). Glouberman (2013) views the future of humanistic psychology as a creation of inspiration for an alternative approach to life. She states that one will never succeed if one is boxed up in old categories and not given a chance to define oneself (Glouberman, 2013). Humanistic psychology is trying to promote and secure its
prominence in contemporary society. It has had a significant impact on a diverse range of fields. In particular, its influence on person-centred approaches to education and planning has been invaluable. For example, the PATH tool may not exist if it were not for this highly influential and critical movement.

2.6. Transition and People with ID: The Importance of Planning

The ways in which individuals approach the process of leaving education and facing the uncertainties of adult life take on an array of forms. One’s ideas about one’s future may develop through a process of trial and error as one encounters different experiences. What one encounters through this transitional period is likely to have a considerable effect on the conclusion one draws and the plans one makes. The circumstances influencing one’s decisions about adult life are diverse and potentially complex. They can be a mix of individual beliefs derived from personal, familial, cultural and societal values (Carnaby & Lewis, 2005). When the individual has an ID, adult life may appear as even more daunting. Influences known to have an impact on people without an ID may leave an individual with an ID feeling confused as to what is expected of them. There is a greater chance of success of an individual with an ID experiencing a smooth transition if careful planning is utilised before, during and after the transition phase. Having the individual at the centre of the planning process is another essential aspect of this planning (Carnaby & Lewis, 2005).

Researchers have noted that transition outcomes for people with ID remain poor (Grant & Ramcharan, 2007; Grigal, Hart & Migliore, 2011; While, Forbes, Ullman, Lewis, Maths & Griffiths, 2004). Transition planning is often connected to low levels of inclusion of significant stakeholders (Kaehne, 2010), little choice for the individual transitioning and their families (Kaehne, 2009; Raghaven & Pawson, 2008) and a predominance of plans that suit services rather than the individual themselves (Helsop & Abbott, 2007; Wagner, Newman, Levine & Garza, 2006). Improved PCP may introduce opportunities for individuals for increased interaction with the planning process itself, develop more sufficient post-school destinations based on the desires of the individual and identify clear aims for support (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). PCP encompasses a range of models, attributes and characteristics, which will be identified below.

2.7. PCP: What is Person-Centred Planning?

The PCP approach is based on gaining knowledge through shared action and finding innovative solutions instead of fitting people into boxes (Sanderson, 2000). It
entails problem solving and working together to develop transformation in one’s life, community and organisations (Sanderson, 2000). This approach is based on the social model of disability, rather than the medical model (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2010). Processes to guide PCP are vital and researchers have developed several models in order to implement PCP effectively (Sanderson, 2000). PCP is a process that allows the individual with a disability, family members, and those significant to the individual an opportunity to share information to establish a personal profile and an outlook for the future (Bambara & Kern, 2005). PCP is characterised by three attributes. Firstly, it aspires to recognise the aims and capacities of the person in which the plan is for. This emphasises the authority of the person with the ID’s voice. Secondly, PCP aims to include and organise the individual’s family and social network. The implication of this is that the families in particular have an involvement in the arrangements made to assist the individual to achieve their goals if support is required. The individual’s social network is also intended to expand and enhance the range of resources at hand to support them. Thirdly, PCP emphasises providing the support required to achieve goals rather than limiting goals to what individuals are assumed they can manage (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2004).

2.8. Research Conducted on Person-Centred Planning

Kinsella (2000) identified that there was almost no evidence of the efficiency of PCP in comparison to other approaches. The evidence that is available comprises mainly of individual case studies that refer to the process and desirability of PCP (e.g. O’Brien & Mount, 1989; Certo, Lee, Mautz, Markey, Toney, Toney & Smalley, 1997; Everson & Reid, 1997). Case studies suggest that PCP can be beneficial and may alter the perception of participants (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2004). Similarly, Wigham, Roberston, Emerson et al., (2008), found that up until recently, there was little evidence on the effect of introducing PCP. There was also no robust evidence on the factors that may facilitate or impede the introduction and effectiveness. The first systematic review of the evidence base for lifestyle planning approaches, which included PCP, found only five studies that reported any outcome data for any form of lifestyle planning (Rudkin & Rowe, 1999). Rudkin & Rowe (1999) concluded that there was no quantitative evidence to support PCP. However, recent research from the U.S.A. and U.K. has established the potential for PCP to improve the lifestyle related outcomes for people with ID (Wigham et al., 2008). A study in the U.S.A. by Holburn, Jacobson, Schwartz, Flory & Vietze (2004) was the first to examine the relationship between a comprehensive PCP intervention and a range of outcomes. Outcome measures showed that the quality of life indicators of autonomy,
choice-making, daily activities, relationships, and satisfaction improved when PCP was utilised.

A longitudinal study of the impact of PCP on the lifestyles of people with ID has been completed in the U.K. and quantitative findings have been presented in a series of publications which have looked at the impact and cost of PCP (Robertson, Emerson, Hatton et al., 2005; 2006), factors associated with successful outcomes for people with ID (Robertson et al., 2007a) and reported barriers to the implementation of PCP (Robertson et al., 2007b). This research showed that little change was observed in people’s lives prior to the introduction of PCP. After PCP was introduced, positive changes were observed in six areas: social networks, contact with family, contact with friends, community-based activities, scheduled day activities, and choice (Robertson et al., 2005). However, the benefits of PCP did not extend to certain areas of people’s lives including employment and more inclusive social networks (Robertson et al., 2005; 2006). Furthermore, the results showed that factors such as characteristics of the participants, contextual factors, and the process of PCP had an impact on the effectiveness of PCP (Robertson et al., 2007a). The research also indicated that the people involved in PCP process face a range of barriers to the implementation of PCP (Robertson et al., 2007b). The PCP tool in which this research is based is the PATH and so, a detailed description of this model is outlined below.

2.9. Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

PATH can be used as a planning style for groups or individuals (Pearpoint, O’Brien & Forest, 2003). PATH begins at the future and backward planning is used to state the actions required in order to obtain the individual’s goals (Pearpoint, O’Brien & Forest, 2003). It involves seven steps: values, setting long term goals, now, enrol/who’s on board, keep strong, three/six month goals and first steps (Pearpoint, O’Brien & Forest, 2003). The PATH tool aids individuals to contemplate where they are in terms of current goals, their individuality, their characteristics, their strengths and their aspirations for the future (Pipi, 2010). There are two key features of PATH that differentiate it from other PCP tools. These are self-efficacy and creativity. Self-efficacy is the understanding that one has the capacity to establish and complete the steps necessary to produce a desired effect and that this is fundamental to success (O’Brien, Pearpoint & Kahn, 2010). Self-efficacy promotes certainty that it is achievable to take real steps towards meaningful goals, especially when there is support to do so. The creativity feature of PATH can be seen in the multi-coloured drawing that is produced from the process (Pipi, 2010) (See Figure 1).
The PATH planning tool has its roots in the work towards inclusion for people with ID (O’ Brian, Pearpoint, & Kahn, 2010). PATH is a tool that encourages supporting people with disabilities to work toward inclusion by planning for their futures and ensuring that the individual most affected by the plan is at the centre of it (Pipi, 2010). The PATH allows individuals to look back on their past experiences and learn from them and move forward into the future with hope of achieving their desired goals. Another principle that guides PATH is diversity. This is evident when the facilitator encourages and welcomes different perspectives and viewpoints from those attending the individuals’ PATH (Pipi, 2010).

In search for evidence-based research in relation to PATH, the researcher found that there was a dearth in existence. Upon this search, the researcher found a lot of descriptive material written about PATH but no empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of it. The PATH Families Network Blog is an Australian ran blog that endeavours to build a supportive online community of people with disabilities and their families. The objective of this blog is to share stories, receive feedback and assist in spreading the word about PATH (Bannister, 2008). This blog includes resources and links to other relevant websites in relation to PATH. All of the resources, however, appear to be Australian based.

Wetherow & Wetherow (2003) encourage the PATH-finder (i.e. the student) and his/her associates to think broadly, creatively and bravely about whom to invite to the PATH session. They affirm that inviting people with whom the individual might share a
particular interest with or people with whom they share a strong identity with is an important aspect to PATH. They state that if one limits the PATH invitation to the presumed supporters, i.e., immediate family members, caregivers and friends, one may miss a rich set of potential connections (Wetherow & Wetherow, 2003). Anecdotal evidence about how the authors came to this conclusion is included in their article so again, one can see that there is a lack of evidence-based research in relation to PATH.

Inclusion Press is a website which provides learning material for anyone interested in PCP. One will find a wealth of information on PCPs and PATH (Pearpoint, Kahn & Hollands, 2015). However, most resources are books and need to be purchased in order for information to be obtained. There are some free articles, however, none relate to conclusive evidence on the effectiveness of PATH. In order to try and obtain this information, the researcher emailed Inclusion Press to see if they could help her pursue evidence-based research. Unfortunately, this email went unanswered.

2.10. Conclusion

This chapter considered how the concept and processes of PATH are informed by the perspective of humanistic psychology. The effect of humanistic psychology on education was examined and the importance of the learner as the source and motivator of his/her own education was demonstrated. The PATH as a valuable method to aid in the transition process for people with ID was discussed. PCP as a concept was defined and research conducted on PCP was outlined. PATH was described and its key features of self-efficacy and creativity were explained. It was argued that despite a range of writings about PATH, the lack of evidence-based research justifies the necessity and importance of this current study. The methodology and methods utilised to conduct this research will be discussed in the ensuing chapter.
3.0. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will begin by stating the research question, aims and objectives. The justification for using a qualitative approach to this research will be explained. The sampling technique of purposive sampling and research tool of semi-structured interviews will be outlined. The data analysis method will be described. Some ethical issues that needed to be addressed in order to carry out this research project appropriately will be highlighted. As no work can come without its limitations, these will also be outlined in relation to the methodology and methods.

3.2. Research Question, Aims and Objectives

The research question is entitled “An Exploration of the PATH process on College Students with Intellectual Disabilities”. The researcher is interested in exploring how students with ID, their parents and a support worker engage with the PATH process.

The aims of this research are:

1. To explore the life experiences and future plans of students as they transition from the CCL programme.
2. To identify the responses of the study group to the PATH process.
3. To find out if PATH is an effective person-centred planning tool.

One objective of this research is to identify if the PATH is a useful tool for students as they leave the CCL. The researcher wants to know if the PATH is a worthwhile project for students to undertake, that encourages the completion of meaningful goals and acts as a practical guide as they leave the CCL. If students and parents found the PATH to be a useful and valuable tool, another objective is to identify if students are meeting the goals that they defined in their PATH project.

3.3. Justification for Using a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is preoccupied with measuring the social world through words (Creswell, 2003). The researcher is interested in exploring the experience of the PATH project on students of the CCL programme, their parents and a support worker. The nature of this research question is orientated to exploration through words. With qualitative research, the point of view of the participant is significant and that provides the structure for the exploration (May, 2011). Qualitative research allows the researcher to become close
to their participants and get a grasp of the world through their eyes. In the case of this current research, a close relationship with the participant is vital in order to obtain the data required. The researcher had worked with the student participants prior to the research taking place. This allowed her to get to know the participants and form a close relationship with them. Qualitative research is typically unstructured in nature. This allows the researcher to explore participants’ meanings and concepts in greater detail. In the case of this current research, generalization to the wider population is not required. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand the PATH process within the context of the CCL. Furthermore, the small-scale nature of this research aligns itself to a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2003).

The findings will be presented in the form of case studies. Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) base their approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective. Constructivism is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality. One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories. Through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants’ actions. The type of case study will be of a multiple case exploratory design (Yin, 2003).

3.4. Sample

Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that was utilised in this research. In this, the researcher did not select participants on a random basis but in a strategic way so that the participants chosen are relevant to the research question. Due to this fact, the research cannot be generalised to a wider population. The researcher decided who will partake in the research based on certain criteria. In the case of this research, the researcher interviewed four students of the CCL programme, four of their parents and one of the student’s support workers. This is a fixed purposive sampling strategy, as unlike a sequential strategy, the sample has been established at the outset of the research (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Furthermore, this is also a priori sampling approach as the criteria for selecting the participants had been decided at the beginning of the research. This is in contrast to a contingent approach where criteria for the participants develop throughout the course of the research (Hood, 2007).

There are conflicting views between researchers in relation to sample size in qualitative research. Warren (2002), states that the minimum number of interviews should
be between 20 and 30. However, Gerson & Horowitz (2002) explain that fewer than 60 interviews cannot support substantial conclusions and more than 150 produce too much data to analyse effectively. The difference between these two authors emphasises the difficulty in specifying a minimum sample size. Crouch & Mckenzie (2006) emphasise the use of small sample sizes by maintaining that sample sizes smaller than 20 increase the qualitative researcher’s odds of getting close involvement with their participants in interview-based studies, which will generate fine-grained data. In light of these opinions, the researcher decided that a smaller sample size would yield better data in relation to this research question.

Nine participants in total were selected for this research. The first case consists of four students of the CCL programme who undertook the PATH. The second case is comprised of four parents of these students. The final case is made up of one of the student’s support workers. Table 1. outlines the pseudonyms of the participants and their relation to one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case One-Students</th>
<th>Case Two-Parents</th>
<th>Case Three-Support Worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>James</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Tony</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Mary</td>
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</table>

3.5. Methods

Semi-structured interviews in the form of face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were chosen for this study for a number of reasons. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and provide in-depth views that allow specific issues to be addressed. Furthermore, the interviews took place with students, parents and a support worker that were connected to the CCL, therefore, semi-structured interviews enabled a degree of cross-case comparability (May, 2011). In a semi-structured interview the researcher uses an interview guide that contains questions or specific topics to be covered (Neuman, 2011). Unlike structured interviews, this is not a rigid schedule that has to be followed in chronological order. The interviewer can ask questions that are not included on the schedule in light of a topic the interviewee brings up. Rambling off topic by the interviewee is encouraged as it provides greater insight into what the interviewee feels is
important. Interviews also allow for the reconstruction of events. The researcher can ask the participant to recall events that are relevant to the research topic (Neuman, 2011).

