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Access, Participation, and Empowerment: Exploring Leadership Practices that Promote Social Inclusion

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This dissertation, ACCESS, PARTICIPATION, AND EMPOWERMENT: EXPLORING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION, by ASHLEY MCKEEN, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

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ACCESS, PARTICIPATION, AND EMPOWERMENT: EXPLORING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION

by

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Under the Direction of Dr. Will Rumbaugh

ABSTRACT

Students with intellectual disabilities have limited options for continuing their education after high school. Inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs provide access for students with intellectual disabilities to the college campus. However, it takes more than an opportunity to have a meaningful college experience. Gidley et al. (2010) outline a framework for promoting Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education that uses the underlying theories of Neoliberalism, Social Justice, and Human Potential that inform practices. This qualitative research study used a single case study design to explore research questions that ask what specific leadership practices promoting social inclusion for individuals with intellectual disabilities at the postsecondary level are used at an IPSE program located at Metro University, a pseudonym for a large public

university located in the Southeast. Data were collected through six individual interviews with the IPSE program staff, four focus group interviews with IPSE program students, and one focus group with members of the mentorship team, using a total of twenty-one participants. A document review of the parent and student manual and additional information retrieved from the program webpage contributed to the results of this study. The major findings revealed that through relationship building, problem-solving, curriculum development, staff support, and Person-Centered Planning, the IPSE program at Metro University provides an inclusive environment for its students that follows the framework of Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education.

INDEX WORDS: Inclusive Postsecondary Education, Intellectual or Developmental Disability, Students with Disabilities

ACCESS, PARTICIPATION, AND EMPOWERMENT: EXPLORING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION

by

ASHLEY MCKEEN

A Dissertation

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In

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DEDICATION

The road to social inclusion is long, and we are not yet halfway. I dedicate this body of work to all who have come before me and all that will come after me in the effort for a society where everyone has the access and the support they need to reach their goals and live their dream.

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DEFINITIONS

CTP	Comprehensive Transition Program as outlined by the Higher Education Opportunities Act (2008)
Disability	"A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities" (Americans with Disabilities Act. 1)
IDD	Intellectual or Developmental Disability as defined by the DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)
Inclusion	The "philosophy of acceptance, belonging and community" (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018, p. 84)
IPSE	Inclusive Postsecondary Education
Other Health Impairment (OHI)	"Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that— (a) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis [a kidney disorder], rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (b) adversely affects a child's educational performance." (Individuals with Disability in Education Act, 2004)
Social Inclusion	Leadership practices that provide equitable access, encourage participation and engagement, and maximize success through Neoliberalism, Social Justice, and Human Potential ideologies
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	Students with one of the thirteen categories of disabilities including: Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Other Health Impairment Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Emotional Disturbance (ED) Speech or Language Impairment Visual impairment Blindness Hearing Impairment Deafness Deaf-blindness Orthopedic Impairment Intellectual or Developmental Disability (IDD) Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

In today's American society, schools make efforts to account for the needs of every student. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case, and the United States has a long history of exclusion and segregation of students with disabilities in education (Staats & Laster, 2018). Several Acts of Congress and social movements have ensured that students with disabilities feel welcome and safe in schools, but inequities still exist in many school settings, including higher education.

In efforts to mitigate inequity, elementary and secondary school leaders promote inclusive practices that encourage the school community to provide students with disabilities fair access to classes and resources. Unfortunately, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have limited support and fewer options for postsecondary education. The development of Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) is one solution to this ongoing issue. Still, there is limited research that explores the specific efforts made by leadership at IPSE programs that promote social inclusion in this setting. This research study examines the specific leadership practices that one IPSE program implements to promote Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities on their campus.

Purpose

Merriam & Tisdale (2016) state that "the vast majority of research topics come from one's personal interest in the field and from the work setting itself" (p.74). The researcher in this study found the need for an investigation on the leadership practices in the Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) program where they work. This relatively new program has been under development for the past five years. Like other new programs, the policies, procedures, and practices of this IPSE program change frequently. Unfortunately, there is no

data, internal or external, that identify the specific and intentional policies, procedures, and practices that are used in to promote social inclusion. The purpose of this study is to identify these practices for overall program improvement.

Research Questions

This study explored the leadership practices that provide access, promote participation, and encourage empowerment for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) at Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What leadership practices promote social inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in an Inclusive Postsecondary Education program?
2. What practices promote access for enrolled students?
3. What practices promote participation from enrolled students?
4. What practices promote empowerment of enrolled students?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study identify the specific efforts made by a single case regarding the social inclusion of students with IDD within a college campus. The universal definition of social inclusion is still under development. This study explores the concept of social inclusion and makes an argument for defining social inclusion in terms of access, participation, and engagement.

Additionally, this study aims to identify the exemplary practice of social inclusion in IPSE. Other, similar IPSE programs can use the results for program development and improvement. Although there are currently no official standards of IPSE, there is an organizational effort to help in the development of this standard of practice. Think College is a

"national organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving research and practice in inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disability" (Think College, 2020). One of their initiatives is to use evidence-based, student-centered research in the creation of program standards for IPSE programs around the country. This study will contribute to the current research and help inform the developing standards.

Overview of the Study

To answer the research questions, a qualitative single-case study design was used to explore the specific leadership practices that promote social inclusion for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the postsecondary setting. This study was conducted during the spring semester of 2021 at Metro University, a pseudonym for a large public university in a major US city. Data were collected through five individual interviews with the IPSE programs staff, four focus group interviews with IPSE program students, one focus group interview with the IPSE program mentorship team, and a document review of the policies and procedures of the IPSE located at a large university in a major U.S. city. The interviews were transcribed first by the dictation service on Microsoft Office, then checked by hand. NVIVO was utilized to organize ideas, identify concepts, and create common patterns and themes in the data to inform the specific practices of the IPSE program that promote social inclusion. In addition to these themes of exemplary practices, participants also revealed some ideas for new practices that will help with the continuation of promoting social inclusion on campus and ideas for continued research in the field.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Today's US society focuses on equity and inclusion, but historically, individuals with disabilities have faced discrimination and exclusion in their communities and the school setting (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). In the early years of American history, children with disabilities brought a sense of shame and guilt to families (Boroson, 2017). By the 1850s, many people with disabilities were institutionalized in facilities with subpar living conditions, no education programs, and little opportunity for social integration (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). The stigma of this population caused social marginalization for generations, leaving them excluded from opportunities such as proper schooling. This left people with disabilities in a severe state of poverty because they were seen unable to contribute to society (Boroson, 2017).

Students with Disabilities

Starting in the 1820s and lasting through the common school movement in the late 19th century, specialized schools and universities for individuals with physical disabilities opened around the country (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). In 1832, the Perkins School for the Blind opened in Massachusetts, the first of its kind, and in 1864 Gallaudet University opened and continues to be the only American postsecondary institute specifically for people who are deaf (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). The development of these educational institutions was a big step in creating various environments where individuals with disabilities have the resources necessary for success.

The first private school that educated students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) was opened in France by Eduard Seguin (Constant, 2014). In 1850, Seguin moved to the United States and began working in several schools that used his model to educate the "feebleminded" (Constant, 2014). This resulted in a "wave of optimism about the treatment of people previously thought beyond help and hope" (Wehmeyer, 2013, p. 85). While these

specialized school environments did not change the general public's mindset toward people with disabilities, it did create an understanding that specialized care was needed for this population to "remove a large and growing community burden" (Wehmeyer, 2013, p. 85).

By the end of the century, separate education settings became the norm, and "large, urban public school systems were beginning to establish the system of separate schools and classrooms" for students with severe disabilities that were categorized as "backward and feebleminded" (Wehmeyer, 2013, p.81). By the late 1800s to early 1900s, mandatory school attendance laws were passed across the country requiring all children of a certain age to attend schools (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). This meant that the learning differences of many children with less severe disabilities, once overlooked and undiagnosed, were much more noticeable (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). Unfortunately, many communities did not have the resources or funding to provide accommodations to every student that needed them, and the number of students in special education programs rose (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). As the population in these segregated classrooms grew, they began to focus more on isolation, exclusion, and eradication of individuals with IDD from the general education classroom instead of modification, accommodation, and integration into the general education classroom (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). Fear spread throughout communities that people with these types of disabilities would contaminate the learning process for other students, and communities felt that it was necessary to keep them segregated into special education classrooms, require them to attend separate schools, or commit them to asylums (Noltemeyer et al., 2012).

Even in the era of desegregation of Black students in the 1950s, schools were not required to provide services to students needing specialized education (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). While many schools at this point did offer some services, it was often a classroom with an

inferior location, taught by underqualified teachers, and supplied with extremely limited resources (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). These programs rarely had real educational goals, and students did not typically experience achievement or knowledge acquisition (Noltemeyer et al., 2012).

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) initiated a change in special education (United States, 1965). Title III, better known as the Adult Education Act of 1966, provided funding for special education programs. Specifically, it "stated that supplementary educational centers and services would receive funding for additional support services to bolster school attendance" (Paul, 2016, p. 1). This is often interpreted as providing support for students with exceptional needs. Additionally, it required educational programming outside of when school was in session and provided isolated rural areas with funding for special education programs (Paul, 2016, p. 1). Title IV of the ESEA, also known as the Bilingual Education Act and the Education of the Handicapped Act, provided $100 million to educational research and training, much of which was used for special education training (United States, 1965; Paul, 2016). This Act gave resources to school systems to help reach students once neglected. In 1969, President Nixon signed several amendments to the ESEA, including titles VI and VII focusing on providing access and funding for educating students with disabilities and vocational education, respectively (Paul, 2016).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act has been reauthorized and renamed several times. In 1994, significant revisions introduced the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), giving states more local control of funding use (Paul, 2016). In 2001, President George W. Bush required increased accountability measures and annual yearly progress standards known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Paul, 2016). And in 2015, President Obama

introduced the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), offering more flexibility to the states when they adopted college and career-ready standards and assessments (Paul, 2016). Through these changes, the K-12 school system has a plethora of policies and funding opportunities to support students with various abilities with the resources they need to succeed. Additional policies were put in place to support students labeled with a disability.

Defining Disability

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990), an individual with a disability is defined as a "person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities" (p. 1). The definition was intentionally left vague, and Congress made a conscious decision not to list the specific impairments covered under the law because of the variation in severity of common “ailments”(Rothstein, Martinez, & McKinney, 2002). Unfortunately, the ambiguous language has also left some individuals uncertain of their right to ask for reasonable accommodations in schools or workplaces (Rothstein, Martinez, & McKinney, 2002).

Individuals may be unsure if they have a disability or a condition. The court case of *Sutton v. United Air Lines* provides a good example that distinguishes these two definitions and can help schools determine if a student should receive disability services. This case involved two sisters who wanted to work for United Airlines; however, they had vision impairments that prevented them from seeing without corrective eyewear, making them ineligible for their preferred job under the airline's guidelines (Rothstein, Martinez, & McKinney, 2002). While these individuals were substantially limited in major life activities without glasses, they did not qualify as being disabled (and therefore coved by the ADA) because they were able to use "corrective measures to mitigate their impaired vision" (Rothstein, Martinez, & McKinney,

2002, p.252). This case distinguishes the difference between a disability and a condition. Having correctable vision impairment is classified as a condition. Alternatively, having uncorrectable vision impairment (such as blindness) is a disability. Determining a disability varies from case to case. This court case is often used when determining whether a student has a disability and is covered by the ADA.

Before the ADA, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), passed in 1975, granted all children with disabilities a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), a least restrictive environment (LRE), and services to meet their needs (Ellis & Abreu-Ellis, 2018). While this Act does not define the broad term of "disability," it does specify that children with specific learning disabilities are those "who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations" (Education for all Handicapped Children Act, 1975, p.22). Unfortunately, the original version of this Act only defined a student with a disability as somebody who has been evaluated and determined to be handicapped (Education for all Handicapped Children Act, 1975).

Since the passing of EAHCA, several amendments have been made to continue improving the educational quality for students with disabilities. In 1990 the EAHCA changed its name to the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and expanded the definition of disability:

> A child with a disability means a child evaluated by §§300.304 through 300.311 as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or

> language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as "emotional disturbance"), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, another health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. (Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act, 1990, sec. 300.8)

This addition made the terms for defining disability concrete and helped clarify the vague definition set in the ADA.

Least Restrictive Environment

The passing of IDEA was a massive win in the disability community and granted over one million underserved students the right to attend school (Ellis & Abreu-Ellis, 2018). While IDEA provides guidelines for defining disability, it also outlines the education process for these students. Each school system works hard to ensure that every student can learn. Many feel that a substantial barrier to student learning is the segregation of students with disabilities (SWD) into special education classrooms, also known as self-contained classrooms (McKissick, Diegelmann, & Parker, 2107). According to the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) statutes, all SWDs that receive special education services receive them in the LRE to the greatest degree possible with the goal of ensuring that every one of these students has access to quality education (Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act, 1975/1990/1997/2004).

As schools continue to include more diverse populations, they continue to develop and offer various programs and initiatives for different kinds of learners to ensure LRE (Florian et al., 2017). Inclusion is a term that comes up during the discussion for equity for SWDs. The goal of inclusion is to place all SWDs in the general education classroom with the required supports

and services they need for success (Hyatt & Filler, 2011). While the LRE policy provides a continuum of services ranging from full inclusion to full segregation, it also suggests that inclusion should be the goal whenever possible (Reiner, 2018). The concept of inclusion needs to be better defined, and every school implements this practice uniquely.

Classroom Inclusion

Schools started practicing the concept of inclusion before IDEA determined that students with disabilities should benefit from an LRE. Many schools started with mainstreaming or bringing students from segregated special education classrooms into the general education classroom (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018). Mainstreaming suggests that all students participate and learn in the same way, with no modifications or accommodations for diverse learners (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018). Mainstreaming allows students access to the classroom and curriculum but does not facilitate participation, engagement, or empowerment, which means that it does not fit the framework of social inclusion presented by Gidley et al. (2010). Mainstreaming often sets students up for failure and ultimately leads them back into the segregated, special education classroom (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018).

Integration is another method where students who receive services in a separate setting are placed in the same physical space as their peers but have a separate curriculum with a specialized teacher (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018). In this model, the curriculum is differentiated, and accommodations are provided, but SWDs often participate in a separate education program with different standards when compared to their non-disabled peers (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018). Because of this, SWDs rarely have the opportunity to interact directly with the full classroom academically, creating the same sense of segregation as a separate classroom (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018). While integration provides a place for students to

participate in learning alongside their peers, it also does not fit in the framework for social inclusion. It bars access to the general curriculum and does not allow them to engage with their peers in a meaningful way throughout the day.