This researcher used a combination of face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews. The first and third interviews consisted of face-to-face interviews while the second interview comprised of a telephone interview. Telephone interviews were utilised for the second interview because the researcher was aware of the intrusion three interviews over six months may have on the participants’ lives. To reduce this, the researcher decided that a telephone interview would suffice.

3.6. Pilot study - Practice of Designing Interview Guides and Interview Skills

In order for the researcher to practice designing an interview guide and practice interviewing skills, a pilot study was conducted with three past pupils of the CCL. These graduates were interviewed with a view to explore their life after completion of the programme. The interview schedule utilised in these interviews (see appendix A) allowed the researcher the space to explore the issues that were problematic and ultimately allowed her to feel more at ease when constructing the actual interview guide that was used in the research. Furthermore, the interview guide used in these interviews helped inform and aid in the creation of the final interview schedules as similar topics were discussed. Conducting practice interviews enabled the researcher to acquire new knowledge about herself that lead to the enablement of creating sound interview guides and the ability to conduct interviews with more assurance in herself.

3.7. Interview Guide

In order to design the interview guide that was used in this study, the researcher followed types of questions to use in qualitative interviews as outlined by Kvale (1996). These are: introducing questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions, structuring questions, silence and interpretation questions (Kvale, 1996) (see appendix B). These allowed the researcher to formulate questions that enabled her to get more in-depth responses from the participants. If the researcher did not follow these suggestions on developing questions, she may have missed out on vital information by not probing the participant or allowing silence for the participant to think. She could have misinterpreted what the participant meant if she had not used interpretation questions.

The areas covered in the design guides vary from the first to the last interview. The questions in the first design schedule related to previous PCP, extent of knowledge of the
PATH, feelings of doing the PATH project and their thoughts on the next six months (see appendix C). The second design schedule included questions that gathered participants’ feelings three months after the initial PATH project (see appendix D). The third design schedule was more in-depth and used questions to ascertain if student’s six month goals had been achieved (see appendix E). They related to how the last six months have been since doing the PATH, what sections of the PATH were utilised, what goals were achieved and how, what goals were not achieved and why, feelings on completing their one year goals and any recommendations for the PATH. The participants’ feelings on their time or their child’s time in CCL were also asked about. These topics were influenced by the research question itself and what the researcher desired to know. Examination of the literature also informed the creation of the interview questions. The practice interviews with graduates from the CCL programme also aided in the creation of the interview guide.

3.8. Ethical Issues

Ethical approval was sought and granted from the School of Social Work and Social Policy Research Ethical Approval Committee (REC) in TCD. The researcher followed the over-arching ethical principles outlined by TCD. These consist of respect for the participants, beneficence and the absence of maleficence, and fairness to all participants (TCD, 2015). The Social Research Association’s (SRA) Ethical Guidelines also informed the researcher’s application. Particular consideration was given to four main areas that could potentially deem this research unethical if these issues were not addressed appropriately. These are harm to participants, lack of informed consent and deception.

Harm encompasses physical and emotional harm (Bryman, 2012). The SRA’s ethical practice reflects this ethical issue by stating that researchers should anticipate and guard against harmful consequences for the participant. Furthermore, it informs the researcher to consider that the research experience may be disturbing for the participant (SRA, 2003). The researcher should minimize harm experienced by the participant and to the participants’ relationship to their environment (SRA, 2003). The ethical issue of harm also includes the matter of confidentiality. This means that identities of individuals should remain classified. Researchers need to take care that participants cannot be identified (Neuman, 2011). This issue of confidentiality is particularly important to the research at hand. Therefore, pseudonyms of the participants were used in this research. Invasion of privacy is also linked to confidentiality and anonymity (Neuman, 2011). According to the REC the anonymity and privacy of participants should be respected. The researcher made
the participant aware of their right to withdraw from the research process at any stage and that no penalty would occur because of it.

Principles of ethics resolve that participants should have as much information about the research as possible in order to make a decision as to whether to engage in the research or not (Neuman, 2011). The REC and SRA state that as far as possible participation in research should be based on informed consent of those studied (TCD, 2015; SRA, 2003). The SRA explain that research involving people should be based on the freely given consent of the participants (SRA, 2003). In order to carry out these interviews the current researcher designed cover letters and consent forms, stating all the information necessary in order for the participants to make an informed decision (see appendix F and G).

This researcher was upfront and honest about what was involved in the research in order to not transgress the ethical issue of deception. Deception happens when researchers portray their work as something different than what it is (Bryman, 2012). The SRA (2003) express that it is the duty of the researcher to not use methods of examination that will violate human values. Doing this would endanger the reputation of social research and the trust between researchers and society.

3.9. Data Analysis

The recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim (See appendix H) and analysed using a system of coding that captured re-occurring patterns and themes. Unlike quantitative data analysis there are no well established systems of analysis for qualitative data. In saying this, there are common steps that have to be taken in the analysis of all qualitative data. The first step is typologies which include counting, patterning, clustering and factoring. The second process is taxonomies which include relating variables, building causal networks and relating findings to a general theoretical framework (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Robson, 1993). In order to carry out these processes the data collected through the semi-structured interviews had to be transcribed.

After transcription was completed, the researcher organised the data by forming typologies and taxonomies; identifying disparities in the data and so, developing subgroups within the general category (Walliman, 2011). Creation of a coding system is an integral part of developing typologies, as it assists in the organisation of an abundant amount of data. Furthermore, it provides the first step for conceptualization (Walliman, 2011). Codes aid the researcher in looking for reoccurring patterns and themes and explanations of why and how these occur (Walliman, 2011). The researcher reduced the data into compact analytical units which allowed her to develop a more integrated comprehension of the data.
3.10. Limitations

Qualitative research does not come without its critiques. The fact that this research topic was formulated by the researcher and was only semi-structured makes identical replication of the research almost impossible. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main research tool. This means that what they decide to focus on is based on their own preference. Due to this, it is unknown to the reader of the research why the researcher focused on a certain area. Furthermore, the participants’ responses will never be able to be recreated as people will respond differently to different researchers based on factors such as age and gender (Bryman, 2012).

The scope of the results of this research are restricted. Given that the interviews were carried out with a small number of participants connected to Trinity College Dublin, it would be impossible for these to be generalised to all who have utilised the PATH project.

The fact that the researcher had a relationship with the student participants prior to the research taking place could lead to the participants answering questions in such a way as to please the researcher. This could potentially produce data that isn’t representative of the participants’ true feelings as they may try to alter their answers to suit what they think the researcher wants to hear.

The researcher feels that the follow-up telephone interviews may have influenced the participants’ engagement with the PATH project. If the follow-up call did not exist many of the participants in the final set of interviews may not have achieved their goals as they may have forgotten about PATH altogether. By asking people about PATH at this stage it may have reignited enthusiasm for it and made them go back to the PATH if they weren’t using it.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter began by stating the research question and the aims and objectives of the research. It outlined the justification for using a qualitative approach. The sampling technique of purposive sampling has been explained. The data collection and data analysis methods were described. The ethical issues that guided the research were outlined. The researcher is aware of the shortcomings of the methodology and so, the limitations were described. The following chapter will describe what was found when the data was analysed.
4.0. Findings

4.1. Introduction

The three case studies of this research project, i.e. the students, the parents and the support worker, are presented separately in this chapter. The first case that examined the experiences of CCL students in relation to the PATH is presented under five themes. These are: The impact of undertaking the CCL; Perceptions of PATH; The influence of others attending the PATH; Autonomy (choice and decision making, independence and transitions) and Recollection of PATH. The second case describes parents’ responses to the PATH, themes include: Undertaking the CCL; Viewpoints on PATH; Autonomy; Changed perception of their child and Recommendations for PATH. The final case presents the voice and opinions of the support worker. The data were analysed by forming typologies and taxonomies and by creating a coding system that allowed the researcher to reduce the data into compact analytical units which allowed her to develop a more integrated comprehension of the data.

4.2. Case One - Students’ Experience

This first case consists of four students who undertook the PATH as part of their transition out of the CCL; these individuals are identified in the following section as Sarah, Michael, Brian and Mark. Two NIID staff members, listed as George and Laura, facilitated and graphed the PATH process. George’s role as facilitator was to guide the students through the steps of the PATH process in such a way that the voice of the students, i.e. the ‘PATH finders’ was prominent. The grapher, Laura, endeavoured to capture the voices of the students by illustration, using images and words to capture what the students said (See appendix I). To ensure confidentiality, all names that appear throughout this chapter are pseudonyms. Any disability services mentioned in this section will be referred to as ‘a service’ in order to protect anonymity. Any educational or employment settings will also have their name changed.

Upon analysing the data, re-occurring themes and patterns emerged and are now presented under five headings:

I. Impact of undertaking the CCL.
II. Perceptions of PATH.
III. The influence of others attending the PATH.
IV. Autonomy: decision making, independence and transitions.
V. Recollection of PATH.

I. Impact of Undertaking the CCL

The students demonstrated the impact the CCL had on their lives by stating the positive influences it had on them particularly in relation to gaining confidence and friendships. This finding is congruent with O’Brien et al. (2008) who found that upon evaluation of the course, being a student in a third level setting provided the individual with confidence and enhanced self-esteem, independence, and positive expectations for the future. During the interviews when asked about their time in the CCL, all four students felt that their participation in the programme had a positive impact on their life for a number of reasons. They enjoyed the variety of subjects that were offered and mentioned the importance of new friendships and gaining self-confidence. For example, Sarah noted that: *(the CCL) was good - I made a lot of friends...and I actually enjoyed the course there was a lot of subjects I loved.* In a similar vein, Michael recognised a profound change in himself after completing the course stating that: *(I always wanted to study more...and make new friends, (doing the CCL) actually changed me.* Brian also mentioned the importance of friendships but extended this awareness to an understanding of the importance of the social side of learning on the CCL. In particular, he felt that working and interacting with his peers: *(made us more confident, made us more sociable with every group. We sat down at break time chatting away.* For Mark, the time he spent in the company of his fellow CCL students raised his awareness of the variety of abilities that existed within the group. He said: *(eh CCL was a good experience for two years it got me to know a bit more of students with their own disabilities and their differences.* Mark, like Brian, also saw the benefits of working in collaboration with other students, especially with regard to the demands of classroom assignments. He observed that: *(it was a good...to team up and work on these presentations...and assignments...all in all it was a good experience.* The self-confidence gained from the course went beyond that of socialising with peers as Sarah noted she gained confidence by *(knowing the routes around and walking around trinity.* In a similar fashion, Mark noted: *(I’d say so yeah, I’d say it had a strong impact on me, the accessibility to get to know trinity and what’s there.*

With regards to the friendships made on the CCL, the students stated during their PATH projects that maintaining these was an important goal for them. During the interviews most students stated that they had been keeping in contact with their friends. However, as noted here by Sarah, seeing her friends is more sporadic than how she had envisaged on her PATH: *(kind of a bit more spread out ‘coz I think it’s just when...*
everyone’s busy and trying to see when everyone’s free it’s hard kind of. Brian reiterates the importance of maintaining friendships with his CCL friends by stating: it’s improving well. I also made, kept my friends close and last weekend I was reunited with Jamie, Michael and I was reunited with Eoin and Emma...keeping in touch with friends is the biggest one.

Overall, undertaking the CCL appeared to have a profound effect on the students. By interacting with their peers they gained not only friends, but a new sense of confidence. This confidence was further reinforced by the ability to explore and get to know the surroundings of Trinity.

II. Perceptions of PATH

During the interviews, the perceptions the students had on the PATH process emerged. In order to discuss these different perceptions the following section consists of the students’ feelings on: 1) their uncertainties of the PATH process, 2) the PATH poster, 3) their trepidation in relation to the timeframe of the PATH, and 4) this author’s concluding comments on the students’ perceptions.

Uncertainties of the PATH Process

Prior to the PATH sessions taking place, the students were given an in-class demonstration on what the PATH entailed and were made aware of what the PATH poster would look like. Furthermore, the students were guided and encouraged through a two hour class session to think about what goals they would like to aim for once they leave the CCL. An information booklet about the PATH (see appendix J) was also distributed to their homes by mail. However, when asked about their expectation of the PATH, a lot of the students were unsure about what it entailed. For example, Sarah said that: I thought first it would only be like a few minutes, like ten minutes or you know like, em, I didn’t expect it to be a two hour session. Mark also perceived the PATH to be a daunting experience and a laborious task. He stated that:

“I was expecting more questions you know writing it down I expected it to be a hell of a lot of work but not so much...was great ‘coz I could just sit down and say what I have to say out of my head”.

Likewise, Michael had perceived the process as different to what actually transpired. He commented: I thought we’d be sitting around at a table and I was the one that had to do the planning but I didn’t realise that Laura was doing that on the wall. Despite having been informed about the PATH and what it entailed, these students displayed an uncertainty about what it involved.
The PATH Poster

As the students described their hopes and dreams for the future; the grapher captured their thoughts by drawing pictures that related to the goals the student wanted to achieve on a large poster. The visual aspect of the PATH and having a concrete poster proved to be a valuable attribute of the project. Sarah noted: *I enjoyed looking at all the pictures drawn up... thought they were very nice... I liked using all the words and images ‘coz they helped me a lot.* Similarly, Brian found that having a bright and colourful poster helped him to make sense of it, stating that: *it’s pretty interesting doing all the detail and contrast...it was very colourful...it needed some colour and contrast to make sense.* Mark commented on the benefit of having his plans written down rather than just keeping them in his head: *em having it all on piece of paper and looking at visually...it’s very handy which I didn’t see it that way ‘coz like when I think of things planning ahead I just think it in my mind not paper.* Even though many spoke of the value of having a poster, some felt that the large poster can be quite cumbersome. Brian commented that: *it’s best downsized, ah it’s better off downsized, it’s best to down size things then to have them enlarged.* Likewise, Michael felt that the large poster was a slight drawback to the process, saying that: *it is a long thing I won’t be able to fit it on the walls in my bedroom.* Even though the students stated the merit of having a visual interpretation of their thoughts, some felt that the large poster was too big to be of benefit to them as they would not be able to fit it on their walls.