While both mainstreaming and integration satisfy the requirement of LRE for many students, the inclusion model allows SWDs to fully participate in the general education classroom with supports in place that allow them to access the curriculum equitably. Inclusion is defined as the "philosophy of acceptance, belonging and community" so all students can reach their full potential (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018, p. 84; Calder Stegemann & Jaciw, 2018). Inclusion goes beyond the mainstreaming model and allows for accommodations and modifications to the curriculum. This model also extends beyond the integration model because students have a cohesive learning experience (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018). Inclusion not only promotes equitable learning, but it also fosters soft-skill attainments such as social awareness, independence, autonomous learning, and age-appropriate communication skills (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018). Schools that practice inclusion do not only provide this type of environment during the academic portions of the day, but they allow SWDs to participate in the additional elements of school. This includes appropriate sports, clubs, and other after-school activities that allow them to reach their full potential (Calder Stegemann & Jaciw, 2018).

In an effort to identify specific practices that promote social inclusion, Hoppey, Black, and Mickelson (2018) conducted a qualitative research study to find out how teachers and administrators at two different schools define inclusion. At each school, the principal participated in semi-structured interviews and select teachers participated in focus group discussions (Hoppey et al., 2018). Also, the researchers conducted inclusive classroom observations and noted initial reactions (Hoppey et al., 2018). Using Wolcott's 3-pronged method to analyze the data, the study

indicated several themes for inclusive program improvement (Hoppey et al., 2018). In each school, there was a lack of a unified vision for reframing the special education programs (Hoppey et al., 2018). Some of the teachers saw inclusion as a process, while others saw it as a mandate (Hoppey et al., 2018). From this, the study drew the conclusion that leaders at these schools must define their efforts as a set of mandates or a process for effective inclusive classroom implementation (Hoppey et al., 2018).

The abovementioned study also shows that teachers wanted a collaborative structure in place (Hoppey et al., 2018). This way school leaders can address teacher concerns and answer questions about inclusion more effectively (Hoppey et al., 2018). Both the teachers and administrators want to see the benefits of their efforts through multiple forms of data (Hoppey et al., 2018). Once it is evident which efforts are or are not working, they can make informed decisions and reflect accurately (Hoppey et al., 2018). Lastly, the principals indicated the importance of negotiating district and state constraints on inclusive practices, specifically when it comes to placement testing and the fear of losing support as a result of successful inclusion (Hoppey et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, there is not much empirical research on the long-term changes in attitudes, practices, and performance that inclusive education provides (Calder Stegemann & Jaciw, 2018). Instead, the existing research focuses on current functioning, student success, and an increased state of well-being in the short term (Calder Stegemann & Jaciw, 2018). The inclusion model is not always implemented successfully, and a study by Sharma, Dunay, & Dely (2018) found that some teachers feel that full inclusion is not always the best model. While the teachers that participated in this study agree that SWDs should have access to inclusive classrooms, they feel

that the segregated setting is more effective for some students, encouraging the continuum of services provided by the LRE policy (Sharma, Dunay, & Dely, 2018).

IDEA provides a pathway for social inclusion for students with disabilities at the elementary and secondary school levels. However, once students complete their secondary education program, the policies of IDEA expire, and students count on ADA and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to secure an appropriate environment for their continued education (Singh, 2019). Most students with disabilities can continue to receive services through a specific department at their postsecondary institution (Singh, 2019). While many students with disabilities thrive in a college or university setting with these accommodations, students with more severe disabilities are often excluded from this type of continued education. In 2011, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that only 11% of students with intellectual disabilities attended a postsecondary education program compared to 58% of students with other disabilities.

Inclusive Postsecondary Education

When compared to their peers, students with IDD have limited options when it comes to postsecondary plans. Some students choose to go straight to work and use resources like Vocational Rehabilitation Services to support their school-to-work transition. Other students choose to enroll in life-skills and gap year programs designed to help young adults learn necessary independence skills. But both of these paths omit the option of continuing their education and attending college like their non-disabled peers. The idea of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) was originated in 1980, but the widespread practice is much more recent (Alqazlan, Alallawi, & Totsika, 2019). IPSE has allowed students with IDD to learn alongside traditional college students and continue their education in a meaningful and worthwhile way (Alqazlan, Alallawi, & Totsika, 2019; Prohn & Kelley, 2018).

IPSE programs "provide individual supports and services for the academic and social inclusion of students with IDD in college courses, extracurricular activities, and other aspects of higher education" (Harrison, Bisson, & Laws, 2019, p. 1). These programs are located on the campuses of colleges and universities and include experiences that allow students to work on their goals relating to continued education, employment, and independent living (Papay & Bambara, 2011). While there are approximately 5,300 colleges and universities in the United States, there are only 288 college programs for students with IDD (Think College, 2020). Because higher education is a new concept for students with intellectual disabilities, every program has a unique design and level of inclusion (Harrison, Bisson, & Laws, 2019).

Leadership in IPSE

There are specific goals in IPSE, none of which would not be met without the proper leadership and intentional efforts made by those involved in the IPSE program. This includes the efforts a variety of stakeholders including IPSE staff and faculty and the leadership team at the institute of higher education where the IPSE program is housed. Two of the guiding leadership techniques that inform decision making for these programs include social justice leadership and inclusive leadership.

Social Justice Leadership.

The steps we have taken toward equality gives people an equal starting point, but we now need to address the fact that equality does not focus on equal outcomes (Angelle, 2017). Social justice has recently become a common term as our society continues to change (Angelle, 2017). Rather than focusing on past wrong-doing, social justice focuses on transforming focus to equitable practices so there is more opportunity for equal outcome (Angelle, 2017). Social justice school leadership is summarized as the effort of recognizing and understanding inequities that

exist in a school and taking action to create a more equitable school community (DeMatthews, 2015). This is done by critically reflecting on school policies and practices and replacing those that are unjust with new policies and practices that are equitably and culturally appropriate (DeMatthews, 2015). Social justice leadership does not focus on any one component of a school environment, but instead strives for equity in all aspects (DeMatthews, 2015).

Inclusive Leadership.

According to DeMatthews (2015), "inclusive education for all students is a core element of social justice leadership" (p.144). Inclusive leadership techniques are often a response to social justice issues and involves the recognition of inequity and the need to address them (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). More specifically, inclusive school leaders start by gaining an understanding of the underserved student population then advocating for and providing the supports needed for a successful inclusive experience (Sider, et al. 2021). This means that leaders who practice inclusive leadership should not only provide the pathway to inclusion, but they should also educate stakeholders on what that means for all parties involved (Sider, et al. 2021).

Inclusive leadership is an approach "grounded in service, network building, modeling behaviors, challenging dominant beliefs, and creating a safe place for others" (DeMatthews, Edwards, & Rincones, 2016, p. 771). Creating an inclusive school environment is not simple and it requires time (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). Schools that aspire to practice inclusive leadership should consider the culture of their school and use "reflective inquiry" to create a dialogue in their staff about diversity and inclusion to start reshaping the school culture when creating a more inclusive school setting (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). According to McLeskey & Waldron (2015) schools that are effective in their

inclusion practices have shared core values and a commitment to developing the inclusive environment. Once the inclusive school culture is built, the focus of the school leadership should be on establishing a unified set value, beliefs and feeling toward inclusion, allocating the necessary resources for successful implementation, creating a system for monitoring student progress, and providing ongoing professional development and support (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015).

These leadership techniques provide guidance and strategy for creating a school culture that supports inclusion. Inclusive leadership “guides the management of cultural diversity, celebrates difference, advocates for diverse learners, and culturally develops the school at the personal, contextual, and curricular levels” (Gomez-Hurtado et al, 2021, p.71). While there is a developed body of research in leadership techniques in elementary and secondary schools, the body of research on inclusion of marginalized population in higher education is just beginning to form due to the relatively new concept of IPSE.

Higher Education Policy

One of the major contributions to improving the ability for marginalized populations to access higher education was introduced in 1965. The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 "authorizes numerous federal aid programs that provide support to both individuals pursuing a postsecondary education and institutions of higher education" (Thompson, 2014, p.1). This piece of legislation created financial assistance to students and their families, giving additional support to less-advantaged students, students pursuing international education, and students earning graduate or professional degrees. Additionally, it provides support to institutes of higher education (IHEs) by "improving their capacity and ability to offer postsecondary education programs" (Thompson, 2014, p. 2). Even though this Act provided access to the college campus

for many disadvantaged populations, students who were not pursuing a degree were still left out of this funding opportunity.

In 2008 the HEA was amended and extended under the name of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA). For the first time, there was access to federal financial aid for students with IDD who attend college programs labeled as Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) (Thompson 2014; Scheef, Hongingshead, & Barrio, 2020). More specifically, some students with IDD in non-degree programs located on college campuses now have access to federal work-study, Pell Grants, and supplemental education opportunity grants; however, these students still do not have access to federal student loans (Thomas, Schram, & Crimmins, 2020).

There are specific requirements and a certification process that leads to the CTP label and grants access to the abovementioned resources. CTPs "provide academic and social support for underserved students as they transition to college and begin their academic journey at the institution" (Hallett et al., 2020, p. 54). According to the HEOA (2008), CTPs must satisfy several conditions. First, they must be "delivered to students physically attending the institution" (Higher Education Opportunities Act, 2008). Next, the program must support students with IDD who are hoping to continue their education and improve their independent living skills with the goal of preparing for gainful employment. The CTP must have an advising and curriculum structure that supports those goals. Also, CTPs require students to have a minimum of 50% inclusive participation. This can be through coursework, non-credit activities, or work experiences that are supported through the program the student attends. Lastly, CTPs must lead to some type of credential or "identified outcome." (HEOA, 2008).

The inception of CTPs in 2008 was not the beginning of inclusive college programs for students with IDD. Before funding was available, programs with the same goals were given the

name Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE). These programs often held themselves to the same standards as the CTPs but did not have any federal oversight until there was funding available. Funded by a grant through the Office of Special Education Programs at the US Department of Education, the University of Massachusetts, Boston created Think College, "a national initiative dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving research and practice in inclusive higher education for student with intellectual disability" (Think College, 2022). Think College provides resources to students with IDD and their families for postsecondary options by managing the national listing of college programs available to students with IDD and what they offer to students (Think College, 2022). In addition to this, Think College is "dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disability." (Think College, 2022).

In 2010, the US Department of Education released the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grant. This provided institutions of higher education to "create or expand high quality, inclusive model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities." (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This grant was renewed in 2015 and again in 2020. The awarded funds for these programs helped in the development of IPSE programs nationwide and aided in forming a body of research surrounding the efforts of IPSE. With the success of the TPSID grant, the Department of Education announced the Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (PPSID) grant in late 2021 that provides funding for the establishment of a technical assistance center to "translate and disseminate research and best practices for all institutions of higher education […] for improving inclusive postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities" (US Department of Education, 2021).The goal of this grant is that

institutions and students have more (and better) options for educational opportunities after high school (US Department of Education, 2021).

The ultimate goal of most IPSE programs is the movement toward social inclusion of people with IDD (Harrison, Bisson, & Laws, 2019). But, as these programs develop and mature, they work together to define universal goals and standards of practice. Think College has "developed model program accreditation standards and associated guidance and training tools that offer colleges and universities a structure to monitor and ensure quality practices and build sustainable programs" (Think College, 2022). These standards are in the pilot stages of development with the hope of a nationally recognized accreditation system in place in the near future. The standards outline the student learning outcomes that are focused on continued education, employment, and independent living skills development to align with CTP requirements stated in the HEOA.

Going beyond inclusion in education, social inclusion is "the process of improving disadvantaged peoples' participation in society" (Rico, Fielden, & Sanchez, 2019). This concept ensures that marginalized populations have the opportunities and resources they need to support an acceptable standard of living within their community. This process includes removing barriers to accessing opportunities to participate, as well as alleviating discriminatory attitudes to make participation easier (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016). Social inclusion is about creating social norms that eliminate exclusion practices (Hall, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to guide this study is Social Inclusion Theory for Quality Higher Education, as outlined by Gidley et al. (2010). Social inclusion improves quality of life by providing opportunities for community involvement and a feeling of belongingness (Fisher et

al., 2019). There are a variety of definitions offered for the term “Social Inclusion”, showing the universal definition is still developing, but the consensus is that it is context-dependent and multidimensional (Raffo & Gunter, 2008). Gidley et al. (2010) argue that before understanding the social inclusion framework, it is essential to understand the three underlying theories: Neoliberalism, Social Justice, and Human Potential.

Neoliberalism.

There is debate surrounding the ultimate purpose of education, but there has always been an underlying consensus that education has an economic benefit. In education, neoliberal ideologies are about investing in human capital with the goal of economic growth and globalization (Gidley et al., 2010). Economically, individuals who participate in high-level schooling are more likely to have credentials that provide employment opportunities that improve the labor market (Raffo & Gunter, 2008). At the same time, failure to succeed in school is seen as an economic problem (Raffo & Gunter, 2008). Socially, widespread education raises the knowledgebase of society (Gidley et al., 2010). Neoliberalism brings together the economic benefit of education with the inherent benefit of knowledge acquisition.

The neoliberal approach also attempts to improve concerns about human rights, Social Justice, and the common good while searching for effectiveness, competitiveness, and profitability (Liasidou & Symeou, 2018). Inequalities in school and the economy are linked, and Neoliberalism attempts to address the issue by providing disadvantaged populations access to colleges and universities (Gidley et al., 2010; Savage, 2017). When colleges and universities open their doors to diverse populations with a neoliberal agenda, the ultimate goal is to raise the skills base of the average American, ultimately improving the economy (Gidley et al., 2010).

Social Justice.

Access to education, outlined by the neoliberal theory, is a starting point for social inclusion (Gidley et al., 2010). However, there is an additional need for meaningful participation for the student to feel genuinely included (Gidley et al., 2010; Raffo & Gunter, 2008). Social Justice theory promotes a just and equitable society that places value on diversity and provides equal opportunities for participation to all (Bhugra, 2016). In education, scholars are still working to define Social Justice and its implications (Furman, 2012). Social Justice can be interpreted as an umbrella term that suggests the recognition of inequities and the need to address them (Furman, 2012; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews, Carey, Olivarez, & Saeedi, 2017). School leaders promote Social Justice by practicing critical self-reflection, allowing them to take notice of the behaviors that perpetuate inequitable practices (Furman, 2012). They work to acknowledge and reduce behaviors that might contribute to the feeling of being silenced or marginalized (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). Indication of successful Social Justice leadership efforts is evident when marginalized populations feel like they have a voice and are able to participate (Furman, 2012).

The Social Justice aspect of participation in higher education starts with access and is nurtured by a sense of belonging (Simplican et al., 2015). Belonging is measured objectively through the number of meaningful relationships that a person has and subjectively by the level of satisfaction that a person experiences within those relationships (Simplican et al., 2015). Simplican et al. (2015) suggest that belonging happens when people have a valued social role, and they are trusted to perform in that role. For example, in the classroom, a student with IDD might experience belonging when they are trusted to complete a portion of a group project rather than just observe and help another student.