Timeframe of PATH

Most of the students spoke about the reality of PATH being more challenging and different to what they expected. The timeframe in which the PATH is completed appeared to be tedious for some of the students. Students stated their difficulties in thinking about the future. Sarah noted: *em, just kind of like planning what I’m going to be doing for six months...I haven’t really thought about going that far yet.* Michael appeared to have similar reservations about planning for the future and how to get started on the plans stating: *when George was asking me the questions it’s just hard to think about when I'm planning you know that’s hard to think what day we’re going to start doing these jobs....it’s hard to pick what day to start...that's the problem.* Just like Sarah and Michael, Brian observed: *it was very challenging...eh I had to do a lot of plans.* The students displayed anxieties when it came to deciding what goals they wanted to achieve. Furthermore, the final stage in the PATH process is the first steps (Pearpoint, O’Brien & Forest, 2003) where students decide what they're going to do today in order to see their
dream come to fruition in one year’s time. This stage appeared challenging for the students and many displayed trepidation in deciding what these first steps should be.

Concluding Comments on Perceptions of the PATH

Despite having uncertainties about what the PATH process entailed and reservations about the timeframe they had in which to complete it, students found the PATH to be a positive experience because they got to see their dreams come to life on a multi-coloured creative poster. Despite stating that this may be too large, the students found benefit in having a bright and colourful record of their PATH. Overall, the students’ experience of the reality of the PATH was a positive one. Sarah noted: I felt it was very good for me...no with the PATH is definitely helping me ‘coz if I didn’t have the PATH I wouldn’t know what to do, kind of be stuck...I thought it was a brilliant project. Michael stated that: it helps me to keep going...and not lose track. Just like Sarah and Michael, Brian found the PATH to be a helpful endeavour: PATH is making sense 100% sense and it means stuff to me and that's a big improvement. Mark stated how the PATH enabled him to get to know himself better: eh well anyway I feel fine I feel happy to have achieve it, it’s made me know better about myself and getting an idea of the future ahead when I can achieve those goals. Even though the students stated that they didn’t know what to expect from the PATH and found some of it daunting, their overall feelings on the PATH was that it was beneficial.

III. The Influence of Others Attending the PATH

It emerged during the interviews that some students would have liked to mention particular matters in their PATH but chose not to do so. There were many reasons for this, for example, students said that they forgot to say it during the PATH session. Sarah explained that trying to think of so many things on the spot can be overwhelming and so can make it easy to forget what she wanted to say:

“I was going to mention some stuff from the block section but I just, it’s hard thinking of so many ‘coz I can’t think of them right all out, then they’re kind of gone out and your trying to get them back in to say what you were going to put down and that now but it’s just when you have so many things in your head and your trying to get them”.

Similarly, Michael mentioned during his interview some aims he wanted on his PATH but just didn’t think of them during the PATH session. Michael: I have everything on the board until I just thought about it but it’s too late to put it up now...mmm sorry I forgot to add that up.
Other students chose to leave out certain aims due to the fact that the presence of staff and parents made them uncomfortable and so made them not want to reveal some aspects that they would have liked to have included in their PATH. Some students showed an apprehension of saying everything they wanted on the PATH for fear of what others would think. Sarah showed on two occasions that there were matters she would have liked to include in her PATH but didn’t. The first was in relation to travelling abroad alone. She noted: probably like travelling abroad...but I feel I’d need a bit more independence for that ’coz my mam said I wouldn’t be able to go abroad just yet. Another aspect that she would have liked to include in her PATH was in relation to romantic relationships. When asked would boyfriend/girlfriend relationships be important to her and be something that she would have liked to have included in her PATH she stated: would have liked to put that on my PATH yeah. When questioned about the reasons why she didn’t include this she noted:

“just felt it was a bit private...just private and just didn’t know if it would be a good answer to put up just didn’t know whether other people wanted to hear it or not...be a bit embarrassed a bit kind of like oh I don’t feel like saying anything else...a bit uncomfortable”.

She continued to explain: I wouldn’t mind like if I was just talking to my mam about it ‘coz I mean my mum’s my mum...but just with my dad it’d be like I dunno. When questioned whether she would have included different matters on her PATH if her parents were not in the room she said: I would have yeah. Sarah showed apprehension about what others in the room would think about her goals stating: didn’t know whether they would have thought that they were good decisions that I said that they were good things to put down like, could think of better things. Michael showed similar trepidation in regards to what staff would think. He had a belief of not being allowed have a girlfriend from the CCL course and so was worried of the staffs’ reaction. Michael: for the first time I told them that Sarah was my girlfriend. We didn’t want to say anything ’coz it’s just the staff letting them know that we’re in a relationship....we thought it wouldn’t be fair for us students to go out on a date.

However, some felt that the support from parents and staff was fundamental to the completion of their PATH and found it encouraging. Mark stated: yeah very comfortable yeah my mum’s not very persuasive or whatever she takes her time with it and was very surprised with it that this is really working out for definitely my mum. Likewise Brian felt: very confident, getting a lot of back up, being very enthusiastic keeping my mind tracked don’t want like don’t like having my mind being blank all the time.
The finding in relation to others attending the PATH and the impact that has on the PATH finder’s stated aspirations provides an insight into how the students experienced the PATH. For some, the support gained from family members during the PATH session is invaluable. For others, however, the presence of staff and parents compelled them to withhold certain aspirations or made them feel anxious about revealing their thoughts; consequently, for these individuals, the PATH may not fully represent their individual dreams.

IV. Autonomy

Upon analysing the data generated through the students’ interviews, the theme of autonomy emerged which provided the researcher with a more in-depth understanding of the students’ experience of PATH. It’s worth noting however, that within the context of intellectual disabilities there is no common understanding or conceptualisation of autonomy and is often used interchangeably with terms such as self-determination, independence and empowerment (Björnsdóttir, Stefānsdóttir & Stefānsdóttir, 2014). Furthermore, the literature on autonomy of people with ID has largely focused on the perspectives of parents and professionals, and the voices of people with ID have largely been absent from the discussion (Björnsdóttir, Stefānsdóttir & Stefānsdóttir, 2014). Going some way to address this issue, this study recognises and values the contribution of CCL students and acknowledges them as valuable contributors to the discussion concerning intellectual disabilities. In an attempt to add to an understanding of autonomy in the lives of CCL students, the following section is presented under three headings: Choice and decision making, independence and transitions. Each of these is now covered in turn.

Choice and Decision Making

All of the students’ acknowledged the fact that the PATH was based on their decisions and described their contentment in making choices for themselves. Some felt the process of decision making overwhelming but this did not diminish their satisfaction in making their own choices. Sarah showed confidence in stating: I’ve made that decision. However, when asked about how making those decisions felt, Sarah noted: em, I don’t know, just em, don’t know, just overwhelming and but I was kind of happy making some decisions ‘coz some of them are my hobbies. When questioned about the importance of having the opportunity to voice one’s own opinions Michael stated: yes it is... ’coz it’s my freedom of speech...like it doesn’t matter if you’re right or wrong like what George said he wasn’t putting words into my mouth. Students’ recognised that everyone is different and
so, their choices on what they like and want to do are particular to their individual interests. Brian observed: that's what's more important being born individuals...well everyone's an individual, everyone's born differently. Likewise, Mark showed an understanding in the individuality of people, stating: everyone’s different. I think people who have had strong difficulties in finding what they want to achieve and haven’t a clue what to think of it then put it all on paper I say. Even though students showed an apprehension in making their own decisions, they displayed satisfaction in getting that opportunity. Students had an acute awareness that people are different and so have their own individual interests that they can decide upon.

Independence

Many of the students spoke about what independence meant to them and put goals on their PATH that will enable them to become more independent. Michael stated that independence is: being responsible for myself and for him this meant: making sure the house is clean and tidy. In order to gain this independence he put the goal on his PATH to: clean the house every Saturday like I empty the dish washer, I sort out the laundry, the washing machine, clean my room dust and hoover.

Some students felt that they had gained a lot from the CCL in relation to their independence but believe that their parents don’t think they're independent enough to fulfil some of their goals. Sarah explained how she began to get the bus by herself to college but feels as though her mother still doesn’t think she’s independent enough to travel further afield alone. Sarah said:

“I definitely like when my mom said about my independence, I definitely gained from my independence because I before I got the bus with my mum and auntie who I mentioned in the PATH, Maria, I usually got the PATH em I mean I usually got the bus with her and for my first time going on the bus on my own it’s just getting used to strangers and that. I feel I can get over it and I can deal with strangers now”.

However, she stated: my mam said I wouldn’t be able to go abroad just yet. Sarah also showed a desire to become more independent in order to release some of her parents’ responsibilities:

“when I do more things on my own it gives my mam a rest you know?...and she doesn’t have to do too much for me...’coz she’s always driving for me, she washes my clothes cooks for me...so it’d be kind of good if I was learning how to wash my own clothes and put away my stuff instead of her doing it”.

Brian is currently living independently in an apartment with one roommate. During the final year of his CCL course he was staying in the apartment two nights a week and in his
family home five nights a week. Now, Brian is living in his apartment five nights a week and stays in his family home just two nights during the week. He explained what that meant to him and the new skills he learnt in order to be independent: *em well I've now since leaving Trinity lived in a town more independently. I've now managed to learn how to do my own cooking and I've learned also to pay for the gas and electricity bills...living independently was the biggest one for me.*

Independence was a strong theme that appeared throughout the PATH sessions. One can see how the students desire more independence in relation to travelling abroad and also to release their parents of some duties that they feel they can manage. Brian showed the enormous growth in his independence from staying mainly in his family home to now spending the majority of his time in his own apartment.

**Transitions**

Many students expressed a desire on their PATH to be in an educational course or in employment upon leaving the CCL. All of the students stated that they are either in or have done an educational course or work experience. Upon leaving the CCL Sarah stated: *eh it’s been good I'm doing work experience in a bakery called McCarthy’s Bakery.* Brian undertook an educational course in relation to cookery skills and said: *I did a cookery course in a service and that has went well, learning to do my own cooking and learning to cook independently.* Michael and Mark began attending mainstream colleges upon completion of the CCL. Michael noted how different his new college was in comparison to Trinity and said: *well I'm now doing computer tech courses and the maths is different than in Trinity what we’re doing is on taxes.* Just like Michael, Mark found a stark difference between his new college and the CCL. He stated:

> “well since I left, when I graduated a month ago em I started a new course in September a music course in a college, the difference between that and CCL it’s very strict the college itself it’s kind of a school as well not only just does music course does motoring course and adult evening courses so it’s very different to CCL and very strict and very strict registration as well very different to CCL course”.

Some students have tried to find paid employment but to no avail. Michael stated: *we’re working on that, trying to get a job.* The two students who are in a paid part time job only work for a few hours one day a week. One student accounted how lucky he feels to work one day a week but desires to work on a more permanent basis in his current establishment. For example, Mark said:
“but it’s such a privilege to work for them you know? I haven’t had a proper job since I left school. I’ve been to training centres and worked in music shops, which I did love, but only for a week which wasn’t good enough, it honestly wasn’t good enough but then you know music is so hard to get into you know? It is. If somebody asked me in the solicitor’s office would I like to take that on board as a job and I said yeah I would, but not for the time being so if there is I’d take it on”.

Many students were eager to begin a new educational course or take up paid employment upon leaving the CCL. The students showed that were either taking steps to achieve this goal by doing work experience or have completed the goal by undertaking a new educational course. Students found it difficult to find paid employment and the two students who are employed work minimal hours.

V. Recollection of PATH

The students took part in three interviews in total. The first interview was on the day they undertook their PATH project and this ascertained their initial thoughts of the PATH process. Three months after this, the students undertook a telephone interview with the researcher. The aim of this interview was to find out how they were progressing with the goals they had outlined on their PATH. The final interview took place six months after completion of the PATH project and aimed to discover if the students’ six month goals had been completed and how much they engaged with the PATH during those six months.

During these interviews it was found that most students could not recollect most of the goals that they had put on their PATH. When asked about what six month goals she remembered, Sarah responded: *em I know exercise was one, em meeting up with friends.* Likewise, when Michael was questioned about if he remembered what he put on the PATH, he responded: *no not really... some can be a bit forgotten ‘coz you focus on college and your summer vacation.* Mark was able to mention some goals he remembered but remarked: *I actually honestly can’t remember so so those are the goals I remembered.* The researcher found that most students had completed the majority of goals that they put on their PATH, yet stated that they could not remember them. Despite stating this, students still managed however to complete the goals they had set for themselves.

4.3. Case Two – Parents’ Experience

This case consists of four parents of the four students who undertook the PATH. There pseudonyms are Rachel, James, Ruth and Mary. Rachel is Sarah’s mother, James is
Michael’s father, Ruth is Brian’s mother and Mary is Mark’s mother. The data emerging from these interviews are now presented under five themes:

I. The impact of undertaking the CCL.
II. Parents’ viewpoints on PATH.
III. Attitudes towards autonomy.
IV. Changed perception of their child.
V. Recommendations for PATH.