Human Potential.

Integrating Neoliberalism and Social Justice, the Human Potential ideology goes "a further step beyond access and participation to encourage the interpretation of social inclusion as empowerment" (Gidley et al., 2010, p. 135). This approach recognizes that all people are multi-dimensional creatures with needs and interests outside of what benefits the economy (Gidley et al., 2010). Levels of engagement are enhanced when people feel empowered to connect with their community (Gidley et al., 2010). Empowerment occurs when individuals use their resources constructively to achieve their goals (Folk, Nagamatsu, & Harangody, 2019). The International Association of Universities (2008) believes that empowerment, especially for those who are historically excluded from higher education, is fostered by access (the neoliberal approach) and participation (Social Justice theory). Once individuals have access to resources, and they have the platform to engage with their community that supports the use of those resources, they must feel empowered to use the resources.

Social inclusion in IPSE.

The abovementioned framework for social inclusion by Gidley et al. (2009) defines social inclusion with three underlying theories" Access, Participation, and Empowerment. In the context of higher education, the Neoliberal aspect of Social Inclusion extends out of the classroom and into the granting of access to appropriate living conditions, opportunities for employment, campus resources, and opportunities for community involvement (Simplican et al., 2015). Providing access to these additional areas increases the social value for students with IDD as they become less reliant on specialized services and more dependent on genuine relationships and natural supports (Simplican et al., 2015).

In a 2019 study, Thoma et al. reviewed literature on IPSE from 2001 to 2010. Overall, the findings were that IPSE programs not only granted access to colleges and universities for students with IDD, but also that students reported a variety of positive experiences as a result of participation and interaction with other students on campus and their engagement with campus activities (Thoma et al., 2019; Neubert et al., 2001). This literature review also revealed that most IPSE programs foster empowerment through the process of Person-Centered Planning (PCP) (Thoma et al., 2019). PCP allows students to set their own goals and identify the needed supports to reach them, promoting and fostering empowerment (Thoma et al., 2019).

Person-Centered Planning.

The process for teaching empowerment and self-determination often starts with goal setting (Folk, Nagamatsu, & Harangody, 2019). Person-Centered Planning (PCP) focuses on "listening and learning from individuals what they would like to have or see in their lives, it assists people to think about what types of things they would like to have now as well as in the future" (Rasheed, Fore, & Miller, 2006, p. 47). It is a process that focuses on the interests of the student and empowers students to take an active role in setting and achieving their goals (Rasheed, Fore, & Miller, 2006). PCP recognizes that SWDs have goals that may not align with system-centered goals; for instance, attaining full time employment or maintaining a healthy diet (Rasheed, Fore, & Miller, 2006).

Instead of focusing on goals set by an institution or by society, PCP focuses on the individual goals of the participant and sets up a support plan for goal achievement. Students who participate in PCP report higher levels of success when trying to reach their personal goals (Rasheed, Fore, & Miller, 2006). Taking specific steps to reduce restricted access, provide a platform for meaningful interaction and participation, and give people the opportunity to let their

voices be heard, creates a socially inclusive environment. The leadership staff at the various IPSE programs makes conscious decisions that promote the framework set by Gidley et al. (2010).

Summary

There is a long history of the marginalization of students with disabilities in education. Through several acts of Congress and court rulings, individuals with disabilities have gone from being social pariahs to fully included members of society. However, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities still have limited options for continuing education after high school. Inclusive Postsecondary Education is one route for students with IDD to continue their education, but there is a gap in the literature for this emerging concept. Using the framework developed by Gidley et al. (2009), this study will contribute to the literature by exploring the specific leadership practices that contribute to the social inclusion of students with IDD at the postsecondary level.

3 METHODOLOGY

Merriam & Tisdale (2016) state that "the vast majority of research topics come from one's personal interest in the field and from the work setting itself" (p.74). The researcher in this study found the need for an investigation on the leadership practices in the Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) program where they work. This relatively new program has been under development for the past five years. Like other new programs, the policies, procedures, and practices of this IPSE program change frequently. Unfortunately, there is no data, internal or external, that identifies which of these policies, procedures, and practices are effective and which are not. The purpose of this study is to identify the exemplary practices of the program and open a dialogue for additional practices that can further promote social inclusion.

This study explores the leadership practices that provide access, promote participation, and encourage empowerment for students with IDD at Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What leadership practices promote social inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in an Inclusive Postsecondary Education program?
2. What practices promote access for enrolled students?
3. What practices promote participation from enrolled students?
4. What practices promote empowerment of enrolled students?

To answer the research questions, a qualitative research study was conducted, grounded in the framework for Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education introduced by Gidley et al. (2010) and using a case study methodology. In choosing the type of study to answer the research questions, other qualitative research methods were quickly ruled out. A narrative approach would

not be appropriate because of the short-term aspect of the study. Narrative studies should focus on experiences over time (Creswell, 2013). Because phenomenological studies aim to find the essence of an observable phenomenon, this type of research would not be appropriate due to the variance of different IPSE programs. Grounded theory research would also not be ideal to answer these research questions, again because of the time constraint. Lastly, because this study is not starting with a theory of a subculture drawn from cognitive science, ethnographic research would not suit this research. These types of research "are defined by the focus of their study, not by a single unit of analysis" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 39).

Case Study

The best fit for the research is a case study because it "is expected to catch the complexity of a single case" (Stake, 1995, p. ix). A case study investigates a real-life bounded system to illustrate and find meaning and understanding in a specific issue (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The cases are not defined by type but by a unit of analysis (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). In this study, the case is defined as one particular program, not by the type of program. The result of a case study is "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 37). Creswell (2013) states that "the hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case" (p. 98). Case studies are also time-bound (conducted in a predetermined amount of time) (Creswell, 2013). This type of research design is a good fit when the researcher has clear, identifiable boundaries and hopes to develop a deep understanding within those bounds (Creswell, 2013).

The nature of case studies is that they must have an intent (Creswell, 2013). In an instrumental case study, the intent is to find a general understanding by gaining insight into specific study questions for a specific case (Stake, 1995). The researcher must choose a case that

is easy to access, with participants willing to engage to maximize what can be learned (Stake, 1995). These participants should not only be willing to participate but are also well versed in the area of study so they can contribute meaningful data to the research (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

An instrumental case study is the best approach to answer the research questions in this study due to the intent of understanding a trend within a single case. The setting in this study is bound by one particular Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) program. It focuses on the leadership practices that contribute to social inclusion for the students in the program. This case is time-bound. The research took place during the spring semester of 2021 on location at Metro University. With these time and location parameters, the case is defined.

This case study uses the IPSE program at Metro University, a pseudonym for a public university with six colleges and 33 unique undergraduate degree offerings. The student population of Metro University is diverse, with 42% of the student population composed of students who are white, which is below the national average of 54.3% of college students identify as white nationwide (Fact Book, 2018; Hanson, 2022). Metro University also has a below-average male-to-female ratio compared to the national college enrollment of 50% females; only 31% of students identify as female at this school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Fact Book, 2018). Another unique factor of Metro University is its large, growing, international population, with 24% of the students coming from 128 different countries (Fact Book, 2018).

Comparing this data to the demographics of the IPSE program at Metro University shows that the population within the program is similar in some respects, but divergent in others. The male-to-female representation within the IPSE program is similar to that of the general student population at Metro University, with 33% of the students identifying as female and 67% of the

students identifying as male. The percentage of students identifying as white within the program was slightly higher than the university average, reporting at 50%. Due to the nature of the program, every student in the IPSE program is a citizen of the United States; however, 6% of the student population in the IPSE program resides outside of the United States, much lower than the international population of the general student population.

With a case defined and research questions identified, the next step is to select the sample (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). For qualitative studies, most researchers choose purposive sampling, the most common type of nonprobability sampling (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Purposive sampling begins with determining the selection criteria by defining the attributes and their importance to the study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). In this study, individuals with specific knowledge and experience in the specific case are selected. Specifically, three types of participants were chosen to participate in this study: enrolled students, members of the mentorship team, and staff members of the IPSE program at Metro University.

Enrolled students.

The IPSE program at Metro University is categorized as a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). CTPs are defined by the Higher Education Opportunities Act as programs that "support students with intellectual disabilities who are seeking to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction at an institution of higher education to prepare for gainful employment" (Higher Education Opportunities Act, 2008, section 760). Students enrolled at Metro University's IPSE program must have a documented intellectual disability (ID), or intellectual developmental disorder (IDD), as defined in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). ID often accompanies other diagnoses, including, but not limited to, Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and Autism (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Generally speaking, the IPSE program at Metro University must have an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD).

The admissions process for this IPSE program starts with a paper application, three letters of recommendation, a high school transcript that confirms program completion, the most recent Individual Education Plan (IEP), and a Psychological Evaluation no older than three years. While there is no specified age requirement, the recommended age range for students is between 18 and 28 years old. The program Director first reviews the applications and completes an evaluation form where notes from each of the application documents are recorded. The specific strengths and challenges for academics, social, independent living, and career areas are noted along with qualifiers for the program such as a diagnosis of an intellectual or developmental disability, the appearance of a desire to work, and the indication that attending college is a goal for the applicant. The last section on this document is a space explaining whether a student is recommended to move to the next step in the process. This determination is first made by the Director, but other staff have the opportunity to look at applications and suggest further review and justification on their recommendation for the next step.

Once a final determination is made, the applicant will either receive notice that they will not be considered for admittance, or an invitation for an interview. Interviews are traditionally held in-person and on campus, but during the pandemic, the program chose to schedule virtual interviews via Microsoft Teams. The interview has two parts to the process. First, the Director and assistant Director speak with the parents or guardians of the students to gain perspective of the family situation and decision to apply to the program. Second, one member from each department (academic, social, and career) attends the semi-structured interview with the student, taking turns asking predetermined questions with clarifying questions added along the way.

Interviewers then and then individually complete a rubric that evaluates if the applicant is qualified for the program based on the CTP requirements and shows that they can function within the supports set up by the program. After all interviews take place, the interviewers compare notes and choose the best candidates for the program, up to twelve students per year. A formal acceptance or denial letter is sent to each candidate with directions on how to enroll in the program if applicable.

Mentorship team.

Students enrolled in the IPSE program at Metro University are supported not only by program staff but also by a large mentorship team consisting of over 100 paid and unpaid undergraduate students enrolled at Metro University (Roman, 2020). Each IPSE program student is assigned a lead peer mentor that acts as a life coach and works with the student throughout the semester to set and attain personal goals (Roman, 2020). Other mentors are assigned specific roles to assist students in accomplishing goals (Roman, 2020). For example, a student might set a goal with the lead mentor of exercising three times a week for the next month. A secondary mentor would be assigned to hold that student accountable for working out and may even exercise with them and show them new techniques to stay on track (Roman, 2020). Mentorship team members complete an initial training and attend additional training throughout the semester to address specific issues during the semester (Roman, 2020).

Program staff.

Metro University's IPSE program has eight regular staff members: one Director, one Administrative Assistant, two Academic Coordinators, one Mentor Coordinator and three Career Coordinators. Each student is supported by a team consisting of one academic advisor, one peer-mentor advisor, and one career advisor. Students meet with each of their advisors regularly to

discuss progress and talk about how they can be best supported. Each team of advisors meets regularly to ensure a holistic approach to the students' experience in the program. At the end of each semester, students have a Person-Centered Planning (PCP) review meeting to adjust their PCP where necessary.

Study participant recruitment

Students who are enrolled in the IPSE program at Metro were contacted by email with an invitation to participate in the study. The sample size for this population was dependent on the number of respondents, with the initial expectation that at least half of the students in each cohort (with the average cohort size of 10) agree to participate, totaling 20-40 students. The actual number of student participants was 13: three first- year students, three second-year students, two third-year students, and five fourth-year students. Each student was asked to participate in a focus group discussion with other members of their cohort, lasting no more than ninety minutes. These focus groups discussed the social inclusion practices of their IPSE program, focusing on the specific practices that are the most effective from their perspectives. Participants signed an informed consent form, indicating they know that their answers to the questions were used in this study. A program advocate read and explained the consent form to all the participants before the interview and acted as a witness to ensure that each participant knew that the data collected during the focus group discussion will be used in this research project.

A second email was sent to select members of the IPSE program's mentorship team, asking them to participate in a single focus group of five to ten people. These participants were identified as knowledgeable by the peer mentorship coordinators of the program. The data from this focus group provides additional insight into the student experience and helps the researcher gain an alternative perspective on the program's efforts in supporting social inclusion. The focus

group lasted less than ninety minutes and addressed the mentorship team's understanding of the policies, practices, and procedures implemented by the IPSE program staff regarding social inclusion. Participants signed a consent form before the focus group that explains how the data would be used in the study and the consent form was reviewed before the start of the focus group.

The third set of data came from semi-structured interviews with the Director and five program coordinators. These interviews provided insight into the specific practices of the IPSE regarding social inclusion. These participants were initially contacted through email and scheduled through in-person conversation. This group of participants participated in a single one-on-one interview that lasted no more than ninety minutes. A consent form explaining that the data collected during the interview was used in the research project.

According to Creswell (2013), case studies involve multiple sources of information and are validated through various data collection methods. Merriam (1988) states that "methodological triangulation combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observations, and physical evidence to study the same unit" (p. 69). The purpose of triangulation is to strengthen the reliability and internal validity of the data (Merriam, 1988).

To authenticate the findings of a study, researchers often use an audit trail (Merriam, 1988). Here, the investigator describes "in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (Merriam, 1988, p. 172). This trail is created by keeping a research journal and recording every step in the research process. Included in this journal are "your reflections, your questions, and the decisions you make with regard to problems, issues, or ideas your encounter in collecting data" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 253).

In this study, triangulation comes from focus groups, individual interviews, and document review. By using "multiple approaches within a single study," this variety of data hopes to "illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences" (Stake, 1995, p. 114). An audit trail was used in every step of the research.

Semi-structured focus groups.

A focus group is a type of interview with a group of people who know about the topic (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Focus groups allow participants to interact with each other and respond to each other's comments (Creswell, 2013). This type of data collection is most appropriate when searching for the generation of ideas within a social context (Breen, 2006). While participants hear the views of others, they may be better able to refine their views into a more clear and cohesive thought and "explore insights that would otherwise remain hidden" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; p. 05.2). It is important that the participants in the focus group are those who know the most about the topic and that the topic is something they would talk about with each other in their everyday lives (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Focus groups should also provide participants with a rewarding experience of their own (Breen, 2006). These discussions usually consist of topics that every participant could talk about in their everyday life but do not (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define a semi-structured interview as one where some or all of the interview questions are flexible in wording and order. This “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondents, and to the new ideas on the topic” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.111). Semi-structured interviews allow for follow-up questions that make the main themes easier for the participants to understand and allows the researcher to turn the focus of the interview to the issues that are meaningful for the

participants (Kallio et al., 2016). This helps the researcher collect data that provides diverse perspectives and a rich understanding of the data (Kallio et al., 2016). The follow up questions can be pre-designed or spontaneous and can serve a variety of purposes such as increasing consistency in interviews or clarifying comments made by interviewees (Kallio et al., 2016).