I. The Impact of Undertaking the CCL

All of the parents felt that the CCL had a significant impact on their child’s life. Many reflected on their child’s schooling thus far and mentioned how the CCL has been the most positive educational setting for their child. Rachel (Sarah’s mother) stated:

“yeah but the education here, this is the best course she’s been on. It’s more inclusive than the secondary schools or the primary schools...you know like the others don’t expect much I think from kids this would have been the most positive definitely without a shadow of a doubt. Yeah it’s just, you couldn’t compare it”.

All of them spoke of how much their child seemed to enjoy the course and what benefits they got out of it. These benefits mainly included enhanced independence with Mary (Mark’s mother) observing: he just realised how vast it (Trinity) was and how many people were there...just gave him an independence and a just totally broader look at you know, everything and social development with James (Michael’s father) noting: he matured a lot in two years, he did. The three lads were shy timid boys going in there, they're fairly assertive now I’d say, that's really worked for them.

However, two parents particularly stated that they would have liked their child to have received paid employment upon completion of the course. Ruth (Brian’s mother) said:

“I think he enjoyed coming here, I think he met a whole range of new people I think it had you know positive benefits in terms of social development. I won’t say in terms of careers as such but certainly in terms of his social development and being able to do it”.

This sentiment is echoed by Rachel who stated: it had a great impact on her, now it didn’t lead to any work or anything so that's kind of I’d love her to have something she could get. That's where the problem is.

Even though the parents felt that the CCL had a positive impact on their child in terms of inclusive education, confidence and social development, the expectation that paid employment would immediately follow the completion of the course led them to feel
disappointment when this did not materialize. Although one principle of the CCL is to enhance individual employability (TCD, 2014) and to equip students with skills that will improve their employability – paid employment is not, nor can be, guaranteed upon completion of the CCL programme. This point is foreground at the CCL Open Day, where students and parents/guardians are offered an overview of the modules of the CCL programme, and the opportunity to undertake work experience (not paid employment) is presented as part of the Career Development module.

II. Viewpoints on PATH

The parents had different perceptions about the PATH process. These perceptions can be viewed by exploring: 1) their expectation of PATH; 2) their understandings of the impact of others attending the PATH; and 3) how they recollected the PATH.

Expectation of PATH

The parents received a letter in the mail along with an information booklet about the PATH prior to the PATH session taking place. This booklet covered what the PATH was and what it entailed. Even though the parents received this information, all of them appeared to have little knowledge on what the PATH would entail. Rachel stated: *I kind of had a vague idea about what it was about, I really was very vague about it.* In a similar vein, James noted: *really, I didn’t know what I was walking into.* Mary’s expectation of the PATH was low until she had the opportunity to support her son in his PATH project. She said: *I expected it to be very loose I expected it to be a bit airy fairy but I found it to be very concise, very directed and positive very positive yeah I really found it it’s past my expectations.* Upon completion of the PATH and realisation of what it involved, all the parents implied that it was beneficial. Rachel noted: *I think it really does make your mind focus on where you’re going and what you have to do to get there.* James was impressed with the creative aspect of the PATH and said that: *I’ve never seen that em map on the wall before...usually you see something like that in written form...and you read through it...but when you get the visual sense of it up in front of you that was excellent.* Mary found the PATH to be extremely advantageous due to how rational and practical she perceived it to be. She stated:

“I’ve been through not something like this before but things where goals were set out for him or goals that he himself has thought of and I’d look at them and thought they’re never going to happen, not realistic or whatever, but today I found it just realistic and to me that's the most important thing. If there had been stuff up there that had been completely
unattainable for him and not possible I would be very annoyed and very disappointed but what I liked about it is it’s very real, practical very pragmatic the whole way the I think that's the strength of it you know”.

Despite parents stating that they did not know what to expect from the PATH, they found it a valuable process. However, given that the parents had received information regarding the PATH to their home in hard copy format, it was striking to find how unaware of the process they actually were.

**Impact of Others Attending the PATH**

Some parents felt that their presence or the staff presence during their child’s PATH had no bearing on what their child was saying. Rachel noted: *no I don’t think so I think she, em I think she said whatever she thought now she didn’t hold back on anything anyway. James reiterated this point by stating: no he was comfortable there he was comfortable there you’d know when Michael’s not comfortable even the way Michael was sitting down and relaxed when Michael’s not comfortable he’d be sitting up right.*

Brian’s mother was not present in the room during the PATH. A support worker of Brian’s attended the PATH instead. The reason why Brian and his mother, Ruth, decided this proves interesting in relation to how they feel about the presence of others during the PATH process. She said:

“I think he would be inclined to say more without me. I think the presence of a parent in his case anyway, but I think with a lot of young adults’ cases tend to clam up a bit if the presence in there is inhibiting. I’d say it’s more so with adults with intellectual disabilities because parents are naturally protective of them but in the process they keep making decisions for them. Decisions that are obviously in their best interest, or they feel are in their best interest but in a situation like this I kind of felt it was important to let him go off and have his own voice without any interference from me ‘coz I would have my own views as to what might be in his best interest but at least that he gets out there what he thinks you know?”

How parents perceive their presence and the presence of staff during the students’ PATH provides a useful insight into the experience of PATH. Some parents felt that the presence of others did not hinder their child stating what goals they desired. Whereas, Ruth observed that the presence of a parent could cause their child to not state their true aspirations.
Recollection

During the second follow-up interview and the third final interview, a lot of the parents stated that they hadn’t looked at the PATH nor could they recall what goals their child put on it. The follow-up interview occurred three months after the student undertook their PATH and the final interview took place six months after the initial interview. Rachel stated: *ah she’s been getting on grand she’s em I forget what was on the PATH now I haven’t been checking the PATH to be honest with you.* Just like Mary, who requested the researcher to: *remind me of them (the goals).* Ruth showed a vague idea of what was on her sons PATH: *I kind of yeah I’m not fully aware no if you asked or had something down.* Even though the parents stated that they could not recollect the PATH, most goals that their child set had been completed. This raises questions about how the PATH is being used to support their child in achieving their goals. It is clear that goals are being met but whether the PATH is guiding these goals is unclear.

III. Attitudes of Parents to Autonomy

Parents showed positive attitudes towards how the PATH encourages decision making and independence within their child. They felt that employment and educational opportunities were limited for their child and held hopes that the CCL would lead to direct employment or follow-on educational courses. They also felt reservations about how well their child was maintaining social connections.

Choice and Decision Making

The parents were pleased that their child had the opportunity to voice what goals they wanted to achieve. Rachel observed: *I think it was very good for her to be able to say it, I do think it’s good for her yeah...it gives her a voice really doesn’t it? It does give her a voice.* During his interview, James, who is in his fifties, recounted that his mother’s generation held the opinion that if a child was born with a disability it was a question of *what are you going to do with her?* He found it invigorating that attitudes are changing and stated:

*“well it was refreshing to see that Michael had an involvement in what he was saying usually, and I've dealt with people with disabilities for the last thirty years and usually people dictate people with disabilities ok? It was refreshing to see that Michael had his say in what was happening”.*

Mary was surprised by how capable her son was in making his own decisions. She remarked: *oh yes, yes I actually didn’t know how articulate he was. I also didn’t know how*
much about himself he understood so that showed me he knows himself very well I didn’t think he had such awareness.

Parents showed contentment that their child was given the opportunity to voice their own opinions. As one can see from James’s comment above, the attitude towards people with ID making their own decisions is changing. By allowing the voice of the student to be heard, parents were able to see how capable their child is in making their own choices.

Independence

The PATH project enabled parents to view their child with more independence. It prompted them to reflect on how they treat their child at that moment in time and what can be done in order to promote independence within their child. Rachel remarked on the realisation that herself and her husband won’t always be around to support their child: *(the PATH) does probably open up the possibility of her being independent, a couple of years time, god forbid if anything happened the either of us she would have to be independent...so it is vital that she’s independent as far as I'm concerned.* Mary commented on the need for her to step back and allow her child to pursue certain goals even if she worries about the risks involved. The fact that Brian, another student participant in this study, is living the majority of the week independently in an apartment, made Mary realise that that could be a possibility for her son also. She said:

“yeah well you know when he started cycling first and wanted to cycle oh my god that was another with him balance they said was really bad so I was thinking falling off every five minutes and he fell off a couple of times but I decided you know everybody falls off a bike and I took a step back from that and he cycles and he goes to places that I just cannot believe because I wouldn’t allow him I’d say don’t go there but he goes because he is a man, which I find difficult to you know see and then in the house now he cooks a few bits but I'm definitely going to let him cook more and also listening to the other boy moving out of home, boy, thirty something I would have thought oh no no no never he could never move out of home but now it’s got me thinking maybe he might want to so that's another thing that's made me sit up and look at my own attitude really”.

The parents’ opinion toward their child being independent appeared to be reinforced throughout the PATH. There was a general recognition of the need for independence as parents will not always be around to support their child. Furthermore, there was a realisation that their child has more capabilities then the parent allowed for.
Employment and Courses

Parents put a strong emphasis on employment and education. As stated during the students’ data analysis, all of the students are in an educational course and/or work experience or paid employment. Parents showed a desire for their child to be in an educational course or paid employment. Rachel stated the difficulty in finding a suitable educational course:

“yeah it’s picking the right one, I’d love her to get one now I just don’t know which one she’d find. I’d love her to do another one where she’d fit in yeah, that’d be the big thing, there's loads of courses but it’s just finding the one”.

James felt a similar predicament in relation to employment: well, that's he, if there's, if it's available he’s there. It’s not that he doesn’t want one and put a block up against it, it’s probably market dictates.

As one can see from the parents’ feelings on their child’s time in CCL, parents hoped the CCL would have a follow-on educational course. Some parents also assumed that the CCL would provide access to paid employment upon completion of the course.

Friends

Friendship was an important aspect of most of the students’ PATH projects. Most parents felt that their child had been in touch with their CCL friends somewhat, but most of the parents felt that more could be done to enable their child to maintain their friendships.

Ruth remarked:

“you know, he realises as well, Brian is on the ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), he’s ASD and it’s very easy for people like Brian to get very isolated, you know and he is aware that it’s very important to keep in touch with people and I think that maybe PATH heightened his awareness of the need to you know keep in touch”.

She maintained that the CCL should have procedures in place that enable the students to stay in touch:

“that's what I think, it’s actually confusion between them. I was saying to George on the day that if they had a formal six month meeting by email that said look were going to all the year going to have lunch together no matter where once every six months so that and then they can organise other meet up themselves but if they got that organised once or twice it might be a huge support to help them to stay in touch”.

Rachel recognised that her daughter hadn’t met up with her CCL friends as much as she had outlined in the PATH: now she hasn’t really met up with the girls and that was one thing that was on it. She reiterated Ruth’s point that she felt more could be done to support the students to maintain their friendships:
“I suppose the thing about keeping in touch with friends I suppose that could be better coordinated ‘coz she hasn’t got the skills to coordinate it if you know what I mean...they do still kind of need a bit of support she’d often say, she was all enthusiastic about it initially but then it waned you know, and people ah this doesn’t suit me and that doesn’t suit me”.

Despite friendship being a reoccurring and important aspect to the students’ PATH projects, parents didn’t feel that this goal was fully achieved. One can see, however, that the parents perceive the maintenance of their child’s friendships different to how most of the students’ viewed the preservation of their CCL friendships.

IV. Changed Perceptions

The PATH allowed parents to view their child from a new perspective. This had profound effects on some of the parents in relation to how they perceive their child. Rachel noted that: you can limit her options a little bit but you kind of have to I suppose to a degree but I suppose it does kind of open up the possibilities of her doing other things. She acknowledged that she has had to restrict her daughter’s options a bit but that the PATH has allowed her to think a bit broader and expand the boundaries for her daughter a bit more. Mary was overwhelmed by the PATH process and it allowed her to view her son in a completely new light:

“I thought probably because from the beginning expectations were quite low and his initial diagnoses the psychologist didn’t say he had aspergers or autism she just said to me your son will never be bright. So that is where you're starting from so you don’t really have many expectations or aspirations and I suppose I have treated him like that and you know delighted he can play music and all that kind of thing but never expected much more but today showed me that he's so much more than I knew, so much brighter than I thought and so much more engaging...he's so well aware of his own strengths and he's so anxious to reach out and be friendly to people which never happened before really... it made me look at him differently and look at the whole disability differently ‘coz I know his way of looking at life is really interesting and enlightening yet you lose sight of that when you're trying to make him conform, that's probably what I do”.

By attending her son’s PATH, Mary gained a new insight into her son’s social skills and strengths. It gave her a new perspective on the concept of disability and allowed her the opportunity to reflect on her attitude toward her son.
V. Recommendations

A few of the parents had recommendations on how to make the PATH more efficient. In Ruth’s feedback, she commented on how this research has been beneficial for herself and her son to review the PATH:

“I think it’s very useful actually what you're doing to bring people back for half an hour tops to ask them how they're doing with it for a year maybe six months that's one recommendation. I know we’re kind of getting the benefit of that know ‘coz you're doing the research but I think that would be good...it’d kind of bring it back into focus and be like yeah I'm doing that and I'm getting there and I need to do more work on that and that's useful, that's what I think anyways”.

James believed the PATH could be a longer process and should begin when the students enter Trinity. He stated:

“well maybe if the PATH had of started for them the day they walked into Trinity we might be at a different stage now or a build up to the PATH if you get where I'm coming from? Where it really came at the end of the two years maybe if there was introductions to the PATH at the start of the two years and maybe a phased in sort of thing”.

One parent appeared overwhelmed by the whole process and when questioned about any recommendations she may have, she could not think of any as she found the whole process faultless. Mary noted: I was totally amazed by it I can’t...oh it’s just so well handled you know I couldn’t fault it definitely.

4.4. Case Three - Support Worker’s Experience

This case consists of one job advocate support worker -Tony- who is employed by a service provider and has worked with Brian for many years. Co-workers mentioned by Tony have been given the pseudonyms of Deirdre and Marie. Tony attended the PATH session at Brian’s request. Tony’s involvement provides another angle to the exploration of how people experience the PATH. In order to explore the experience of the PATH process it’s important to hear the variety of voices that are involved in it. By examining the data produced by interviews with a professional support worker, one receives a new dimension into the experience of the PATH.

When asked about Brian’s time in the CCL Tony believed that Brian enjoyed it very much and that it had a significant impact on Brian’s life, especially in terms of social identity and organisational skills. Tony stated:

“like he enjoyed it, he got an awful lot out of it you know so he enjoyed the whole social identity and coming in and participating in the course...Now an awful lot happened for
Brian over the last year or two and he seems to be coping really well now with all the changes”.

Tony saw a change in Brian as a result of the CCL. He noted how Brian’s social skills were enhanced as a result of the course and that this gave him a new identity of being a Trinity student.

As a support worker in a service, Tony has had experience with other PCPs. From this, he was able to draw comparisons between them and the PATH. This provided a useful insight into the experience of the PATH in relation to other PCPs. Tony accounted: *yeah it would kind of be pretty similar when you put them together. Most of the lads and girls in my service would be doing something similar they would have their interests...it’s all about personal development.* From having experience with other PCPs, Tony had an idea of what to expect from the PATH: *yeah yeah the kind of expectation like I knew the theme that's involved.* Upon completing the PATH, Tony was impressed by the simplicity of the tool. He was enthusiastic about extending the knowledge he learnt to his service stating: *no no that's very straightforward it’s a good module that you use so I’ll be passing on the information that I got to my manager in work as well like you know.*

Tony made an interesting statement in relation to choice and decision making in other PCPs that he has completed. When asked about the emphasis of the individual’s voice with whom the PCP is for, Tony noted:

“in some cases it can be what’s practical and what is achievable like you don’t want to be setting someone up for a fall you know? Everything is researched and if they want to have a career in something and it’s not achievable ‘coz of their intellectual disability then you know we might try to see if we can achieve that by an interest or an educational programme and you know what’s practical and what’s achievable is the most important thing for service users”.

The emphasis on what is practical and achievable for the individual with the ID is an interesting concept. This practicality and achievability can be subjective.

In relation to independence, Tony saw a vast development within Brian. He discussed how Brian’s confidence had been enhanced and how well he had coped with the change to independent living. He stated:

“well he's thrown himself into getting more, what would you say? Up to speed or more em confident in relation to the independent living, so he's gone from staying one day a week to staying nearly five days a week which is great...at the start it was a bit of a struggle for him but for the team, Deirdre and Marie the two girls that are assigned to him in the service, like he's coping with it very well and his mam like is brilliant she’s putting in an awful lot
of effort too...for someone that has the level of autism that he has em his mam would encourage him, he drives like he passed his driver licence there like two years ago so he's proactive and as busy as he possibly can”.

Tony remarked on the encouragement Brian received from his mother and how this helped Brian to get to the stage he is at. After working with Brian for many years, Tony was able to see the vast progress Brian has made.

Tony maintains that finding educational courses for Brian has been difficult. As a support worker he has worked with other individuals with ID and is aware of the hardship faced by individuals in relation to finding suitable educational courses and paid employment. He observed that:

“there's not a lot like over the last couple of years, we find it very hard for to get courses for Brian like a couple of years ago he done his Junior Cert Applied he done a couple of subjects in it and in order for a mainstream school to take on that responsibility we found it very very hard to do...he ended up passing out on his which was a fantastic achievement for him but outside of that, in relation to educational courses, there's not really an awful lot out there for lads and girls with intellectual disabilities especially if they covered more or less all of the FETAC level 3 modules which Brian has”.

Tony is satisfied with how the motor car company and Brian work together. However, this job only entails one day of work a week and Tony is conscious that, in time, Brian needs something more than that. Tony noted:

“the only thing I’d be conscious of is maybe somewhere down the line he might achieve it, might be a year or two or three years away try to achieve another job for him or something different but that's going to be difficult because Brian has cognitive problems in relation to concentration, it’s going to be very hard to get a job where people within you know you don’t get too many areas that will support him or understand his needs where up in the motor car company they understand his needs and he goes about his work and they understand, they work with Brian and Brian works with them, so that will be an obstacle”.

Tony appeared at a loss of choices in relation to suitable educational courses. Furthermore, he discussed the difficulty in finding paid employment in an area that suits the individual.

Tony recognised the need for support in maintaining the friendships Brian had made during his time in the CCL. Tony asserts: “it’s very important now that the friends that Brian has made that he kind of keeps, he needs an awful lot of support to keep in contact with the lads he’s made in the course."
4.5. **Conclusion**

This chapter looked at three cases – students, parents and a support worker. It described what was found when the data from the interviews was analysed. The case of the students was looked at first. One can see how undertaking the CCL had a strong impact on their lives, mainly in terms of enhancing self-confidence and gaining friendships. What the students expected PATH to be like and their reactions to the reality of the process were explored. The influence of others attending the student’s PATH was discussed and it was found that parental and staff presence may hinder the disclosure of students’ true aspirations. Autonomy of the students was looked at in relation to choice and decision making, independence and transitions. Finally, the concept of recalling the PATH was discussed and it was shown that students found it difficult to remember all that was on the PATH. From the parents’ perspective, the CCL was seen to have a positive influence on the lives of their children. However, they had expectations that the CCL would lead to employment and were disappointed when this did not occur. Upon completion of the PATH parents had changed their perceptions of their child and recognised new potential regarding autonomy and independence. Finally, the opinions of a professional support worker added a new dimension to the findings and allowed the researcher to get a deeper insight into the understanding of the PATH process and its implications.

The following ‘Discussion’ chapter elaborates on and critiques the findings of this study and examines whether this author has answered the three main research questions.
5.0. Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine whether the current study has answered the three main research questions, namely:

1. To explore the life experiences and future plans of students as they transition from the CCL.
2. To identify the responses of the study group to the PATH process.
3. To find out if PATH is an effective person-centred planning tool.

Exploring the life experiences and future plans of the students as they transition from the CCL is discussed first. The life experiences will be examined in relation to the students’ prior education. The future plans of the students in relation to employment, educational courses and sustaining friendships are discussed. Second, the responses of the participants to the PATH process is explored by examining their expectation of the PATH, who should be present for PATH, over-lapping goals, recollection of PATH and the parent’s changed perception of their child. The concept of autonomy is also addressed in order to deduce if PATH is an effective planning tool in promoting empowerment. The relevance and impact of this study will be highlighted and recommendations and suggestions for future research will be outlined. Before concluding, a reflection on the researcher’s learning process is described.

5.2. Exploring the Life Experiences and Future Plans of Students as they Transition from the CCL

In the previous chapter it was outlined how the different participants of this current study - students, parents and a support worker - viewed the CCL as having a positive impact on the student’s life. Furthermore, some parents noted that the CCL has been the most inclusive form of education that their child has received to date, expressing concerns about the value of previous educational experiences and the uncertainty of securing future educational courses that are suitable for their child. This is significant as Ireland’s special education policy experienced a radical shift throughout the 1990’s. Special education policy evolved from a basic focus on educational provision for distinct categories to a more inclusive view of special education mainly delivered through mainstream settings (Griffin & Shelvin, 2007). However, even though these inclusive education policies have developed, some parents from this study believe that the exclusion of people with ID
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) is an influential international policy that encourages the need for inclusive education. Article 24 of the UNCRPD outlines the need for an inclusive education system that does not exclude people with disabilities from the general education system through the provision of reasonable accommodation and individualised support (United Nations, 2006). In Ireland, The Education Act 1998 represented the first step towards inclusive education (Meaney, Kiernan & Monahan, 2005). However, the definition of Special Educational Needs in the Act is strictly from a medical model point of view (Griffin & Shelvin, 2007). The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 was a turning point for education legislation provision for pupils with special needs. The central tenet of the Act is to ensure the provision of inclusive education unless there are particular reasons why a specialised placement is required (Griffin & Shelvin, 2007). The EPSEN Act embraces a definition derived from a social model of disability, and this is in marked contrast to the definition used in the Education Act 1998.

By examining the inclusive educational policy that exists in Ireland, it’s interesting that the parents noted that educational provision for their child prior to the CCL was less inclusive. These views offer a valuable insight into the value of inclusive tertiary education programmes for people with ID as a preparation and a transition into further education and/or employment, progress to extend access to tertiary education is still however a work in progress. Internationally, inclusive education in third level can be seen in eleven programmes across the United States of America (O’Brien, Shevlin, O’Keefe, Fitzgerald, Curtis & Kenny, 2009), in the University of Alberta, Canada (J.P. Das Centre, 2015) and Flinders University, South Australia (Flinders, 2014). Even though O’Brien et al. (2009) comment on the paucity of these programmes, opportunities for students with ID to attend third level education is gradually increasing. Considering the parents’ observations that the CCL has been the most inclusive education their child has received, it seems necessary for more programmes like the CCL to exist. Exploring past educational experiences allows the researcher to understand some of the life experiences of the students.

In relation to employment and post CCL educational opportunities, the students, parents and support worker have shown concerns about what opportunities exist. Within the legislative framework of inclusive education, it’s important for third level education to be encompassed also. Kaehne (2009) & Raghaven & Pawson (2008) noted that transition outcomes for people with ID remain poor due to the fact that there is little choice for the
individual transitioning and their families. In order for students to have a smooth transition from the CCL it’s vital that suitable educational programmes develop further. In relation to employment, many participants spoke about our current economic climate and how this inhibits employment opportunities for their child. This is similar to studies that have shown that environmental factors can contribute to the opportunities to make choices regarding employment (Jahoda, Kemp, Riddell & Banks, 2008; Nota, Ferrari, Soresi & Wehmeyer, 2007; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). The students who are earning a wage for the job they do only receive a minimal sum due to the restricted hours that they work. Likewise, there was recognition among the participants that there are very few educational courses which suit their son or daughter. This prompts questions as to why such resources do not exist. As stated earlier, there is legislation in place that aims to promote inclusiveness in education. Nevertheless, the participants in this study are struggling to find suitable courses. Some parents spoke of the assumption that the CCL would lead to employment upon completion of the course. Many spoke of the work experience the student undertook as part of the course and wondered why no paid employment could come of this. Many also hoped for a follow-on course from the CCL or for the duration of CCL itself to be longer. One can see from previous studies conducted on PCP that the benefits of PCP did not extend to certain areas of people’s lives, such as employment (Robertson et al., 2005; 2006). This research on the PATH is congruent with that finding.

Many of the students PATHs included goals in relation to sustaining friendships into the future. Students stated that they had been maintaining their CCL friendships to some degree. However, parents felt as though their child needed more support in order to preserve these friendships. This support they believed should come from the CCL and that a protocol should be in place that encourages the class to meet up at regular intervals. The researcher noted that only one student spoke of friends outside of the CCL programme and raises the question on the social networks of the students. This mirrors Roberston et al. (2005; 2006) who found that the benefits of PCP did not extend to wider, more inclusive social networks. Many appear to only have their CCL friends in their friendship circles and if they are not maintaining contact with these friends, social isolation could possibly occur. The parent of the son who spoke of friends outside of the CCL stated that his friends are also on the autism spectrum. The question of friendships with people without disabilities arises in this context. It appears that most students are dependent on their friendships from within the CCL. If this is the case then ensuring that these friendships are maintained is of vital importance.
5.3. Responses of the Study Group Regarding the PATH Process

This section will explore the responses of the students, the parents and the support worker to the PATH process. It will examine: the participant’s expectations of the PATH and the reality that transpired, who should be present for the PATH, overlapping goals, recollection of the PATH and parents changed perception of their child.

Expectations of PATH

The students and parents stated in the findings that they did not know what to expect before doing the PATH. The reality of how the PATH transpired was quite different to what they perceived. However, before the PATH took place, students had received a demonstration about what the PATH would entail and were shown examples of the PATH poster. They also received a talk on planning for the future and were encouraged to think about goals they would like to aspire too. An accessible information booklet about PATH was distributed by mail to the students and the parents. This booklet covered topics such as: “What does PATH mean?”, “What is a PATH?”, “Who is it for?”, “Who is invited?”, “How long does it take?” and “What happens at the PATH meeting?”. The booklet also explained each section of the PATH in detail. Contact details of the staff member coordinating the PATH were included to address any queries. In light of this information, it was surprising to the researcher to find out that students and parents alike had very little idea of what was involved in PATH. This raises the question of what more can be done to ensure that students and parents know what to expect from the PATH. The experience of undertaking the PATH may be quite different if the people involved had a better understanding of what to expect. The reality of what occurred during the PATH process was unanticipated by most of the students and parents. Students stated how the visual aspect of the PATH was beneficial to them. Parents and support worker also illustrated this statement.

Who Should be Present for the PATH?

An intriguing finding was the recognition of the influence of others who attended the PATH finder’s (i.e. student’s) PATH. In two circumstances parent and child differed in their opinion on the influence of others. Two of the students stated that they were anxious about mentioning certain aspirations for fear of what their parents and staff would think. The parents of these students were unaware of their children’s apprehension and believed that they did not conceal any goals. This is an important finding in relation to how students experience the PATH. The PATH encourages students to include people in their PATH
session who will support them to achieve their goals. However, if the student feels that some of their goals cannot be disclosed in front of these people, then their PATH may not be inclusive of their genuine goals. Students may be incorporating goals that please parents and staff members and are not wholly reflective of their true aspirations. One can see from humanistic psychology that an individual needs a setting that provides them with genuineness, acceptance and empathy in order for personal development to occur (Rogers, 1995). As PCP originated from this basis, the setting and context in which a PATH is undertaken is of vital importance. Transparency is crucial in order for an individual to complete a PATH that encompasses all of their aspirations. If the individual feels uncomfortable or under pressure during the PATH session then their goals may be a compilation of what they believe people want to hear and not what they truly desire.