Participants in each focus group should have exposure to similar experiences (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Creswell 2013; Breen, 2006; Krueger et al., 2001). Since each cohort of students has a unique set of experiences, student participants were asked to participate in one semi-structured focus group with only other participants of their program cohort. The members of the mentorship teams participated in a separate focus group as well due to their shared experience. Each set of participants was asked questions that focus on the practices of the IPSE that promote social inclusion. The questions used with the student focus groups used simplified language to ensure understanding. The language with the mentorship team was slightly elevated, including terms that they are familiar with due to their close relationship to the program. Additionally, the focus group participants discussed the resources they are aware of but choose not to use, making this a rewarding and unique experience. The focus group setting gave the participants the space to think about the variety of practices they are aware of and brainstorm possible additional services they would like to see in the future.

Semi-structured interviews.

This study collected data through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. According to Breen (2006), this type of data collection should "probe individual experiences, encouraging self-reflection on issues that could be distorted if social pressure were placed on the individual" (p. 466). These interviews are designed to provide insight into the individual perceptions of the efforts of social inclusion. All interview participants were asked a series of questions that

allowed them to elaborate on the current practices used by the IPSE program at Metro University that promote social inclusion. Participants were asked questions about the current practices and any potential practices that the IPSE may implement in the future to promote social inclusion further. A one-on-one interview is ideal for these participants so they can be more open and honest without hesitation to speak their minds and share ideas and insights (Creswell, 2013).

The participant pool for these semi-structured interviews consisted of the staff and leadership of the IPSE program at Metro University. The pool of participants included the Director and program coordinators. The total number of interviews was dependent on the response rate of those contacted with the expectation that between two and six individuals participate. All staff members responded to be participants with the final number of interviews being six. These interviews lasted no more than ninety minutes, and, due to the social distancing recommendations surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, interviewees participated in a virtual interview via Microsoft Teams. Conversations were recorded and transcribed using a voice-to-text tool provided by Microsoft Office, then revised for accuracy by the researcher.

Development of questions.

Marriam and Tisdale (2016) state that "the key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions" (p. 117). Phrasing and sequencing are important when forming questions (Krueger et al. 2001). The questions should avoid technical jargon and should use language that reflects the reading and writing abilities of the participants (Krueger et al., 2001; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The majority of questions should be open-ended, and interviews should start and end with questions that "invite the interviewee to open up and talk" (Creswell, 2013, p, 164). The middle set of questions should focus on the central phenomenon in the study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Kreuger et al., 2001). Often, the interview questions are developed from the sub-

questions to the research question (Creswell, 2013). In a semi-structured focus group or interview, follow-up questions about how they felt about certain experiences might provide further information that adds to the study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

A group interview, or focus group, is another method of collecting data. In a focus group, the interactions are structured by a series of planned discussion topics set by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). When developing the discussion questions, the researcher should start with questions that "prepare the participants to answer the most important questions" (Krueger et al. 2001, p. 7). In a focus group discussion, questioning should start and end with questions that are easily answered by everyone, with the middle set of questions focusing on the fundamental issues of the study (Krueger et al. 2001). The majority of the questions should probe participants to share and compare their experiences and interact with the other participants (Breen, 2006).

Each question used in these interviews and focus groups was intentionally designed using the method described above. In this study, the focus groups and individual interview questions were similar but used different verbiage due to the difference in language skills between participants. Each set of questions started with introductory questions that were easy to answer, followed by a question that introduced the central topic of social inclusion. The majority of the interview focused on the research question and sub-questions, with space for follow-up or probing questions where appropriate. The interviews and focus groups ended with a general question that addresses their main takeaways from our conversations. For a list of interview and focus group questions, please see Appendix B.

Connection to the conceptual framework.

Gidley et al.'s (2010) social inclusion theory for quality higher education is the conceptual framework for this study. The three underlying theories of Neoliberalism, Social Justice, and Human Potential outline this framework and have the real-work applications of access, participation and engagement, and empowerment, respectively. The interview questions mirror the framework and ask participants to reflect on what the IPSE program at Metro University does to provide access, facilitate participation, and foster empowerment. The interview questions explore the exemplary practices they have in these three categories and question participants about areas for improvement.

Document Review.

Document review allows the researcher to find meaning, gain understanding, and develop knowledge of the subject matter (Bowen, 2009). This type of data is used much in the same way that interviews are used (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). They can be a good source of data not only because they are easily accessible and free, but also because documents are objective sources (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Most documents are "produced independently of the research study" and are "acquired in a reasonably practical but systematic manner" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 189; p. 180). Documents can help construct emerging themes and extend what interviews and focus groups provide to the study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

The first step of this process is to find relevant material (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). While reviewing documents, the researcher should keep an open mind to authentic, serendipitous discoveries (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). For this study, the researcher started with a review of the program's parent and student handbooks, followed by an information search from various program-owned websites. The researcher looked for keywords associated with access,

participation, and empowerment to add to the data collected through focus group interviews. This additional information provides much-needed clarity and evidence for credibility to the study (Bowen, 2009). Procedures

To explore the leadership practices that provide access, promote participation, and encourage empowerment for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) at Inclusive Postsecondary Education programs, the following research questions were used to guide the case study:

1. What leadership practices promote social inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program?
2. What practices promote access for enrolled students?
3. What practices promote participation from enrolled students?
4. What practices foster empowerment for enrolled students?

To answer these questions, four data sources were used: staff interview, student focus groups, mentorship focus group, and a document review. The sections below provide a detail overview of the data collection process for each data set.

Staff Interviews

All staff members of the IPSE program were offered the opportunity to participate in an individual interview to contribute to this study through a recruitment email. Six staff members were contacted by email, and all six staff members promptly replied to set a time and day for their interview. These interviews were all conducted within a week of the last day of classes for the spring 2021 semester. The experience of the staff members varied from having seven years working with the program and the least experienced having three years working with the program. Before the interviews, participants were sent the consent form for review and were

asked to sign the document via DocuSign. One staff member chose to print the document and sign by hand. The consent form was reviewed at the start of the meeting, and participants had no further clarifying questions before getting started.

Student Focus Groups

Student participants were recruited through email. Each of the four cohorts was contacted separately, and every cohort member was copied on the same email. In the freshman cohort, three of the four students responded and attended. The sophomore cohort of nine students had five respondents. However, scheduling issues resulted in only three participants in the final focus group. The smallest student focus group was with the junior cohort. There were three respondents within a class of eleven students, but only two logged on to the virtual meeting. The student who did not attend contacted the researcher after the meeting, letting them know they forgot about it and realized it after the fact. The senior class of eleven students had the most responses at five, but one student dropped out after initially volunteering to participate, leaving a group of four students. No additional demographic information was collected from the student participants to aid in anonymity.

Before each focus group, participants were sent the consent form for review. Each student met individually with the researcher and a witness to review the consent form and clarify its components. Students signed the consent form by hand, followed by the witness. The consent form was again reviewed at the start of each meeting, and participants had no further clarifying questions before getting started.

Additional Protections for Student Participants

This study involves interviewing participants with intellectual disabilities, which presents unique challenges to the data collection process. Specifically, people with intellectual disabilities

often have four areas of challenges: "inarticulateness (linked to low self-esteem, isolation and anxiety as well as language skill levels); unresponsiveness in open questioning; difficulty generalising from experience and thinking in abstract terms; and conceptual difficulty around time, making it difficult for them to tell their story" (Nind, 2008, p.10). A group interview where participants are familiar with each other provides a non-threatening space that may build confidence and enable participants to contribute to research discussions through the power of group dynamics (Nind, 2008). This may mitigate some of the barriers that may arise during an individual interview.

One strategy to effective inclusion for participants with disabilities is to manage the focus group size. While the literature on qualitative study designs suggests that focus groups could have up to ten participants, Trevisan (2020) and Doyle et al. (2020) suggests that a group of four or five participants is more appropriate (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). This smaller group size will allow participants more time to process the questions and develop an articulated response and alleviate some of the pressure of finding the opportunity to participate in the conversation meaningfully (Trevisan, 2020). For this study, each focus group had no more than five respondents.

In addition to managing the number of participants in each focus group, a student advocate was also invited to each scheduled virtual meeting. This advocate was a part time employee of the IPSE program, working as an assistant to the mentorship coordinator, and each student participant was familiar them. The role of the advocate was to sit on each of the virtual meetings to observe behaviors and listen to student responses. Prior to the focus groups, the advocate met with the researcher to review specific verbal and non-verbal indicators of student stress and frustration. The advocate was responsible for informing the researcher if any student

exhibited signs of discomfort with the conversation and verifying that the line of questioning was aligned with the study and appropriate for this population. This helped remove the risk of unintentionally ignoring any of the behaviors that would suggest the necessity for a change or halt to the line of questioning. At the end of each focus group the researcher confirmed that there were none these indicators.

Mentorship Team Participants

The recruitment process for the mentorship team focus group started with a request sent to the peer-Mentor Coordinator on staff in the IPSE program. Five members of the mentorship team were contacted through email addresses provided. Three mentors responded that they wanted to participate. However, one mentor had to drop out of the focus group at the last minute due to a scheduling conflict. Of the remaining participants, one was a mentor with three years of experience working in the mentorship program, and the other had two years of experience. Before the focus group, participants were sent the consent form for review and were asked to sign the document via DocuSign. The consent form was reviewed at the start of the meeting, and participants had no further clarifying questions before getting started.

Document review.

The IPSE program provided the study with several documents and resources that contributed to the data triangulation. Specifically, the researcher was provided access to the student handbook, the parent handbook, and the program policy and procedure manual. Additionally, the resources on the program website rounded out the document review with information from a promotional video, a recording of an information session for prospective students, and general information about the program.

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the document review was an ongoing process. Because of the researcher's relationship to the IPSE program in this case study, documents were available to the researcher before the focus groups and interviews started and provided a knowledge base when entering into the conversations. Additionally, some of the data from the interviews and focus groups needed clarification through a document review. Specific uses of the documents are referenced in the data analysis sections in this chapter.

Data Analysis

Case study relies on both interpretation and aggregation of the data (Stake, 1995). In case study research, the need for categorical data is important (Stake, 1995). Patterns of consistency within certain conditions, or "correspondence," highlight the categories and give meaning to the study (Stake, 1995). Preparing the data for analysis is a multi-step process. First, all recordings from the focus groups and interviews were transcribed using voice-to-text software. The researcher then ensured the transcriptions were correct by comparing the transcription to the recording. The field notes for each focus group and interview were added to each transcription. These files were then combined with the document review files.

Member Checking

After each interview and focus group was transcribed, participants in each part of the study were sent a copy of the transcript and asked for accuracy verification. Additionally, they were allowed to review their comments and omit any or all of their portion of the data. Participants in the student focus groups were offered the opportunity to meet individually to go over the transcripts for accuracy. None of the participants responded with edits, so the entirety of each conversation was used in the data analysis process.

Once all data were verified and compiled, common patterns and themes were identified through a coding process. The coding process started with reviewing the field notes for major themes within each interview and focus group. NVIVO was utilized to code various recurring themes and organize the data electronically. Patterns of different social-inclusion-themed words and phrases were used according to the themes of the social inclusion for higher education conceptual framework: access (Neoliberalism), participation (Social Justice), and engagement (Human Potential). The study intends to highlight the specific practices of social inclusion within the IPSE program at Metro University. Using the multiple sources for triangulation, a fair assessment of the case can be made. Experts in qualitative studies suggest that multiple sources of information validate the data (Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). The triangulation for this data is from individual interviews, focus group interviews, and a document review. Any redundant or irrelevant information was easily identified and omitted from the final results with these multiple data sources.

The identified themes were first separated into three sections: Staff Interviews, Student Focus Groups, and Mentorship Focus groups. After the initial analysis and themes were identified in each group independently, the comparison of the analyses revealed common overarching themes. The analysis is presented with evidence from each set of interviews with supporting evidence from the document review.

Validity and Reliability

According to Coleman (2021, p.2042), “no method or procedure can guarantee the validity,” but several tools can increase credibility and reduce threats of validity. Specifically, the use of audio and visual recordings in combination with researcher notes, member checking, use of quasi-statistics, researcher neutrality, and triangulation help create the full and complete story

behind a qualitative research study (Coleman, 2021). This study used these techniques to produce the most credible and valid case. All interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and then sent to participants for verification. Several charts show the frequency of concepts that materialized during the data collection process to show the repetition of similar concepts. A variety of sources were used to triangulate the data appropriately. The researcher attempted to stay as neutral as possible, although insider bias is a limitation of the study.

Reliability in qualitative research is often resolved by providing detail and designing a methodology that is replicable at other case sites (Coleman, 2021). This study was specifically designed so that any other IPSE program could repeat the study, using the same research questions, structure, recruitment process, and interview questions to potentially reveal similar themes. One recommendation set by Coleman (2021) was to include other researchers in the coding and theme development process. This study did not lend itself to being a collaborative effort; the codes were generated by the researcher and by using NVIVO to identify patterns.

Summary

In this instrumental case study, the researcher conducted six individual interviews with Metro University's IPSE program leadership, four focus group interviews with students enrolled in the IPSE program at Metro University, and one focus group interview with experienced members of the IPSE program's mentorship team. Each interview asked participants about their attitudes and opinions surrounding the leadership efforts toward social inclusion for students enrolled in the IPSE program. After the interviews, recordings were transcribed using voice-to-text software, then carefully checked by the researcher. During this process, field notes for each focus group and interview were added to each transcription. Adding to the data, the researcher

also conducted an in-depth document review, looking for keywords associated with social inclusion for higher education conceptual framework.

4 RESULTS

This study aimed to explore the leadership practices that promote social inclusion in the Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Program at Metro University. Data were collected in the form of individual interviews with IPSE program staff members, focus group interviews with IPSE students and the members of the IPSE program mentorship team, and a review of various documents. Guided by the framework of Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education (Gidley et al., 2008), the data collected was sorted into three categories to identify themes within each area of the framework: Neoliberalism (access), Social Justice (participation), and Human Potential (empowerment). This analysis aims to answer the research questions:

1. What leadership practices promote social inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program?
2. What practices promote access for enrolled students?
3. What practices promote participation from enrolled students?
4. What practices promote empowerment of enrolled students?

Participant Observations

Overall, the staff were all eager and willing to share as much as they could about their knowledge and efforts toward social inclusion at Metro University. Since each staff member works with different aspects of the program, the data from the six staff interviews were evaluated together to get a holistic view of the program. The staff interviews provided a direct view on the specific leadership practices of the IPSE program that promote social inclusion, but this data group had less insight on the effects of those practices.