Over-lapping of Goals

One can observe in the previous chapter that common conceptions of choice and decision making, independence, employment and courses, and friends appeared in all of the students’ PATHs. This raises questions as to why the students had so many similar goals. It could be due to the fact that the students are in a similar phase in their lives and so have common thoughts on future plans. Another reason for common goals could be the way in which the PATH is executed. The PATH process incorporates a certain set of steps and questions. The way in which these are posed could prompt similar responses from the students. Even though the individual interests in relation to these themes differ, very similar themes are apparent nonetheless. If this is the case, then the PATH itself may have inhibiting factors that do not allow for full and genuine goals to be acknowledged by the PATH finder.

Recollection of PATH

During the interviews students and parents stated that they could not remember most of the goals that were on the PATH. However, all of the students had completed most of their six month goals. When questioned whether the student would be doing what they're doing now without the PATH, only one parent stated that they wouldn’t and that the PATH was invaluable to planning what her child would do upon leaving the CCL. Even though all had completed the majority of their goals, they still said that they couldn’t recollect nor do they use the PATH. This raises the question: are these goals and desires already recognised and being worked on by student and parent prior to setting the PATH? Most students and parents stated that the PATH is a valuable tool and that it was a
worthwhile project to undertake. Even if goals were already in motion prior to doing the PATH, it’s possible that the PATH helped to put a more stringent plan in place in order to have them achieved by a certain date. The PATH could have helped them to develop a more definitive plan then they may have previously had, thus providing them with a stepping-stone that was subsequently forgotten.

**Changed Perception**

The PATH enabled parents to see their child in a new light. The response by some of the parents in relation to this revelation was overwhelming. It enabled parents to gain a new perspective on their child that they would not have obtained without experiencing the PATH.

Previous case studies suggest that PCP can be beneficial and may alter the perception of participants (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2004). This was found to be true in the case of this research. They spoke of how it opened up new possibilities for their child and allowed them to look at their own attitude toward their child as well. Many parents stated how they wouldn’t previously allow their child to partake in certain activities such as, travelling long distances on a bus alone. However, the PATH made them reassess their thinking process and enabled them to view the capabilities of their child to carry out activities that they previously believed their child was unable to do.

**5.4. Is PATH an Effective Planning Tool for Student Autonomy and Empowerment?**

The UNCRPD recognises the importance for people with ID to have their individual autonomy and independence, which includes freedom to make their own choices (United Nations, 2006). The PATH as a planning tool endeavours to empower students to make their own decisions in relation to their future plans. This is important because historically, people with ID have not had individual autonomy and have been restricted in making choices for themselves due to the belief that their impairment made them incapable of doing so (Carlson, 2010). As stated in Chapter Four, there does not seem to be a common understanding of what is meant by autonomy, however, it is often conceptualised with terms such as self-determination, independence and empowerment (Björnsdóttir, Stefánsdóttir & Stefánsdóttir, 2014). As PATH is a tool that aims to empower the PATH finder in making his/her decisions, this section will discuss choice, decision making and independence for the students of this study. Relevant research conducted on PCP will be noted as findings in this study relate to previous research.
The students, parents and support worker acknowledged the virtue of the student making decisions in relation to goals themselves. One parent recognised that people with ID can sometimes be spoken for and the students themselves stated that they felt overwhelmed in making their own choices. Trepidation when deciding future goals can be experienced by anyone but one wonders if this is particularly so for adults with ID if they have not been given the opportunity to voice their opinions before. Tony, Brian's support worker, made an insightful remark in relation to previous PCPs he has been a part of. He stated that individuals do make their own decisions but only when they are deemed practical by professionals. Mansell & Beadle-Brown (2004) recognised that PCP should provide the support required to achieve goals rather than limiting goals to what individuals are assumed to be able to manage. What is feasible to an individual is a subjective concept. One may not believe that an individual has the capacity to obtain certain goals and so limits them from ever trying. Furthermore, one can see from the literature that a predominance of plans are made that suit services rather than suiting the individual themselves (Helsop & Abbott, 2007; Wagner, Newman, Levine & Garza, 2006). In order to promote and sustain the autonomy of individuals with ID they should be supported in trying to obtain their goals rather than never been given the opportunity to try. During the PATH interviews, parents and the support worker stated how practical and pragmatic the PATH appeared. This makes the researcher wonder again if true desires were not placed on the PATH for fear of them being unattainable.

One parent discussed the importance of independence in relation to the acknowledgment that her husband and herself will not always be around to care for their daughter. The realisation of the significance of independence could be seen throughout the students’ and parents’ interviews. The fact that one student is living independently inspired some parents to believe that their child can do that too. Prior to the PATH they believed that that could never come to fruition. Saadah (2002) described autonomy as “what makes a life one’s own” (p.979). If this definition is to be used in relation to independence, one can see the difference in what independence means to an individual. For some students in this study, independence meant being more responsible for themselves within the family home, for others this meant living outside the family home and fending for themselves. The PATH enabled individuals to examine their own opinions of independence.

From this study one can see that the PATH was effective in promoting autonomy for the students in relation to choice, decision making and independence. Students showed satisfaction in voicing their opinions on their PATH. Holburn et al. (2004) showed that the quality of life indicators of autonomy, choice-making and satisfaction improved when PCP
was utilised. These findings are reflected in this current research. In relation to promoting autonomy, there is evidence that people with ID can do so if they are given adequate support (Nota et al., 2007; Wehmeyer & Garner, 2003; Wullink, Widdershoven, Lantman-de Valk, Metsemakers & Dinant, 2009). As a result of attending the PATH, many parents acknowledged the importance of promoting independence in their children and supporting them in achieving it.

5.5. Recommendations

In light of these findings, the researcher has compiled recommendations that may help alleviate some of the issues that the participants experienced during PATH. The recommendations that some of the parents gave will also be discussed in this section. A recommendation on future research will also be included.

As one can see, even though students participated in PATH preparation classes and both student and parent received an information booklet, neither case knew what to expect from the PATH session. In order to combat this, it is proposed that a pre-PATH meeting take place with student and parents. In this way, both will know what to expect of PATH and will have the opportunity to be more prepared for the session.

As students stated, the poster in which the PATH is drawn on can be too large to fit on a wall. If the student is unable to hang their poster up in a convenient place then they may never look at it. If the student never observes what is on the PATH then it could be easily forgotten thus rendering it futile. In order to address this, one recommends that the student receives a downsized version of the poster. As the students said that the visual aspect of the poster was important to them, the researcher believes that carrying out the PATH on a large poster is an efficient way of conducting the PATH. However, in terms of ease of use, this large poster can be too cumbersome for the students. Another suggestion apart from a downsized copy of the poster is to transfer a photo of the large poster onto a computer. This way it can be emailed to the students or stored on a USB. The students in the CCL spent two years doing a computer module so this will not only make accessing their PATH handy but will also serve to maintain their computer skills. By setting a picture of their PATH as the wallpaper on their computer or laptop, the students could be reminded of the PATH every time they use it.

An important issue that arose during this research was the impact of the people attending the student’s PATH. Some students stated that they did not reveal all of the goals they desired for fear of what their parents and staff would think. The researcher then believes it is very important for the PATH finder to include people in the room that they
feel comfortable revealing all their goals with. As one parent noted, children may say certain things to please their parents rather than saying what pleases them. If a pre-PATH session were to take place, this issue could be discussed and the student could decide who would be best to undertake the PATH with them. The presumption seems to be that it is the parents that undertake the PATH with them but if this serves to hinder what the student wants to say then a rethink as to who joins the PATH is needed. Wetherow & Wetherow (2003) acknowledged this point that if one limits the PATH invitation to the presumed supporters, i.e., immediate family members, caregivers and friends, one may miss a rich set of potential connections which they believe could be wider community members who share an interest with the PATH finder. For example, if the PATH finder is interested in reading then they should explore the avenue of inviting a member of their local book club to attend their PATH. Likewise, the student should have a say in the staff members who perform the PATH. Some may not feel comfortable discussing certain issues with the staff members present. Understandably, the PATH is run and co-ordinated by the staff in the CCL and to remove them from the process would make executing the PATH extremely difficult. Outside agencies may need to be used. However, this would be resource dependent and poses the problem that an individual may feel even more uncomfortable around a stranger.

One can see the common conceptions that appear throughout the students’ PATHs in relation to choice and decision making, independence, employment and courses and friends. The overwhelmingly common goals that the students share makes one speculate about the way in which PATH is carried out. The researcher wonders if the steps and questions used in PATH guide the students in such a way that they all end up with very similar goals. As a PCP tool it’s vitally important that the individual guides the PATH. One wonders if staff or parents unintentionally lead the PATH. The stringent steps involved in PATH may in itself act as a hindrance and guide students into answers that are not necessarily their own. In order for this not to be the case, one feels it’s important to examine the way in which PATH is executed and look deeply at each step and how they’re posed to ensure they do not encompass too many leading questions.

Some parents made recommendations in relation to how students could be better supported in reaching some of their goals. This was particularly apparent in goals that were based around maintaining friendships. Most parents reiterated how difficult it was for their child to remain in contact with their CCL friends. It was recommended by some of the parents that the staff of the CCL could organise class reunions at regular intervals during the year. In relation to this recommendation, the researcher believes that there is merit in
organising one or two class reunions within the first year of graduation in order for students to be formally reconnected. By doing this, students have the opportunity to see class mates again and swap contact details which may encourage them to remain in contact.

Parents also made recommendations on how to make the PATH more effective. One parent stated that because they were involved in this research that it encouraged herself and her son to stick to the PATH. She explained how conducting follow-up meetings at six month and one year intervals would be beneficial to the student. The researcher believes that this is a good recommendation that should become an aspect of the PATH. As one can see, students and parents stated how they had forgotten some of the PATH. If follow-up meetings were to become a custom once a student finishes the PATH, they may be more inclined to stick to the PATH more and achieve the goals they desired. Furthermore, Carnaby & Lewis (2005) stated that there is a greater chance of success of an individual with an ID experiencing a smooth transition if careful planning is utilised before, during and after the transition phase.

5.6. Future Research

In relation to future work, the researcher recommends that a research project like this is elongated in order to see how the students fared after one year and further into the future. Unfortunately, time restraints in relation to this project made following up with the students after one year unfeasible.

This research captured the voices of the students, parents and a professional support worker to the PATH. In future research, the opinions of the staff coordinating the PATH should be included also. This would give a new insight into how the PATH is experienced by all those involved.

The participants of this study showed how advantageous a course like the CCL has been. Research into why more inclusive third level education isn’t in existence should be carried out and developed. Furthermore, parents and students stated that they wanted the CCL to be longer in duration. Research should be conducted to discover if this would be beneficial and/or feasible.

5.7. Relevance and Impact of the Study

As one can see from the literature review, research in relation to the PATH is sparse. Even though this is a small case study and has its limitations, it still serves as a step towards investigating the PATH. As the CCL has been using PATH to guide students
through the transition from college, it’s important to note how students are engaging with it. Up until now, staff members of the CCL had anecdotal evidence that the PATH was an effective tool but had no empirical evidence to support this. One can see that the participants did find the PATH to be an efficient tool even if there are certain areas that can be improved upon. Now that one knows how students experience the PATH, one can begin to take steps to improve that experience. The recommendations from this research can be incorporated by the staff of the CCL which could hopefully aid in the efficiency of the PATH process. This will have an impact on future graduates of the CCL as it is now known how students experience the PATH process. The involvement of parents and support worker documented the variety of voices in the PATH and enabled the researcher to explore the experience of students in greater detail.

5.8. Reflection

In order to conduct this research, the researcher had to become completely immersed in research methods. It wasn’t until she was thoroughly engaged with her own research project that what she had learnt about research methods in the class room began to make sense. At the beginning of this project, the researcher felt extremely overwhelmed by what was ahead of her. Having struggled to understand all of the concepts that are involved in research methods, the idea of carrying out her own research was daunting. However, once she began to take steps to put the research question into motion, those things she believed she never understood began to make sense. She grew to become more logical in her approach towards answering her research question. Once she knew what she wanted answered she was able to formulate a methodology that would enable her to do so. During her undergraduate degree, the researcher had to carry out a literature review and create a research proposal. This undergraduate project did not require data collection or data analysis to take place. Therefore, her experience of collecting and analysing data was restricted to what she was taught in lectures. The researcher had never conducted interviews before this research. She felt nervous before her first interview but as they progressed those nerves subsided and she began to feel comfortable in her abilities. Furthermore, the experience of the pilot interviews allowed her to recognise what interviewing entailed. The researcher worked on her literature review and transcriptions alongside her data collection. Once data collection was complete, she began the perceived arduous task of data analysis. The researcher assumed that the volume of data generated by this research would be overwhelming for her novice research skills. She was fearful that she didn’t know enough about data analysis to carry it out efficiently. However, by
returning to research method books and slides from past lectures, the researcher was surprised in her ability to understand and know how to apply the learning to her research. This showed the researcher that she shouldn’t undermine herself too much. She gained awareness about herself and her confidence in relation to her research skills increased. By conducting this research, the researcher not only learnt more about research methods but learnt more about herself as a student.