The student participants were thoughtful when answering the questions. As mentioned in the literature review, interviewing students with intellectual disabilities can be challenging for

various reasons. Most participants did a great job of asking clarifying questions to ensure they understood how to respond. Overall, the student participants were extremely gracious to the staff and spoke very highly of the IPSE program at Metro University. They had some insight on areas for improvement but felt that the program's leadership does an overall excellent job of promoting social inclusion on campus. It was interesting that the students have full faith that the IPSE staff is doing everything they can to make their experience on campus as meaningful as possible. This shows that the students trust and respect the staff in their decision-making promise.

It is important to note that fewer direct quotes are included from the participants in this section of the data analysis. This is due to the processing and language barriers with some of the participants. During these interviews, several participants had trouble with verbal expression, making the quotes difficult to interpret as a reader. Still, through follow-up questions and non-verbal cues, the researcher could get a conceptual understanding of the responses

The discussion with the mentorship team revolved much more around the improvements to the current efforts of the IPSE leadership. It was interesting to contrast their ideas for program improvement with the staff's efforts that are currently in place. It seems that the members of the mentorship team are uninformed of several strategies of relationship building, advisement, and curriculum design that promote social inclusion. Instead, they focused on the specific students they work with personally, the struggles they continue to face regarding social inclusion, and how they think the issues should be resolved. By combining the data from the mentorship focus groups with the student focus groups and staff interviews, there was clarity of the efficacy of the practices mentioned.

Defining differences.

Each interview and focus group started with the researcher asking each participant to identify the major differences between a student in the IPSE program and a typically matriculating undergraduate student at Metro University. The staff discussions in this area had a variety of focus. Some staff members were able to identify several areas of difference, while others had trouble finding any.

Staff 5 mentioned that several of the challenges that students in the IPSE program face when first entering campus are the same as those of a traditional undergraduate student:

> I think we do get kind of hung up on the differences when there aren't really as many differences. I think for a traditional student coming in their first week of school, and for an [IPSE] student coming in for their first week of school, neither one of them have probably lived on their own before, neither one of them have ever been around campus, they don't know the bus routes, they don't know the clubs, they don't know all the organizations.

Table 1 provides a visualization of the areas mentioned by each staff member.

Student participants identified several major differences as well. The students focused on credentials, curriculum, course workload and expectations, support, and participation in campus

Table 1

Major Differences Between IPSE Students and Degree-Seeking Students: Staff Only

Difference Mentioned	Staff 1	Staff 2	Staff 3	Staff 4	Staff 5	Staff 6
Type of Credential		x		x	x	x
Course Registration Process				x		
Level of Support	x		x	x	x	
Access to Student Activities		x	x	x	x	x
Housing Options		x				

organizations. The first-year focus group spoke about the credentials offered by the IPSE program. Freshman 2 said, "We don't really get any sort of degree or Ph.D. in anything. We mostly just get a certificate." The students in this group mentioned that because of this, there is a different course load that IPSE students take. In other focus groups, the students spoke more about the classes themselves. Senior 3 mentioned that some of the classes they are required to take that are specially designed for students in the IPSE program. Others are meant for the general university population: "We got to take the same kind of classes that regular [Metro University] students take, but we also got to take classes that are [IPSE] classes." Senior 2 expanded with, "They take a math class, they take a science class, they take all the…standard classes, and we take a career class, and they are different classes." Appendix F gives an overview of the certificate completion requirements for clarity on curriculum.

Senior 1 clarified that the classes designed for typical undergraduate students are modified for the students in the IPSE program and there is a different set of expectations for course completion:

> Our work in the course, well I wouldn't say that much easier, but…let's say that they have to write a 10-page paper we would only have to write like a five-page paper and meet with tutors to make sure we understand the information.

The student focus groups also mentioned that a major difference lies in the level of support they get from program staff. Sophomore 1 said, "We get a little bit more help than a typical [Metro University] student just because we have mentors, coaches, tutors and study halls, and different things like that."

Freshman 1 reflects:

> The thing I really love about [the IPSE program] in particular is the support that we get on the academics and other work that we do. It makes it kinda easier, not less stressful, but it's easier because we have a supportive team behind us who help guide us in what we are doing and what we want with our lives. And that we have that team. It's like a family.

Junior 2 mentioned that not only are the credentialing and course-loads different, but the process of being accepted into the program is different. They were self-aware and mentioned that due to their disability and capabilities, they would not meet the requirements to be admitted into Metro University, nor would they be successful if they did.

Participation in student organizations and activities was another major theme in discussing the differences. Many participants mentioned that students in the IPSE program cannot join fraternities or sororities and cannot be a member of a conference-sponsored athletic team. Junior 1 says, "We're not able to be in certain like sports, or like any fraternities or sororities I would say I guess it's like the typical like, you know, college thing to do, but I understand that it might be more difficult for us, you know, given because you know some of us have certain disabilities." Senior 1 focused more on the Greek organizations saying, "I feel like ours is also different because we can't join social fraternities and sororities." The first-year focus group spoke more about the specific events they did not feel that they were allowed to attend. Freshmen 3 says, "Well, I think we can go to tailgates, but we can do that, but you can't be a part of parties at all." These conversation pieces were interesting because the participants seemed unsure of the rules and were unaware of why they could not join these organizations. According to the student handbook, the students are not prohibited from attending events sponsored by Greek life organizations; however, due to the rules set by the organizations themselves, students in any non-degree seeking program would not be eligible for membership.

While each student focus group was able to generate a few major differences, every group mentioned more similarities in their experience than differences. Junior 2 reflects, "The [IPSE] program does a great job of trying to make sure that we get the [IPSE] students to do most things." Overall students felt that there was a good reason for many of the differences mentioned. Senior 3 mentions that they wanted to be a part of the Metro University competition swim team because they were a competitive swimmer at their high school but realized that they would not make the cut of the team even if it were allowed to try out. The 1st year focus group spoke about the need for the additional support to feel included. And the 2nd year focus group made it clear that they did not feel like being a part of Greek life organizations would be beneficial to most of the students in the IPSE program because of a lack of common interests and experiences.

The participants in the mentorship team focus group were typically matriculating undergraduate students and had a first-hand understanding of the differences between an IPSE student and a typical undergraduate because of their lived experience. Most of this conversation focused on the areas in which they worked with mentees who faced challenges of inclusion because of the differences in IPSE students compared to the mentor's experience. The mentor group spoke about the differences regarding support, credentials, curriculum, and opportunities for social integration.

Mentor 1 started the conversation by talking about the structure and support the IPSE program provides:

> I think that what stands out to me is the amount of support offered to the [IPSE] students. There are a lot of different supports that traditional students are often [provided], but they

> often have to go out and seek their supports while with an [IPSE] student, that support is built into the program.

Mentor 2 followed up this with a short conversation about the differences in the curriculum:

> They're getting two certificates versus a four-year bachelor of science degree…. The curriculum focuses a lot on some technical, interest-based, or topical classes, but also a lot of social and career support and health and wellness support in classes, which traditional students don't usually receive.

In continuing their thought process, Mentor 2 mentioned that the IPSE program uses a cohort model. They indicate that there are advantages to this style, but it may close their social network since there is less variety in the people in their classes. Mentor 1 agreed and added, "Students in [the IPSE program] seem to have a social circle within [the IPSE program] more so than with a regular student that would have lots of social circles with different sources."

The last major difference mentioned was that IPSE students are required to have an internship while they are taking classes. In contrast, typical students may have an internship during the summer instead of classes.

Table 2
Major Difference Between IPSE Students and Degree-Seeking Students: Combined Responses

Difference Mentioned	Staff Combined	Students Combined	Mentorship Team
Type of Credential	X	X	X
Course Registration Process	X		X
Level of support	X	X	X
Access to Student Activities	X	X	
Housing Options	X		

Defining Social Inclusion

Before moving on to questions focused on the theoretical framework, participants were asked to define social inclusion in their own words. Table 3 details the various definitions given by participants. Most participants described social inclusion as belonging, acceptance, and the opportunity to be a part of something.

Table 3
Definition of Social Inclusion by Participant

Participant	Definition of Social Inclusion
Staff 1	It's not just equal access, but it's the whole idea that their presence is desired, and their participation is valued.
Staff 2	Social inclusion to me means being accepted, so it would be all groups regardless of race, regardless of socioeconomic status, regardless of which would include your education of course, regardless of disability being included and doing things together and valuing one another in the social aspect.
Staff 3	Social inclusion is having easy access to events where people are socializing that aren't in an academic setting and are outside of typical academic responsibilities. I think social inclusion also has a component of being of everyone being heard and everyone being respected and seen.
Staff 4	Students with intellectual and development disabilities are able to fully participate in the college experience. They have agency over their own decisions as they navigate college, and they actively choose what they would like to participate in without barriers to participation.
Staff 5	It's just kind of about organicness, that not noticing, like all opportunities being available that would be available to anyone else.
Staff 6	When there's a culture and environment where not only individuals with disabilities see the benefit but the larger campus and culture sees the benefit.
Freshman 1	Being engaged in the whole community of the program socially by being around people and being able do, like, the similar belonging, that we all belong socially, that we have people in the community that we can come to that accept us that can listen to us and really hear what we value so we can be just like anyone else and be able to grow socially and be able to grow as who we are.
Freshman 2	I think that's what I think. That's what everybody wants in the program: just to be treated on the same level as regular individuals. You know, be the same as others, not like, you know, special treated…to be included [in] other activities, not just in

	campus but in life, and making sure everyone does feel included and just talking to people and getting out there.
Freshman 3	Being a part of all, like any clubs and like being involved in what they're doing, like going to, like, bonfires or going to play putt-putt, or like any other, like, worship or something.
Sophomore 1	No one is excluded. Everyone is invited.
Sophomore 2	I am a famous and a popular guy within the [Metro university] and with [my dorm] community.
Sophomore 3	Wanting to join the best buddies and something like that. Yeah.
Junior 1	It's different varieties of different schools/colleges giving people with disabilities all types of opportunities.
Junior 2	It is a way to include diverse people in social situations and, like, in groups in schools, like, so It's a way to be more open to them.
Senior 1	Not leaving you out just because you're different and you haven't disability. Like, I learned that they're volunteering at the friendship circle but just because those kids have special needs, they still need a friend. They['re] still people too and something like my mother [and]y aunt. My aunt is deaf and wears hearing aids, and my mom can't see, so I've learned that and my aunt's kind of blind too, but still I learned that they are also still humans and they still need friends as much as anyone else does.
Senior 2	That we learned differently from other people.
Senior 3	To be involved. To be, like, all together.
Senior 4	To me it would include almost everyone no matter what they were like, no matter what they grew up from, no matter what they're experts in, or no matter what they're a fan of.
Senior 5	To be included despite having some differences.
Mentor 1	Not so much that it's actively seeking out diversity but that everyone is welcome. You know, it's not like we're looking for someone who is different, but if someone, everyone is welcome to the social circle if they choose to try to enter it.
Mentor 2	I think of social spaces and that are open and almost intentionally seek out diversity, intentionally are open to people who are different, kind of come

> together, and that could be people of different ability levels. That could be people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Just spaces that are really open and actively that open.

Access

The data shows that students in the IPSE program have access to most areas of campus. This includes access to classes, buildings, clubs, sporting events, the campus recreation center, on-campus jobs, campus transportation, and housing. Additionally, students who qualify have access to specialized services such as paratransit, the on-campus food pantry, and emergency summer housing opportunities.

Staff 2 reflects, "I think that our program is really good about advocating for equal access" and, "I think the access that students have to actual campus life and feeling like they are a part of Georgia Tech is amazing." Table 4 provides insight into some of the specific examples that staff members mentioned about these areas of access. The aim of this study is not to identify the areas in which students have access, but instead to identify the leadership practices that gave students that access.

Table 4

Areas Of Campus Students Can Access: Staff

	Staff 1	**Staff 2**	**Staff 3**	**Staff 4**	**Staff 5**	**Staff 6**
Campus Building Access		x	x	x		
Clubs & Campus Organizations		x	x	x	x	x
Sporting Events		x		x	x	
Housing		x	x	x	x	x
Classes	x	x	x	x		x
Graduation Ceremony		x		x	x	
On-campus Jobs			x	x	x	x
Student Life Activities	x	x		x	x	
Support Services		x				

Staff 1 says, "Overall, I feel that the access at Metro University is outstanding" and "I think we're really getting to a point now where most things are most things that are traditional

degree-seeking students would be able to do on campus or opportunities are concerned our students are able with the exception of very few things."

The student focus groups revealed some interesting insights. It was clear that the students were not aware of everything the IPSE staff does to promote social inclusion. However, they understood that their access on campus did not come naturally and that there were specific efforts made to provide that access. Table 5 shows the specific aspects mentioned in each focus group conversation. Overall, the students felt that they had great access to the various aspects of campus. Junior 1 says, "If I'm being honest, I think we kind of have a lot of, quite a bit of access to the [Metro University] campus. To be honest, I don't think that there's that much areas on campus that we're not allowed to have access to. There is quite a bit." Sophomore 1 also says, "I think the [IPSE] program does a pretty good job with access…. We have pretty much, I think everything on campus or most things."

Table 5
Aspects of Campus Students Can Access: Students

	1st years	**2nd years**	**3rd years**	**4th years**
Campus Building Access	x	x	x	x
Clubs & Campus Organizations	x	x		x
Sporting Events	x	x	x	x
Housing	x	x		
Classes	x	x	x	x
Graduation Ceremony				
On-campus Jobs	x			
Student Life Activities	x		x	x
Support Services	x	x	x	x

The mentorship team participants had the most difficulty identifying areas of campus that IPSE students have access to, only mentioning access to some social spaces, internships, classes, and the graduation ceremony. The participants were able to identify some of the strategies used to give access to these areas. Still, this conversation revealed that the mentorship team does not have depth in their knowledge of specific efforts of the IPSE program leadership that promote social inclusion.

When comparing the data from the staff, student, and mentorship interviews and focus groups, two major themes arose when discussing access: relationship building and problem-solving. The staff interviews provided insight on the actual steps taken by the IPSE leadership, and the student and mentor focus group helped confirm the efficacy of the practices.

Theme: Relationship Building.

Several staff members mentioned that because IPSE program students are not coded into the university system in the same way undergraduate students are, they do not have the same status an undergraduate student has. This means they do not automatically have access to the same services and activities around campus. The program implemented specific leadership techniques to provide access to various areas on campus. All six of the IPSE program staff members mentioned that relationship building is a major contributing factor to granting access to various aspects of campus.

Staff 1 describes the IPSE program leadership as assertive, mentioning that they take the initiative when making connections on campus to ensure the students have what they need to feel like they are a part of campus. Staff 1 reflect that there is a strategic effort in relationship building where IPSE program staff approach members of campus that are high-level decision-makers. Staff 1 specifically said, "It's not just at the level of approaching a teacher or an

instructor. It's at the level of approaching full-on department heads and deans and people that are higher decision-makers." Staff 6 also focused on the need to advocate with those that have more power to make top-level decisions. According to Staff 6, the IPSE staff grants access by "advocating to leadership about the specific need that a student has." Staff 2 continues this thought and mentions that "we need the top administration down to really embrace that and push it into the other areas that are lacking access."

Staff 2 also focused on the benefits surrounding the growing knowledge that the program exists on campus. Staff 2 mentions, "Someone from a department reaches out to [the IPSE program] and is very interested in learning more about us because they have someone in their family or friends who has a disability, or they just heard really good reports from other areas across campus." Staff 5 spoke more about the effective strategy of growing the network, saying "It's just a domino effect, the more people who have an experience with an [IPSE] student, the more people who have had a positive experience with the program, it just becomes more natural, and the inclusion becomes more natural."

Since Staff 3 specifically works in academics and spoke in more detail about access to classes, mentioning that the students have almost complete access to the school's course catalog when choosing classes to audit, or in program terminology, inclusive classes. Through networking and communication with campus faculty, students have participated in most classes they have requested. Staff 3 continues to say, "We work a lot with personal relationships and establishing connections with departments that allow the professors to have a better picture of what our students need and what our students are looking for when they take a class." Staff 6 expanded on the classes that the students are not able to access: "We don't have access to them

probably because of the nature of the course, so if there is a course that requires a higher level of skill or intellect to access."

Students in the IPSE program have access to housing due to relationship building. Staff 4 says the access to housing "was because of many conversations that I had with housing over the years." Unfortunately, students only have limited choices when picking a dorm where they would like to live. They do not have access to living in the apartment-style dorms that are much more desirable and are available to undergraduate students. The program is still working on the relationship-building process with housing, but there is a perceived inequity to access for the students in the IPSE program. Staff 4 goes on to say, "We continue that conversation as we look at expanding housing options…. It's something that I go to them about every year, to see what's available, and were hoping to establish housing where they're not in competition with degree-seeking students based on space."

Staff 2 also mentions that it is about continuing the conversation when networking. "It's basically networking and reaching out and making the ask because if you don't make the ask, and if you don't make the ask over and over again, if you don't show why it's needed, then it is not going to happen."

The student focus groups confirmed that they do have access to the areas mentioned by the IPSE staff and were able to recognize that it was in part because of the relationship building efforts of the IPSE leadership. Most of the student focus groups spoke about the relationships the IPSE staff have developed on campus to provide access. The first-, second-, and fourth-year focus groups all mentioned the relationship-building between the IPSE Academic Coordinators and the inclusive class professors. Sophomore 1 says, "They form relationships and binds with people so we can have access to the inclusive classes." The other participants in the group

continue to say that it is not just about the access but having the instructors understand the needs of the students. Additionally, the student focus groups touched on their knowledge that there are relationships with athletics, internship sites, and housing.

The mentorship team participants touched on some of the staff-developed relationships that provide access for IPSE students. Specifically, the participants mentioned the relationship-building efforts with internship sites. According to the student handbook, students in the IPSE program are required to participate in internships that are organized and monitored by IPSE staff. Participants spoke about the relationship building through the IPSE leadership and how it creates access to employment opportunities both on and off-campus. Mentor 2 reflects:

> I think certainly the […] program does a fantastic job at helping students find jobs and internships in places that employers may not have ever considered hiring somebody with disabilities, in places students wouldn't be able to get connected to opportunities themselves without the support of the program. I think definitely there's a huge accessibility component to the job and career opportunities.

The participants touched on some other relationship-building efforts as well. They spoke about the lack of access to Greek organizations and the unsuccessful efforts of granting access to that aspect of college life. Mentor 2 mentions that IPSE program leadership approached a few Greek organizations and high-level decision makers about excluding IPSE students. But they feel that "it was kind of an institute-level decision where they were like, 'you have to be a degree enrolled students to be enrolled in Greek life.'" They suggested that it may just be about more coordination and continuing the conversation to grant this access for future students.

Theme: Problem-solving.

The program description makes it clear that the students in the IPSE program are not considered undergraduate students. Because students with IDD would not usually be accepted into a typical 4-year college, "the [IPSE] program created a second program where students get a parallel experience," according to Staff 5. This alternative route to accessing the campus means these students are coded into the university-wide system as a professional education student rather than a typically matriculating undergraduate student. Staff Member 4 mentions, "There are issues with access regarding how they are coded in the system, which can cause barriers." Because of this difference, they do not have the same automatic access to many resources. However, the students in the IPSE program have access to most areas of campus because of the problem-solving strategies implemented by the IPSE program leadership.

The interviewed staff mentioned several instances of problem-solving and alternative routes in granting access to some specialized services. Staff 5 reflects, "When you're not able to allow students like [IPSE] students to go through the main door, sometimes you have to make a separate gate that goes to the same place. So that's one of the things that I think as a program we do constantly just trying to create that second gate."

When barriers to access arise, it is the responsibility of the IPSE staff to address the barrier and problem-solve according to the parent manual. Staff 2 mentioned that "it's [the IPSE program] reaching out because we have a particular need or there's a particular access problem." Staff 2 mentions that when there is no way to resolve the issue within the supports available at the university, the IPSE program creates a similar resource for the students in the program. For example, the students in the IPSE program do not have access to the on-campus disability

services department. According to Staff 2, the program resolves this issue internally: "We provide all of our own disability accommodations and things."

Each of the student focus groups spoke about access issues that occurred while they were with the program and the IPSE program staff's steps to resolve the issue. Sophomore 2 says that when a student experiences an issue, "we should talk to [the Director] or [the program administrator] to come up with a solution."

One example given by Sophomore 1 was with meal plan access. Originally students in the IPSE program were not able to access the student meal plan. After some problem-solving with the IPSE leadership, they were able to find an alternate route to allow access to meal plans. However, students cannot purchase meal plans the same way as undergraduate students. According to the parent manual, this, instead, is done through the program administrator, creating more work behind the scenes but still giving students access.

The fourth-year students mentioned a similar situation regarding purchasing Metro University sporting events tickets. Students in the IPSE program are not able to use their student IDs to get student pricing for tickets. According to Senior 2, to access this ticketing, the peer Mentor Coordinator has a contact in the athletic department that opens a temporary link to purchase tickets each year. These tangible examples from a student perspective show the efficacy of the problem-solving techniques implemented by IPSE staff.

The mentorship team does quite a bit of problem-solving within that portion of the organization, and often without IPSE leadership help. The role of the mentorship team is to help IPSE students reach their goals through discovery, problem-solving, and troubleshooting. One specific area of access that the mentorship team participants spoke about was access to social spaces. This included mentions of clubs, organizations, and non-organized groups such as study

groups or natural partnerships on group projects. Mentor 2 feels that this is because the mentors work closely with students to help them reach their goals. Many students identify specific activities they want to be a part of and social groups they want to join. Mentor 2 says, "I think in that way there's some mentorship program aspect [that] does a good job at connecting students to or allowing access to social spaces for students." They say that this is because the mentors help students work toward their goals, and if their goal is to, for example, join a club, they problem-solve until that goal becomes a reality.

Another major effort led by the mentorship team was access to the graduation ceremony. Originally students in the IPSE program did not participate in commencement alongside their undergraduate peers. Mentor 1 mentioned that after initially being denied the opportunity to participate in the ceremony, several members of the mentorship team did some problem-solving and created a petition. The petition was then distributed for signatures to the general undergraduate student population and presented to Metro University high-level decision-makers. This effort overturned the decision, and the IPSE students have a place in spring commencement ceremonies.

The mentorship team participants turned their conversation to an area of access that is still under development through relationship building and problem-solving. Specifically mentioning that IPSE students still lack access to leadership roles on campus. Mentor 2 had an interesting perspective when they said, "it is hard for me to envision what that might look like. A student in a leadership position that requires a lot of self-directed work...students lack access to meaningful leadership positions in college instead of just being a general member of the club." Even though some students have tried running for leadership positions in the organizations they are a part of, none have been successful according to Mentor 2. The mentorship team noticed this

recurring issue and developed the Student Advisory Board (SAB). This organization is run by IPSE students and IPSE mentorship team members. According to Mentor 2, "The students have gotten involved. I think that's a great way to supplement, maybe, that lack of leadership in other spaces."

The two themes of *relationship building* and *problem-solving* work together in many instances. Several problem-solving strategies resulted in relationship building, and many of the relationships that the IPSE program formed resulted in a swift and easy process for the problem to be solved. For example, Staff 4 mentioned that they had a relationship with the athletics department head. When students did not have access to tickets, it was an easy solution to contact that person and use their social capital to create a swift and easy solution to getting students tickets. An alternative approach was used when students did not have access to housing, the first step in problem-solving was to create a relationship with the head of the department of housing.

Participation.

The next set of questions asked during the interviews focused on student participation and the strategies of the IPSE program to encourage meaningful participation and a sense of belonging on campus for their students. The program staff was consistent in their message that this was an important component of the IPSE program. Staff 2 says, "We really try hard to allow students to be a part of the conversation, not to just be the token [IPSE] student that's there." The two prominent themes of these conversations were the IPSE curriculum and IPSE staff support.

During the student focus groups, the researcher found that the concept of participation was hard to specify for most of the participants. Each of the focus groups needed guidance to define the concept of participation as a sense of belonging and the platform for participation. The data from this portion of the student focus groups leaned more toward individual experiences and

feelings than the specific leadership practices that promote participation. However, two similar themes arose, but with less supporting data.

Because of the nature and role of the mentorship team, the participants did not mention several leadership-focused aspects of the program. Their focus was on campus life's social components, such as joining student organizations, initiating friendships, and independent living skills. In asking questions based on leadership practices that promote participation, Mentor 1 said, "It's hard for me to answer because I operate with the students more one-on-one or within the [IPSE] group, so that's why I'm struggling to answer this question." The conversation during this focus group centered on participation was limited to speaking only about the support provided by the IPSE mentorship team with no mention of the support provided by IPSE staff or the IPSE program curriculum.

Theme: IPSE Curriculum. (Staff and Students only)

According to the resources available on the IPSE program website, students take four classes each semester. The first class focuses on career development and is accompanied by IPSE program staff. The second class, also taught by IPSE Program staff, focuses on one of four areas: fundamentals, social, independent living, or transition. For the last two classes the students in the program can choose undergraduate level courses where they enter the class as a guest student and have modified expectation to earn credit toward their certificate.

Many staff members mentioned that it is not uncommon for a student in the IPSE program to lack a sense of belonging on campus. Staff 3 mentions that the major issues in fostering participation are interpersonal connections and the skills needed for students to build relationships. They observed that the students in the IPSE program have a hard time connecting with the undergraduate students at Metro University, specifically when it comes to club

participation and classroom team projects. Additionally, they often have trouble connecting with others in general as part of their various disabilities. As a result, students often lack a sense of belonging in these areas and tend to pull away from voluntary social opportunities.

One of the IPSE program's components that addresses these issues is developing the IPSE program curriculum (the classes required for IPSE students and taught by IPSE staff). Staff 2 mentions that in all the IPSE program-specific classes, there are group projects, class presentations, and required interactions. They say,

> Every single class that we teach we have students presenting. They think about their concepts. They present them. They know how to speak in front of a crew. They get comfortable really talking to people, and a lot of people are not comfortable with that, so I think just that communication and strengthening that communication, so they feel comfortable with who they are and sharing their information.

More specifically, Staff 2 talks about the importance of the current events course. They say, "I think the current events classes have been really powerful in helping the students really tune into what's going on in the world." Another course mentioned by Staff 5 is the first-year seminar course that all IPSE students are required to take. According to Staff 2, the focus of the course is to "show what [Metro University] is and what are the opportunities and what are the traditions and all that kind of stuff." This course allows the students to understand the variety of ways to be engaged with the university community.

Most staff members mentioned the importance of the social skills course. This class uses the PEERs curriculum from UCLA to teach specific interpersonal relationship building skills such as identifying interests, trading information with new people, and entering group conversations. Staff 4 says that PEERs is "an evidence-based social skills course that we teach in

the program." According to Staff 1, "it breaks everything down into tasks, which helps them approach social situations and engagement in a much more scientific way, and it's almost like a task list that they're able to follow step-by-step." Staff 5 details the specific components of the PEERs curriculum:

> The PEERs curriculum, which literally teaches students how to find a good source of friends with common interests, how to enter group conversations, how to main conversations, how to go back and forth and resolve conflicts, and about dating and all these other things, equip[s] them with the tools on how to find a group of people who have common interests as you because that's the most important thing is to have a meaningful role within that group.

Staff 2 speaks about the intended benefits of the course:

> The PEERs social class, I think it's really good for our students. It would probably be good for the [Metro University] students that work for our program with us too because I think that the social communication skills that we teach through PEERs a lot of students just don't get at an early age. Sometimes they don't get it at all.

The intended outcomes of the course are described by staff member 3: "The PEERs curriculum teaches them social skills to feel competent in how they engage with others."

The student focus groups also mention the importance of the IPSE program curriculum in promoting participation on campus. Junior 2 mentions that the PEERs-based social skills class has helped them understand how to handle different social situations. Most student focus groups also mention the benefits of taking courses and participating in academic activities designed only for IPSE students. Freshman 3 mentions that they felt comfortable in class discussions in the IPSE classes because they are more familiar with the other student in the class. They also liked

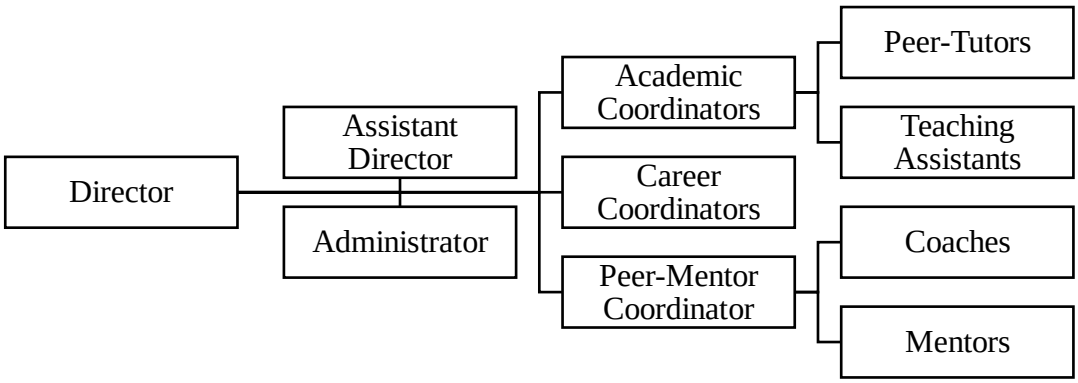
the requirement of attending study halls with IPSE staff to get the extra help they need to feel confident in their inclusive classes.