5.9. Conclusion

In light of this discussion, one can see that the research questions have been answered. The experience of the PATH process on college students with ID has been thoroughly explored by examining the findings. One can see how the study group engaged with the PATH process and their responses to it. The researcher wished to know if the PATH is an effective person-centred planning tool and from examining the concepts of autonomy and empowerment, she believes it is. Even though there are improvements that can be made in relation to its efficiency, the data obtained from students, parents and support worker would lead the researcher to believe that the PATH is an effective and useful tool for students. It appears that the PATH does encourage the completion of meaningful goals and acts as a guide for student’s transition out of the CCL.
6.0. References


Glouberman, D. (2013). Humanistic psychology: How it was and how it may be. In R. House, D. Kalisch & J. Maidman (Eds.), *The future of humanistic psychology* (pp. 125-130). Herefordshire; PCCS Books LTD.


### 7.0. Appendices

#### 7.1. Appendix A- Interview Guide for CCL Graduates

**Aim:** to find out what happens when people leave CCL.

Introduction of Interviewer – Introduce self, explain what I wish to know and over view of what I’ll be asking.

Introduction of Interviewer – Ask about the graduate and get to know some details about them. Could lead into “About You” section

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Follow up, probing and specifying</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>About you</strong> (From graduate survey)</td>
<td>Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself?</td>
<td>What do you mean by that?</td>
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<td>Could you please tell me about your housing arrangements?</td>
<td>Could you please tell me more about that?</td>
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<td><strong>About CCL</strong></td>
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<td>Please tell me about why you chose to do the CCL</td>
<td>What do you mean by that?</td>
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<td>What was your time doing the CCL like?</td>
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<td>What did you do on the CCL?</td>
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<td>Are you still in contact with your friends from the CCL?</td>
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<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
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<td><em>What activities have</em></td>
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<th>Question</th>
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<td>Did you do work experience? Please tell me about it.</td>
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<td>Did you do a PATH?</td>
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<td>Could you please tell me about your PATH and if you have achieved the</td>
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<td>Have they done any courses since finishing CCL?</td>
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<td>If they could do any course what would it be</td>
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<td>Do they think it’s important to keep learning and do courses</td>
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<td>Did CCL make it easier to do new courses</td>
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7.2. Appendix B - Types of Interview Questions (Kvale, 1996, p.133-135)

A. Introducing questions- Could you please tell me about…? Could you describe in as much information as possible.? Do you remember a time when…? Such opening questions lead to rich, spontaneous information about the participant’s experiences.

B. Follow-up questions- What do you mean by that? If the interviewer takes a curious and critical approach to what the interviewee says, their answers can be extended. Can be done by asking a direct question or simply by nodding and using verbal rewards like “hmm”.

C. Probing questions- Could you say some more about that? Could you please give a more specific description of…? These are used so that the interviewer can pursue an answer further.

D. Specifying questions- What did you do then? What did you think of that? These can be used to get a more precise description of what the interviewee is saying.

E. Direct questions- Have you ever…? These types of questions are best left until end of interview in order to not influence direction of it.

F. Indirect questions- What do most people think of…? How do you believe other people regard…? Careful follow-up questions must be used in order to interpret the answer.

G. Structuring questions- I would now like to move on to a different topic. These should be used when a theme has been exhausted.

H. Silence- By leaving pauses in an interview, the interviewer can give the participant time to reflect and gather their thoughts.

I. Interpreting questions- So do you mean…? Is it correct that you think…? By rephrasing a participant’s answer, the interviewer can ensure that they understand what is being said to them.
**7.3. Appendix C- First Interview Guide for Students, Parents and Support Worker**

**Students’ First Interview Guide**

**Introduction:** Thank you for meeting with me today. I know it’s been a busy day so the interview won’t last longer than 40 minutes. I will be asking you about the PATH project you have just finished. I would like to record the interview so that I don’t miss anything that you say if that is ok? I will keep this audio recording safe on my computer and will change your name so that no one will know it’s you. You don’t have to answer any questions that you don’t want to and can stop the interview at any stage. You will not get into trouble if you decide to stop the interview. Do you have any questions before we start?

Have you ever done a person centred plan before?

If so, what type?

How involved were you in this planning session?

How did it compare to PATH?

What did you expect PATH to be like?

How did you feel before the PATH?

How do you feel now?

Could you please tell me about what was good about the PATH project?

Was there anything you found difficult about the PATH project?

What goals did you put in your PATH?

How do you feel about your next 12 months?

**Probes** – Could you tell me more about that?

**Specifying questions** - What did you do then? What did you think of that?

**Interpreting questions** – so do you mean….?
Parents’ and Support Worker’s First Interview Guide

**Introduction:** Thank you for meeting with me today. The interview will last between 30 and 40 minutes. I will be asking you about the PATH project you just undertook with “X”. I would like to ask your permission to audio record this interview. This will help me to get an accurate account of your responses and aid me in my data analysis at a later stage. The data I record will be kept safe on my computer and anonymized. You do not have to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with and are free to withdraw from the interview at any stage. No penalty will come to you or to “X” as a result of withdrawing from the interview. Do you have any questions before we start?

Has “X” ever been involved in a person centred plan like this before?

If so, what type?

How did this compare to PATH?

Were you involved in this previous planning session?

Did “X” get the opportunity to voice their opinions in this plan?

PATH has a strong emphasis on allowing the Pathfinder’s voice to emerge, how did you feel about this?

Could you please tell me what your expectations of the PATH project were?

How do you feel it went?

What aspects of the PATH did you find good?

Were there aspects of the PATH you didn’t like?

How do you feel about the goals outlined by “X”?

How do you think you will support “X” in achieving his/her goals?

Has PATH opened up new possibilities for “X”?

Has your view on the potential of “X” changed?

**Probes** – Could you tell me more about that?

**Specifying questions** - What did you do then? What did you think of that?

**Interpreting questions** – so do you mean….?
7.4. Appendix D- Second Interview Guide for Students, Parents and Support Worker

Students’ Second Interview Guide

**Introduction:** Thank you for taking my call. It’s been four months now since you have done your PATH project so I’m just calling to see how you’ve been getting on with it. The call shouldn’t take more than twenty minutes. Again, you don’t have to answer any questions you don’t want to and you can stop the interview at any stage without getting into any trouble. Do you have any questions before we start?

How have the last three months been since you PATH project?

Can you tell me some of the things you’ve been doing?

Is your PATH project an important aspect of your life at the moment? How so?

Where is your PATH project now?

Can you still make sense of the symbols and words that are on it?

Have any of your goals changed since you completed it in June?

How do you feel about achieving your 6 month goals in December?

**Probes** – Could you tell me more about that?

**Specifying questions** - What did you do then? What did you think of that?

**Interpreting questions** – so do you mean….?
Introduction: Thank you for taking my call. It’s been four months now since your son/daughter has done the PATH project so I’m just calling to see how they’ve been getting on with it. The call shouldn’t take more than twenty minutes. Again, you don’t have to answer any questions you don’t want to and you can stop the interview at any stage without any penalty occurring. Do you have any questions before we start?

How have the last three months been since “X” did their PATH project?

Can you please tell me about some of the things “X” has been doing?

Do you feel that the PATH project is a prominent part of “X”’s life? How so?

Where is their PATH project now?

Do you feel any of “X”’s goals have changed?

How do you feel about “X” achieving their 6 month goals by December?

Probes – Could you tell me more about that?
Specify questions - What did you do then? What did you think of that?
Interpreting questions – so do you mean….?
Students’ Third Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you again for meeting with me today. The interview shouldn’t last longer than 40 minutes. It’s now been 6 months since you did your PATH so I will be asking you about how you’ve been getting on with it. I would like to record the interview so that I don’t miss anything that you say if that is ok? I will keep this audio recording safe on my computer and will change your name so that no one will know it’s you. You don’t have to answer any questions that you don’t want to and can stop the interview at any stage. You will not get into trouble if you decide to stop the interview. Do you have any questions before we start?

Could you first please tell me about your time in the CCL?

What impact has the CCL had on your life?

How have the last 6 months been since you finished the CCL?

Has the PATH had a strong influence on the last 6 months?

What 6 month goals have you achieved?

How did you achieve these goals?

How successful were the people in your enrol section at helping you to meet your goals?

How successful was the keeping strong section when you felt some of the things you identified as blocks?

What 6 month goals have you not achieved?

What could be done to help you achieve these?

In relation to your 1 year goals, how do you feel about achieving them?

Do you feel that you would be doing what you are doing now without doing the PATH project?

Do you feel the PATH project was a worthwhile project to undertake?

Ask permission to use picture of their PATH in thesis

Probes: Could you please tell me more about that? Why do you think that was?
Specifying questions: What did you do then? What did you think of that?
Interpreting questions: So do you mean...?
Parents’ and Support Worker’s Third Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for meeting with me again today. The interview will last between 30 and 40 minutes. I will be asking you about how the last since months have been in relation to your sons/daughters PATH project. I would like to ask your permission to audio record this interview. This will help me to get an accurate account of your responses and aid me in my data analysis at a later stage. The data I record will be kept safe on my computer and anonymized. You do not have to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with and are free to withdraw from the interview at any stage. No penalty will come to you or to “X” as a result of withdrawing from the interview. Do you have any questions before we start?

Could you first please tell me about “X”’s time in the CCL programme?

Do you feel the CCL had a strong impact on “X”’s life?

How have the last since months been for “X” since they finished the CCL?

Do you feel the PATH has had a strong influence on “X” in the last 6 months?

What 6 month goals do you feel “X” has achieved?

What do you feel helped “X” to achieve these goals?

Do you feel the people in the enrol section aided in “X” achieving these goals?

Do you feel that “X” used the keep strong section when they felt blocks occurring?

What 6 month goals have not been achieved?

Why do you feel these haven’t been achieved?

What could be done to help “X” achieve these goals?

How do you feel about “X” achieving their 1 year goals?

Do you feel “X” would be doing what they're doing now without the PATH?

Do you feel PATH was a useful project for “X” to undertake?

How did you find your involvement in the PATH?

Do you have any recommendations on how the PATH could be improved?

Probes: Could you please tell me more about that? Why do you think that was?

Specifying questions: What did you do then? What did you think of that?

Interpreting questions: So do you mean...?
Dear CCL Student,

Who am I?
My name is Alanna Haycock. I am a student in the M.Sc. in Disability Studies in Trinity College Dublin.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study called “An Exploration of the PATH Process on College Students with Intellectual Disabilities”. This research study will be supervised by Dr. John Kubiak.

What is this research about?

Before you finish the CCL you and the people who care about you will take part in a project called Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH).

For this project you think about what goals you would like to meet in the future. Your parent(s)/guardian(s) and supporters help you to achieve these goals.

I would like to find out if you meet the goals that you put in your PATH project. If you did meet them, I’d like to know what supports you got that helped you. If you did not meet them, I’d like to know what supports would help you to meet them.
In order to find out this information, I would like to interview you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) separately. The interviews will take 30–40 minutes. There will be three interviews in total.

If you have any questions about this research you can contact me by telephone on 086****** or by email at ______@tcd.ie. You can contact John by telephone on 01-******* or by email at ______@tcd.ie.

Thank you for considering to take part in this research.

Yours faithfully,
Alanna Haycock
Dear Parent/Support Worker,

Who am I?
My name is Alanna Haycock. I am a student in the M.Sc. in Disability Studies in Trinity College Dublin. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study entitled “An Exploration of the PATH Process on College Students with Intellectual Disabilities”. This research study will be supervised by Dr. John Kubiak.

What is this research about?
As you know, the students will be undertaking a Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) project as part of their Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) studies. This research is about exploring the PATH process on the CCL students.

Why is this research important?
Anecdotal evidence suggests that students are fulfilling their aims as outlined in their PATH projects. However, no empirical study has been carried out to evaluate this. This is why I wish to undertake this project. The information obtained should be of great value to the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID) and subsequently to the future students of the CCL.

It is important to understand the variety of voices that are involved in the PATH process. This is why I wish to conduct interviews with the student themselves and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s). I plan to conduct three interviews in total over a 6 month period. These interviews will take between 30 and 40 minutes.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can call me on 086******* or email me at ______@tcd.ie. Dr. John Kubiak can be contacted by telephone on 01-******* or by email at ______@tcd.ie.

Thank you in advance for your consideration to take part in this research.

Yours faithfully,

Alanna Haycock
Name of project: An Exploration of the PATH process on College Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Researcher: Alanna Haycock
Student of the M.Sc in Disability Studies in Trinity College, Dublin.

Please read these carefully

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have had this research explained to me.</th>
<th>I would be happy to talk to another person if I have any concerns.</th>
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<td>I have been able to ask questions and have them answered.</td>
<td>I am happy to have interviews tape recorded</td>
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<td>I understand what is expected of me.</td>
<td>This project is about PATH.</td>
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<td>I can stop being involved at any stage of this project</td>
<td>I agree to take part in this project.</td>
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Signed:_________________
Print name: __________________________
Date: __________________________

Witness:_________________
Print name: __________________________
Date: __________________________
Checking if everyone understands

What is this project about?

Is it about relationships?

Yes □ No □

Is it about PATH?

Yes □ No □

Is it about learning?

Yes □ No □
Parents’ and Support Worker’s Consent Form

Name of project: An Exploration of the PATH process on College Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Researcher: Alanna Haycock
Student of the M.Sc. in Disability Studies in Trinity College, Dublin.

I…………………………………………agree to participate in this research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview to be tape-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, either before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed…………………………………….. Date……………………
7.8. Appendix H – Sample Interview Transcription

Researcher: now so thanks a mill for meeting me today ‘coz I know it’s been a long afternoon. I’ll be asking you about the PATH project that we just did and I'm going to be audio recording it if that's ok. Anything that I do record will be kept safe on my computer and it’ll be anonymised and anything you tell me now will be confidential. Em you can not answer any of the questions if you don’t want to and you can at any time stop the interview if you feel you want to. Em so just firstly do you have any questions for me before we start?