Theme: IPSE Staff Support.

The IPSE program is set up to support the students in the program in various ways. The IPSE program staff consists of one Director, one assistant Director, one administrator, two Career Coordinators, two Academic Coordinators, and one Peer Mentor Coordinator. Additionally, the program has a team of student employees who act as coaches, mentors, teaching assistants, and peer tutors who work under the program staff's direction. All program coordinators have student advising responsibilities, and each student has a team of three advisors that they work with, one in each category. Figure 1 shows the organizational structure of the IPSE Program Staff.

Figure 1

Metro University IPSE Program Organizational Structure



Advisors.

According to the IPSE program staff, the students meet with each advisor several times throughout the semester, and in some cases, weekly. In each of these meetings, advisors work with students to address behaviors and actions that may improve a sense of belonging in different aspects of student life. According to Staff 2:

> In these meetings, they receive feedback on their behaviors and their communication and a lot of support in changing it, an idea how they could say something or rephrase something a little bit differently to make it come across a little better. Also, there is the email communication and text messages communication. There's so much communication that they really get a lot of help with.

Staff 4 says, "It is the job of the advisors to communicate with the students and determine their level of need…. The advisors turn up or turn down the heat in terms of modification when they see the student is either struggling or is capable of more in terms of learning…and identifying what kind of support they might want in terms of access."

Staff 5 mentioned that the advisement meetings are designed to give students unsolicited feedback. These meetings are also a time for students to process their behaviors or ask how to approach different situations appropriately. Additionally, "we have students that don't feel that they need support in that way and they're fine doing on their own, and that's okay too."

Some of the staff members mentioned that their role is not only about supporting students to succeed but also supporting students through failure. According to Staff 2, "one of the things that we preach in the [IPSE] program is that inclusion is all the good and the bad." Staff 5 continues to say that a major part of inclusion is "allowing the students to still be challenged and to still taste failure every now and then and to be held to the same standards as another student

…. We certainly challenge students. We don't sugarcoat everything. We let students taste failure. We let students be held to the same standard." Overall, the staff feels that giving students in the IPSE program the space for failure is important to creating a sense of belonging because it is part of the human experience.

The student interviews also revealed the importance of advisors in promoting participation. Freshman 3 mentioned that when they have a hard time deciding, they rely on the advisement of the program Director to help guide them. Sophomore 1 reflected on their experience of feeling lonely on campus and using the advisement of their peer-Mentor Coordinator to help find a way to make new social connections on campus. Senior 1 spoke about the support provided during academic advising saying, "they ask you…if you need anything to be helpful for the tests and quizzes, like if you need accommodations." They continue to mention that they work closely with their tutors to create a plan so they feel a sense of belonging in the class and can participate during discussions and "grasp the information."

Several of the students also mentioned that when they do not feel a sense of belonging or have a platform for meaningful participation, they work with the advisors to uncover the reasoning behind it. Sophomore 2 mentioned that they joined a club that was not a good fit. When they met with their mentorship coordinator for advisement, they revealed several reasons it was not a good fit and found a different organization to try new techniques to help them feel like they were a part of the group.

The mentorship team did not mention any of the efforts done by the IPSE advisors. Still, they did acknowledge that the students have support from their advisors on various levels.

Peer Mentors and Tutors.

Another practice mentioned is the peer-mentor program comprised of undergraduate students who work individually with IPSE program students. Staff 4 says,

> The mentors are an important bridge on the Social Justice train…. We have a robust mentor and tutoring program that is staffed by volunteers and paid degree-seeking students who engage with the students as their peers. So it might be that mentors help them engage in clubs or events or social or athletic events that are going on campus if the student desires that support.

The Peer-Mentor Coordinator trains and manages these mentors and is assigned to work with individual students on their unique goals. While this part of the program is also developing, it is an integral part of creating a sense of belonging on campus. Staff 5 mentions that it gives students the training and confidence they need to find a place to have meaningful participation and interactions with the campus. Staff 3 says, "We encourage engagement on the large events that are easy to access…like Six Flags and night at the aquarium and football games, and we do that by pairing them with mentors who are specifically focused on their social life."

According to Staff 6, the mentorship program is a major component to promoting social inclusion on campus: “Having traditional [Metro University] students that are available, interested, motivated, and trained to include individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in campus is probably the crux of the way that engagement happens.”

The program staff also hires undergraduate students from within the inclusive classroom to act as peer tutors. This is done through a recruitment email sent out to the class and a hiring process through the IPSE program. According to Staff 6, "the tutors are providing that engagement in course content, where coaches are providing that engagement within this social

opportunity on campus…. They're increasing engagement in a classroom where this the student can engage in content or in-group work as well as engaging just in their own interactions in tutoring sessions."

The student focus groups also mentioned the importance of the IPSE program tutors and mentors. Freshman 3 reflected on personal experience when joining an on-campus club. After identifying this organization, the mentorship coordinator paired them with a mentor who was a part of the club. According to Freshman 3, they "would usually ask me if I was coming or not." This helped develop a sense of belonging and acceptance in the organization.

The members of the mentorship team spoke about the support offered to IPSE program students that facilitate participation by creating a sense of belonging in their community. First, Mentor 1 spoke about the inclusive class tutor and the support they provide: “I would say one of the meaningful ways that students are able to participate in that is with the support of the academic tutor. I think the academic tutor really works to facilitate, to bridge that gap between what a traditional student might be expected to learn.”

Mentor 2 continues and mentions that some tutors do a better job than others. Since tutors are recruited during the first week of each semester, some tutors sign up without being "passionate about connecting with students with intellectual or developmental disabilities and didn't really know about meeting their needs and supporting them." They suggest that there should be a better vetting process for hiring these student employees, but the time crunch is a major barrier to doing that. The participants were unaware of how much training is provided by the IPSE program staff, but they hope that there is an opportunity for tutors to "feel prepared to do the work that they're being asked to do.”

Mentor 1 focused on students' support from the mentorship team in entering different social circles. They were not able to expand on the specifics of that process but suggested some ideas for furthering the development of this process:

> You could have mentors go into clubs with you, or set up pairings within clubs, and be like 'Hey, I want you to make sure that this student feels like they can speak out and express themselves.' We don't do that right now, I don't think. Once you get into a club you're there, but it's on you after that to take initiative.

Mentor 2 followed up and mentioned that there was one specific organization on campus that helped develop relationships after students chose to join that club:

> There are interns who are hired to specifically reach out with initiate and connect with students, and I think that that might be part of why students seem to like [this club] and seem to go back to [this club] is that people are very intentional about reaching out to them, and that's not as present in other clubs.

Lastly, the support of the community that the on-campus housing system provides has allowed students to feel a sense of belonging and give them a platform for meaningful participation in that aspect of campus life. Participants in both focus groups mentioned that students in the IPSE program feel comfortable spending time with the typical undergraduate students that live in their dorms and participating in housing-sponsored activities with the other students. Mentor 2 says, "They seem to have a lot of fun within those communities that they live with." As mentioned in the staff interview section, the leadership effort here lies in creating that on-campus housing space. While the participants did not explicitly mention this behind-the-scenes effort, it is important to note.

Empowerment

In each interview, the last set of questions focused on the leadership practices that promote empowerment. Overall, the staff spoke about the program component of student-led discussions across the board.

Staff 2 laid out the autonomy that students in the IPSE program have:

> We don't tell them what time to go to bed, what time to get up. We give them choices to what classes they're going to take except for, of course, the careers class and things like that. They are empowered to sign up for more study halls if they want to ask for help, to ask for less help, to go anywhere they want to go on campus and do whatever they want to do…really. I think that offering the supports but not mandating these supports, not saying, oh, you have to have this support, you have to do this, but it's available if you want it, and if you don't want it, then that's fine.

In contrast to the sections on Access and Participation, the student focus group conversations centered on empowerment were extremely informative. Sophomore 1 reflects, "I think they let us know that we have a voice and that we can speak up if we don't like something and if we do like something." Students spoke in detail about the empowerment they feel like part of the IPSE program and the lack of empowerment they feel when they are not on campus.

As indicated above, the mentorship team participants had limited knowledge of the variety of experiences of an IPSE student since they primarily focus on the social growth when working with them. These participants were able to identify some of the strategies implemented by the IPSE program leadership during their training that promote empowerment. The mentorship team participants spoke mainly about their role of helping students work toward their

goals set during their annual goal-setting meetings. The theme identified in each subgroup was Person-Centered Planning and Ongoing Support.

Theme: Person-Centered Planning.

Most of the staff members also focused on Person-Centered Planning (PCP) as a major contribution to empowerment in the IPSE program. Staff 1 detailed the Person-Centered Planning model that the IPSE program uses.

> At the end of the fall semester, we have a mid-year review, and the student will identify goals that they've been working on, places where they've been struggling, and ask the team for the things that they want help with the things they want to work on next. Then in the spring semester, we do a person-centered plan which is an end-of-year review but also a setting of goals for the next academic year, and so they have a chance to review every aspect of the program so their social involvement, their academics, their employment, and their independence skills.

Staff 5 elaborates on the process from his perspective and calls it a "celebration of what you've accomplished over that year." They also mention that students often enter their Person-Centered Planning meetings nervous because they do not feel a sense of accomplishment. Still, at the end of most meetings, students feel empowered because they can share their successes, allowing others to be proud of them.

As mentioned by Staff 4 in the above section, IPSE students have a team of three advisors that work with them on the three major aspects of the program: careers, academics, and social life. Students are expected to meet with each advisor several times throughout the semester, and some students meet with each advisor each week. These weekly meetings are an important aspect of the continuous process of supporting a person-centered plan.

Each staff member spoke about the importance of ongoing support of each student's PCP. Staff 1 spoke in detail about how giving each student that space for processing their thoughts with an advisor is important:

> We're giving them time every week to be able to stop and think about, "Where are my choices leading?" and when you're able to take that time and be introspective and think about "What are the choices I have in front of me?" and "What are the consequences for my actions, good or bad?" it doesn't matter, but having been able to have that thought process is really important to empowering a person and helping them understand how much control they actually have over their lives.

Staff 2 reiterates that the intent of these meetings is not to tell students what to do. Instead, the goal is to open the lines of communication, educate the students of the different choices they can make, and provide space for them to make their own decisions regarding their goals. The ongoing meetings are a platform to check in on their progress and hold them accountable.

> Staff 4 focuses on the way advisors treat their students and the concept of mutual respect: We treat them with respect, and we encourage them to be developing all these things that any student in college would be developing as they grow and mature. We encourage them to try new things. We care about what they think and what they feel and what they want, and when they're feeling down, we try to connect them with ways that will help them feel better.

According to Staff member 5, there is an added need for this type of support in this population:

> "We're all about positive reinforcement. We're like, yeah, this could have been better, but yeah, you've worked as hard as you can, and I'm proud of the work you did or whatever,

so you know, I just think we try to avoid tearing the students down because…they've been torn down their whole life in one way or another."

Many of these same leadership techniques are verified in the student focus group conversations. Freshman 3 says: "They always try to check in and see how our weekend was and how your family's doing and how your homework is going…. It motivates me to do that…check-in with my family members and do my homework."

The student focus groups gave additional insight into the PCP meetings. They described it as a meeting where you set your goals for the next year and talk about the support you need to reach those goals. Senior 3 mentions an important aspect of the process: "Some people view Person-Centered Planning as a onetime thing, but the IPSE program at Metro University does it every year and continuously talks to us to see if things have changed."

Freshman 2 mentioned advising is not about giving out the answers but rather working with you to find the answer. They gave an example: "If you have a question about something, they will say 'what do you think is the answer to that?' instead of just telling you." Freshman 3 piggy-backed on that comment, saying that by talking through the decision-making process, advising lets them understand what they are deciding and why they are deciding that route while still feeling supported.

Senior 3 spoke about the importance of ongoing advisement: "They can help us find or slowly develop or guide us through careers that we want to do and also find the classes that is related to what you want to do."

According to students, weekly advising also provides an opportunity for honest feedback to students. Junior 2 spoke about the importance of weekly career advising. Paraphrasing, Junior 2 said that career advising allows you to express your interests in things you are and are not good

at doing. They help you find the job you want, and if you want a job that they don't think you could get, they try to help you find a similar job that you can get or get you the training for the job you want.

Several of the students spoke about pushing students to reach their full potential. Sophomore 1 says, "They help you kind of to get out of your comfort zone. Like…if you don't talk much, they try to put you around people that will help you have conversations and different things like that." Freshman 2 had a similar thought saying, "[They] push us to do more things. If we have an idea, we tell [them] it, and [they] tell us to go at it, do it, and [they] motivate us by saying how good we are with what we're doing and that…we're progressing."

It's important to mention that all these conversations alluded to the fact that the students feel like they can advocate for themselves and each other. Junior 2 says, "I feel like independence is a really good area that they help us in and that gives us the opportunity to also advocate for ourselves." Generally speaking, these students feel like they have a safe space in the IPSE program to ask for help, get honest feedback, and have guidance through the ongoing advisement meetings.

The role of the mentorship team is to work directly with students in helping them reach their goals. These goals are set during the year-end Person-Centered Planning meeting. Because mentors are assigned to students at the start of the next year, they do not have a role in the Person-Centered Planning meeting at the end of the previous school year. However, they receive a copy of the meeting notes for their review. Mentor 1 says, "When you get your PCP as a coach at the beginning of the semester, it provides some kind of beginning structure." From this point, mentors meet with students regularly, sometimes multiple times a week, to collaborate with students and create a plan for achieving the goals.

Mentor 1 feels that the mentorship program does a great job of providing ongoing support in helping students work toward their individual goals. This is done by breaking large, long-term goals into short-term goals that seem less daunting and more achievable. They say:

> I think we do a good job as a [mentorship team] with the idea of focusing on the small victories. Because when you feel like you can achieve…one small thing, it helps propel momentum to keep going. I think we do a good job of that, and that's something [the mentorship coordinator] talks about a lot, whenever anything happens incrementally: Let's celebrate that before we just move on to the next thing.

Mentor 1 clarified that the mentor guides this process, but IPSE students are responsible for making the final plan and asking for help when they need it. The accountability ultimately lies with the student, but the mentor check-in meetings are also important to the accountability process.

Summary

The data from the research resulted in providing an interpretation for the case and one possible set of answers to the research question and sub-questions. The data shows that the IPSE program at Metro University promotes social inclusion by building relationships, problem-solving, developing curriculum, providing staff support, and providing Person-Centered Planning and ongoing support. These leadership practices contribute to creating an inclusive environment for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the post-secondary setting.