James: no, no just hope this is of help to you

Researcher: hopefully, thank you so much. I suppose just to ask first have you ever been involved in a person centred plan like this before with Michael?

James: with Michael?

Researcher: mmm

James: no, no

Researcher: no

James: but in my profession I've had aspects of this coming in and out of planning peoples futures but

Researcher: okay

James: but not actually with Michael

Researcher: and how did those em plans compare to this PATH?

James: well it would have been more from a security end of things

Researcher: yeah

James: so it would have been completely different

Researcher: it wouldn’t have been that related yeah em so could you just tell me about some of your expectations of the PATH before you came in and did it today?

James: really, I didn’t know what I was walking into

Researcher: yeah

James: I’ll be honest with you there. I thought I was coming in for more of an evaluation of Michaels last two years

Researcher: okay

James: okay and it was refreshing to see what has happened in there and I probably brought a lot about to em to see in the fine plan in front of me so what of Michaels future

75
Researcher: future

James: I know its short term, we we used to work with Michael on more of a six month basis and try and meet the goals but you see he’s getting older and it needs to be spread out more but it was very interesting I thought.

Researcher: yeah, and you used the word refreshing there, what was it about it that was refreshing?

James: em, well it was refreshing to see that Michael had an involvement in what he was saying.

Researcher: yeah.

James: usually, and I've dealt with people with disabilities for the last thirty years.

Researcher: mmhmm.

James: and usually people dictate people with disabilities ok?

Researcher: yeah.

James: it was refreshing to see that Michael had his say in what was happening.

Researcher: mmhmm, 'coz that is kind of one of the, em quite, the PATH has quite a strong emphasis on the PATH finder’s voice and so you felt today that that came across.

James: yeah that came through it did and em, em dealing with people with disabilities did you ever hear about the does he take sugar syndrome.

Researcher: mmhmm.

James: so you know what I'm talking about there and a lot of people maybe it’s through education and that that people get away from that does he take sugar syndrome and it’s great to see that.

Researcher: mmhmm.

James: em Michael was very included in what was happening.

Researcher: yeah and how kind of talking about that do they take sugar syndrome do you think we are kind of, do you think people are moving on from that and.

James: ehm yes as in it’s probably a generational thing I’d say.

Researcher: mmhmm.

James: now I'm a very old man, I’d say younger people than me yes.

Researcher: yeah.

James: my age group and up (that's the late 50’s) up, eh Michael is my second child with a disability. My daughter had a physical disability, cerebral palsy.
Researcher: mmhmm

James: and when Jane was young, born and she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy my mother’s generation was what are you going to do with her

Researcher: ok yeah

James: ok, didn’t talk to my mother for seven years after that, that was the mind set and it came down if my wife was here she’d agree with me, Jane’s grandmother used to call it ah sure it’ll be great it was so I think we are moving away from that era, I hope we are and I hope through your input into this were moving even more forward with it

Researcher: yeah, yeah em so that was one of the things you found good about the PATH the fact that it em had highlighted

James: Michael was totally included

Researcher: Michaels voice, was there anything else you found particularly good about it or enjoyed about it?

James: well, I've never seen that em map on the wall before that and fair dews to that girl she must have done art as well but it was brilliant to see it come through ‘coz usually you see something like that in written form

Researcher: mmhmm yeah

James: and you read through it and you’re going from line to line but when you get the visual sense of it up in front of you that was excellent

Researcher: and why do you think the visual side of it, why do you think that that's so good?

James: well if you read a report

Researcher: mmhmm

James: and you've read reports, I mean usually after the fourth or fifth paragraph in a report your yeah yeah yeah yeah and you go on but it was in front of you probably the way people with disabilities are taught visually now maybe we need to be taught more visually in that sense

Researcher: yeah so you think being able to see it and see the picture it brings it to life a bit more I suppose

James: yeah

Researcher: that's good. And is there anything you found that you didn’t like about the PATH or you thought was just

James: em, no the only thing I thought, I thought probably now my view of Michael’s point of view I thought em if he had of been built up to it more of what was going to
happen here, I think he walked in as blind as we were coming in here but where we were coping with it

Researcher: mmhmm

James: and we were kind of everyone there was trying to get across to Michael that you have to plan this and that and the other, but he walked in blind

Researcher: ah ha

James: maybe it was good to catch him unawares and he had to answer more, he might have given more honest answers then if he had of been built up to it, but em that would be the only thing maybe a little bit of this is what were going to do, maybe now I wouldn’t say dress it up and you go in and answer the questions you have the staged questions to answer but maybe just well this is what were going to do because I know when we sat down I, I read a lot of people and I train people in observation skills and that and I was looking at Michael and I could see him looking at the headlines of what he was reading and I could see what was going to come next

Researcher: yeah

James: maybe just a little preparation but not to spoil it all by giving to much preparation

Researcher: ‘coz you said he might have given more honest answers?

James: yeah I think he did when he was caught unawares

Researcher: oh ok so you feel he did give more honest answers today?

James: yeah

Researcher: okay em then if he had been knowing

James: if he had been prepped for it

Researcher: oh ok

James: like as in well they're going to ask me this em one thing with Michael, Michael spends all his life trying to please and he always wants to give the right answer so maybe if he had been told a little bit about it but when I say he gave honest answers I mean he was caught unawares and hadn’t got a stock answer to give

Researcher: ok yeah

James: does that make sense?

Researcher: yeah yeah no I know what you mean. So you feel, yeah so, so that's what I was asking so you feel Michael today that everything he said was his opinion and his honesty

James: yeah yeah he hadn’t had time to formulate a stock answer to keep everyone happy in the room and I was looking at him a couple of times and he was caught unawares and he did I would say any of the answers he gave were honest and truthful
Researcher: and do you think there was anything he would have wanted to put up or would have liked to put up but didn’t? Or do you feel everything he was saying

James: I think yeah, but I feel he was beginning to drift a bit on the when you asked him what he wanted to do he just kept reverting back to the book he’s going to write you know

Researcher: mmm

James: where, he wasn’t probably getting a good handle on what he was being asked you know

Researcher: okay yeah

James: eh maybe the question, maybe if the question was formulated in a different way you might get I’d say at that stage when he answered the question by going back to the book he was giving the stock answer well if I say this, this is giving you know

Researcher: and if there was some things he wanted to say but didn’t, why do you think he didn’t? Do you think it was just the way the questions were asked?

James: I think it was probably just the way the questions were asked

Researcher: ok so just more about wording and things like that ok yeah. I'm just trying to ascertain the presence of other people in the room make him kind of not want to say things?

James: no he was comfortable there he was comfortable there you'd know when Michaels not comfortable even the way Michael was sitting down and relaxed when Michaels not comfortable he’d be sitting upright

Researcher: you'd see it

James: yeah you'd see it, he was comfortable there but then again he knew everyone

Researcher: and so about his goals, how did you feel about the ones he outlined and the ones he says he wants to achieve

James: well taking the book and the novel apart out of that yeah he will achieve but as I said at the end of the thing there, everything Michael falls down on is time management

Researcher: mnhmm

James: it’s just management of time he gets transfixed on things and the world could pass him by as long as he's doing that like I go out for work in the morning, I don’t have to work but I train staff and I go out in the morning and I could be home at twelve o clock and see Michael come out of the bedroom and he’ll be like oh is it that time already so he needs he needs em its probably brought more home to us about the time management that’s where Michael, if Michael falls down on anything its time management

Researcher: yeah but then the goals he outlined you still think they're manageable within
James: oh they’re all manageable around the time management

Researcher: yeah everything falls back to that kind of

James: everything falls back to that

Researcher: yeah and do you think then, how do you think like you will support Michael in all these things like to think how it was done with the time scale and pinning down that time do you think all that will help in supporting him to do these

James: well we mightn’t be to the latter of what was on the board there but we will help him in any way shape or form

Researcher: yeah

James: but it’s probably brought home to us more the time management thing, everything else is possibly for him once he manages the time management

Researcher: the time management yeah

James: sorry if I keep coming back to that but it’s only now that I see that thing on the wall and dead in the centre was the clock and everything was coming in to that

Researcher: no its ok if that's what you felt yeah but I suppose yeah as you were saying the visuals again brought that back and that’s a very important part of the PATH

James: mmm

Researcher: em do you think the PATH has opened up new possibilities for Michael?

James: em maybe, maybe not ok?

Researcher: ok

James: realistically Michaels ability will determine where he goes so its will it open up something for him? I can’t really say at this stage I mean the world is in turmoil it’s hard enough for people to get jobs without Michael coming into the mix so em it might I don’t know I cannot say

Researcher: yeah and has your view of the potential of Michael changed after seeing this? And seeing what he wants to do and can be done? Has it helped with that?

James: (long pause) I can’t really say within an afternoon of the potential

Researcher: yeah of course

James: I hope it does but em I can’t really say now at this stage ok?

Researcher: yeah that's ok em a lot of it as well during the PATH is kind of coming back to budgeting and that roll of money and planning with it and stuff, how do you think Michael will get on with that?
James: eh, we will have to the whole situation probably time management and money management are going to be his two biggest goals for the next while to get it right. He’s getting there with the money management

Researcher: mmhmm

James: he is I’ll have to say that I mean he’s come a long way from when Michael would buy a bar of chocolate and hand in a twenty pound wand walk away

Researcher: okay yeah

James: had no concept of you have to get change but what he had was you hand this in you get that ad you walk away

Researcher: yeah

James: so he has come on a hell of a lot but em yeah both of them together will have to be tackled from him and his point of view and our point of view

Researcher: mmm

James: it will have to happen

Researcher: mmm so just before you kind of did the PATH today like this morning how were you feeling about actually coming in and doing it?

James: well as I said didn’t know what we were coming into

Researcher: didn’t know what to expect and just kind of now that you've finished it how do you feel about just actually doing it

James: well I felt it was very very interesting I really do and I think from Michael’s point of view eh it’s a PATH or a map out in front of him and he has times now that he has to keep

Researcher: mmhmm

James: so from that point of view yeah I thought it was very good

Researcher: well I think, I'm just trying to think if there's anything else I’d like to ask you right now. Is there anything that I didn’t ask or anything that you would like to or wanted to share?

James: eh no, no I hope this, what we’ve done here today helps someone in the future ‘coz I'm sure that's where your heading down and I hope any questions I've answered for you that I hope they are of help to you

Researcher: yeah definitely

James: so that's about it

Researcher: cool, well thank you. I’ll stop it there so
7. 9. Appendix I – Students’ PATHs

Sarah’s PATH

Michael’s PATH
Dear __________

The NIID would like to invite you to take part in your own PATH. This letter contains information about PATH and how and your family and friends can take part.

**PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope)**

**PATH** was developed by Jack Pearpoint, John O’Brien and Marsha Forest in 1991.
What does it mean?

PATH means Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope. Everyone can benefit from having a PATH, and all students in the NIID will be invited to participate in the PATH process.

What is a PATH?

Just like a path that leads a walker from one place to another, a PATH will help to lead you to where you want to be in life. It is a graphic recording of your future dreams and goals, and the things that you need to help you achieve these. At the end of it, you will have a poster that is colourful, and dynamic, and that you will be able to look at and remind yourself of where you are going.

PATH is a tool to enable you as the PATH finder to plan for your future. Unlike other planning tools, the PATH is a visual piece of work that you can hang on your bedroom wall, this helps keep you focused on your goals.

Who is it for and who is invited?

As this is your PATH you are the PATH finder.

You, as the PATH finder can invite anyone you feel is important to you, and the process works best when people like parents and family members, very close friends and staff from the agency you attend (if you do), are there and get involved. Staff from the NIID will be there as well, and we will all work
together with you. These individuals can, throughout the PATH add to the discussion with suggestions or ideas, however it is highlighted at the beginning that this is not their PATH and that they must respect the goals and wishes of the PATH finder.

How long does it take?

You and the people you invite to your PATH meeting will be here for about 2 hours.

What happens at a PATH meeting?
Each PATH is facilitated by two external individuals.
The facilitator guides the PATH finder through the various sections of the PATH process with gentle questions and respectful listening, while the other facilitator (called the ‘grapher’) graphs on a large piece of paper what the PATH finder has said. The grapher also re-caps what has been discussed at the end of each section.
Throughout the two hours that the PATH takes to do, you will be asked to use your imagination and think about things a lot, the group can help you through adding suggestions and ideas.

The PATH Workshop is divided up in sub sections:
1. Values

2. Long Term Goals

3. Now

4. Enrol
5. Blocks

6. Keeping Strong

7. Short Term Goals

8. First Steps
The process will begin you as the PATH finder identifying your values; who and what are important to you? Once these have been established, you will decide how long a period you wish to plan for, thus setting the first of two dates. This date is then entered in the Long Term Goals section.

Once the date, month and year have been set, you will then discuss what you want to achieve by this date. It is at this stage that you examine how life is like for you at the present. This is done in the Now section.

This leads onto the Enrol section, which asks you to think about the people in your life, and from this group to identify who you think would be a good candidate to support you in reaching your goals identified in the Long Term Goals section. You will then be asked to reflect on possible factors that may hinder or prevent you from achieving these goals in the next section, Blocks.

To counteract issues raised in the Blocks section you will then be asked to investigate ways around these in the Keeping Strong section.

As the PATH finder, you may have identified a number of goals over a number of years in the Long Term Goals. You are now asked to choose some of these goals and identify a shorter period of time; this second date is entered in the section Short Term Goals. You will then reflect on these goals and set out the first steps and who will support them in doing them. This information is placed in the First Step section.

The end goal may be very far away, but there are always lots of little steps that take you closer to the end of the PATH.
When are they?

Your PATH will take place on:

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Do you have any questions?

If anyone has any questions about the PATH process, please contact

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Looking forward to seeing you at your PATH,

Kind Regards,

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