5 DISCUSSION

A case study is an "opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect on the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for those things we cherish" (Stake, 1995, p. 136). In case study research, readers should also interpret the case on their own and should be "counted on to do their share of the work" (Stake, 1995, p.122). This discussion section provides one interpretation of the case.

Conclusions

This study intended to explore the specific leadership techniques that promote social inclusion in Inclusive Postsecondary Education programs (IPSE). Using the theoretical framework of Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education presented by Gidley et al. (2010), the following research questions guided the study:

1. What leadership practices promote social inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program?
2. What practices promote access for enrolled students?
3. What practices promote participation from enrolled students?
4. What practices promote empowerment of enrolled students?

A case study and qualitative analysis highlighted several specific practices of the IPSE program at Metro University that promote social inclusion on their campus. The data were collected in the form of six individual interviews with IPSE program staff, four focus group interviews with current IPSE program students, and one focus group interview with current IPSE program mentorship team members. Additionally, the documents reviewed provided a base of knowledge and verification of mentioned practices and procedures during the interviews and

focus groups. Five unique themes emerged from the data and provided insight into the research questions.

Promoting access.

Two themes emerged when exploring the sub-question, "What practices promote access for enrolled students?" The most prominent theme was *Relationship Building*. Each interview and focus group participant acknowledged that the IPSE program would not exist without the support of others. IPSE program staff focused their comments on the relationships they have built since their time working with the program but were not hesitant to discuss future potential relationships beneficial to ongoing program development and enhancement. One of the conclusions from this line of questioning was the staff's confidence in developing these relationships. Staff members spoke about developing relationships as effortless without mentioning the amount of time and energy it takes to develop and maintain these connections. This speaks volumes to the greater Metro University community as well. It seems that Metro University is open and willing to learn about the IPSE program and, oftentimes, take steps to help create an inclusive environment for the students in the program.

Students and mentors were not hesitant to acknowledge the relationship-building efforts of the IPSE program leadership either. Throughout the focus group interviews, there were suggestions that participants felt that the access that students had around campus was because of the widespread knowledge of the IPSE program and opportunities to partner with the program. The students understood that each of these partnerships was developed by IPSE program leadership to provide an entrance to various events, organizations, venues, and classes.

The second theme that answers the first sub-question was *Problem-Solving*. While the interviews intended to focus more on the successful practices of the IPSE program leadership that support social inclusion, each of the interviews and focus groups acknowledged that there were barriers to access in the past and new issues concerning access that continue to surface. Through each recount of prior issues, IPSE staff were able to detail the problem-solving process, often describing several unsuccessful iterations before finding the best solution to the problem. It seems, however, that while many of the barriers to successful access have been handled and resolved, staff still feel that there could be a better solution.

For example, Staff 5 mentioned that students in the IPSE program have limited access to overnight service trips with the university's student life organization. The current solution is that an IPSE program staff member would have to volunteer their participation on the same trip as the IPSE student, but this is not required for students in undergraduate programs. While this is a great solution for the student's access, it strains the program's resources. Staff 5 was not hesitant to mention that there are some alternative solutions, including continued relationship building and providing additional training to the student life organization's staff about social inclusion. The hope is that this organization will remove the requirement for staff participation and have the experience be as similar as possible.

Promoting participation.

Two themes surfaced when exploring the sub question of "What practices promote participation from enrolled students?" First was the *IPSE Curriculum*, but the Mentorship Team focus group did not reinforce this theme. Throughout the data analysis, the mentorship team showed their lack of knowledge of the academics portion of the program. The student focus groups and staff interviews provided enough data to ensure that the curriculum was a major

theme in creating an environment where students felt they had a platform for meaningful participation. According to both student and staff participants, one of the components is the soft-skills curriculum interwoven throughout the courses specifically designed for the students in the program. There was a trend of speaking about practicing social skills, presentation skills, and group discussion skills in a protected space, hoping to transfer the skills to the other aspects of their college experience. Student focus groups verified that this was working, mentioning that they use the skills taught in the PEERs class regularly when meeting new people in campus organizations or inclusive classes. Other students mentioned that the group work and presentation practice in IPSE courses gives them the confidence to participate alongside undergraduate students in their inclusive classes.

The other theme that answered this sub-question was IPSE *Staff Support*. All participant groups mentioned that one of the major differences between IPSE students and undergraduate students at Metro University is the level and amount of support students get. Students are supported through mentors, tutors, and advisors. Each student has a team of three faculty and staff members that support them throughout their college experience. Each support person has a specific role, including academic support, social skills/independent living support, and career support. Initially, there was programmatic concern about the high level of support, but the staff interviews clarified that it is addressed with a process of weaning that is typically student-driven. One of the most revealing comments came from the mentorship focus group mentioning that if all students had this support structure, the transition from high school to college would be much smoother.

Promoting empowerment.

The last sub-question was answered through one common theme of *Person-Centered Planning* (PCP) with ongoing support. One interesting find in the literature review section of this paper shows that most authors think of Person-Centered Planning as one meeting where supports are set. Through the conversations in this study, it seems that Person-Centered Planning is a process, not one specific meeting, in the context of this program. Staff members mentioned that they meet with each of the students they advise nearly every week. But these meetings are not about accountability. The meetings are about structuring support, redefining goals, and celebrating victories. This shows that the program in this study uses a unique model of Person-Centered Planning that might deserve some additional attention in the greater IPSE community.

The student insight in Person-Centered Planning was enlightening as well. Students mentioned that the PCP process provides a venue for their support circle to push them out of their comfort zone and give them the confidence to do things they never thought imaginable. Staff interviews revealed that many of the current students have never been given the opportunity to fail prior to entering the program. While the program's goal is not to teach students how to fail, one of the hidden goals is to teach students that failing does not mean failure. By providing a platform for students to be supported when they are not successful in achieving their goals, the students are empowered to discover their likes and dislikes and their strengths and areas for improvement.

Connection to Leadership

McLeskey and Waldron (2015) state that a major component of inclusive leadership is a system that monitors student progress. The IPSE program at Metro University uses the *Person-Centered-Planning* process they developed as a way of checking on student progress and the

staff support, through weekly advising meetings, provides a venue for on-going and consistent monitoring. During these PCP and advising meetings students may bring up areas that are not adequately inclusive, giving the staff the opportunity to understand the student culture and recognize the inequities that exist. Through social justice leadership, they can then work on addressing these issues and use *relationship building* and *problem solving* to take actionable steps to resolve the situation.

A major component to effective inclusive leadership is ongoing professional development (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). *IPSE curriculum development* shows that the staff uses professional development opportunities to enhance the student experience by improving the educational component of the program. The IPSE program is intentional with the creation and implementation of several of their courses that teach students the hard and soft skills needed for successful acceptance and interaction with their community to help them develop a sense of belonging. More specifically, the inclusion and implementation of the PEERs curriculum provided the teaching staff with the opportunity to train how to use the curriculum effectively. Additional trainings, conferences, and partnerships were briefly mentioned by IPSE program staff throughout their interviews as well.

The abovementioned themes point to the specific leadership practices that align with inclusive and social justice leadership tactics. These leadership styles work together and outline the necessary components for an effective inclusive program. Social justice leadership is about recognizing inequities and taking steps to address them while inclusive leadership is outlined "network building, modeling behaviors, challenging dominant beliefs, and creating a safe place for others" (DeMatthews, Edwards, & Rincones, 2016, p. 771; CITE). The themes of *relationship building, problem solving, student support, curriculum design, and Person-*

Centered-Planning all point to the specific practices that the IPSE program at Metro University uses to promote social inclusion.

Implications

In addition to defining leadership practices that promote social inclusion at Metro University, this paper reveals additional implications. Further research and discussion in this area may lead to a unified definition and deeper understanding of the best practices for social inclusion in higher education or inform policy on the local, state, national, or even international levels. Additionally, there are a variety of transferable practices that may help other new and developing IPSE programs as they work toward successful social inclusion at their schools. Lastly, this study revealed several areas for program improvement.

Defining Social Inclusion for Higher Education

One major implication is that this study provides evidence to refine a definition for social inclusion in higher education. The findings suggest that the IPSE program at Metro University is already promoting social inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in a way that follows the framework presented by Gidley et al. (2009). Staff interviews revealed the specific practices they use to promote social inclusion, and student and mentor focus groups reinforced the efficacy of these practices from their perspectives. This study's methodological process verified the specific practices that fit each piece of the framework: access, participation, and empowerment. A proposed definition could be that social inclusion in higher education is achieved through providing students with access to the college campus with all its components, ensuring the opportunity for meaningful participation in campus activities, and empowering students to focus on their individual goals without bound.

IPSE Policy

This study not only highlights the specific leadership practices used my Metro University, but it also shows the benefits of IPSE for both the students involved in the program directly and the benefit to the University by developing an inclusive community. Just like any other student preparing for college, they must have a plan to pay, and due to the relative infancy of programs like this, few families prepare, financially, for their students with intellectual or developmental disabilities in the same way that they would for a neuro-typical student (Weir, 2022). As mentioned in the literature review, students enrolling in IPSE programs that are labeled as a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) are eligible for Pell Grants and Federal Work-Study Programs, but do not have access to federal direct student loans because they are not degree seeing programs (Think College, 2022). One proposed policy change is to create a pathway to allowing CTPs at institutions of higher education to provide credentialling to students that would make federal students loans available.

While CTPs are already required to provide a credential of some sort there is currently no standard set of practices that lead to a universally recognized certificate (Higher Education Opportunities Act, 2008). Another proposed area regarding policy is for IPSE programs that are labeled as CTPs to have a universal credential that would make the more meaningful in the working-world. Think College has started work in this area and once the accreditation standards are defined and researched, policy changes can be made (Think College, 2020).

A final proposed policy change is to remove the barrier of providing the space for an IPSE program at IHEs. The results from this study show that there are a variety of barriers to social inclusion for students in IPSE programs that come from a lack of understanding, and sometimes, a lack of willingness to open the opportunity to these students. A major policy

change that could be made in a new revision of the Higher Education Act that would remove several of these barriers. For example, once an IPSE program is established on a campus, a policy change could require these students to have access to the same resources that undergraduate students have such as housing, meal plans, and non-academic student services. One of the major themes identified in the study was *internal problem solving,* and a policy change like this would have taken away the need for the variety of efforts made by the program leadership to fight for student access.

Transferable Practices

There are several specific practices that this study may suggest universally effective leadership techniques to promote social inclusion at other institutions of higher education. New and developing program may use this paper as a resource for the successful implementation if IPSE at their school. Metro University could use this study as the start of developing a guide that other schools can use as they look for ways to improve their model.

One of the efforts made by the IPSE program at Metro University is a unique style of Person-Centered Planning (PCP) that is treated as an ever-changing plan that needs consistent updating. This method may provide a new perspective on PCP and inform the research surrounding the effective strategies for these meetings. By defining the system this program uses and creating a consistent and transferable model, the PCP model the IPSE program at Metro University uses could contribute to the body of research in PCP.

Suggestions for program Improvement

This study did reveal several areas for continued program improvement. One area for development is creating a better venue for communication between the members of the mentorship team and the IPSE program staff. It seems that because the mentors are not aware of

many of the specific practices of the IPSE leaders and the IPSE leaders are not aware of all the efforts of the mentorship team. Some misinformed decisions are being made on both ends of the relationship. One recommendation is to include mentorship team members in some decision-making processes, even reaching out to mentors when a problem arises to see if they have recommendations for a solution. For clarity on the mentorship team side, the mentors should be made aware, during training, of the capacity and aptitude of the staff in developing relationships, ensuring them that they are welcome to be a part of the process of finding solutions to issues as they arise.

Another area for program improvement is efficiency. It seems that several of the techniques are extremely taxing to the staff members. As the program matures, more relationships are developed, more areas of improvement are identified, and some current practices seem unsustainable. It might be in the best interest of this program to compile the relationships and problem-solving strategies they have and spend time refining the processes for program longevity.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study makes several assumptions that influence the results. First, this study assumes that all students and staff in this IPSE program have similar experiences. Only a sample of students and staff members participated in the interviews and focus groups and contribute to the data. While all current IPSE students were invited to participate, student participants were self-selected for participation after the recruitment email was sent. The mentorship team participants were first identified as ideal participants by the mentorship team coordinator, then self-selected to participate. This leaves a population of mentorship team members that were never invited or informed of the study. All current staff members were invited to be participants to gain a holistic

and full understanding of staff efforts. No program alumni, former mentorship team members, or former staff members were invited to contribute to the data. The assumption is that the sample of participants is representative of the entire student body and staff at the time data were collected.

Another group of participants that was left out of the data collection process was the leadership at the University Level (i.e., University president, provosts, deans). While this data set could provide addition insight to the study, this study focuses on the core stakeholders of the IPSE program and those that have first-hand experience with the specific leadership practices that inform the program's implementation. The university leadership team was determined to be far enough removed from the day-to-day administration of the program that, for this study, it did not seem like a vital data source.

There are limitations to this study due to the nature of case study research. A case study observes a single case, and in this study, one group of students at one university located in the Southeast is observed. The results are not generalizable but give a perspective that may inform what other, similar schools do to promote social inclusion for students with disabilities (SWD) in their school community. This study provides a single snapshot of social inclusion efforts, policies, and practices at one IPSE program at one university during one semester. As this program develops and changes, their policies and practices also change.

There are additional limitations due to the cognitive abilities of the student participants. Students enrolled in IPSE programs have a diagnosis of intellectual or developmental disability (IDD). Common issues with communicating with people with IDD include but are not limited to a general understanding of the conversation, limited insight into their responses, and slow processing with a limited concentration span (Lexicon Limited, 2014). Because of generally reduced communication skills, students may experience frustration, anxiety, and stress affecting

their participation in the focus group process (Lexicon Limited, 2014). In the data collection section of this paper, some of the comments made by student participants are summarized rather than directly quoted to ensure reader-understanding, but all concepts and ideas are untainted. In this study and additional observer attended each of the focus group interviews to act as an advocate for students who experienced any of the negative emotions. This observer confirmed that there was no evidence of students displaying signs of these feelings during the group sessions.

The student responses in this study contributed minimally to the results. One recommended adjustment to the methodology is to write a set of interview questions that are more direct for the student participants. Students had a hard time answering questions that were vague and open-ended. Future researchers that may replicate this study may find it beneficial to write the student interview questions based on the responses from the staff interviews. For example, instead of asking students about the practices that promote access, ask them if they know how they got access to a specific area of campus life. This may provide a better data source than this study did.

A final limitation was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the social distancing rules surrounding COVID-19, some of the specific practices used by the IPSE program at Metro University, a pseudonym for a large public university located in a major city in the Southeast, were not used in the semester in which the study occurred. Students participating in the study had a range of on-campus inclusive experiences. The freshmen cohort in the program experienced social inclusion in a very different way than the returning and former students experienced it in the past several years. While this does limit the current study, this can also be seen as an opportunity to gain insight into social inclusion during a pandemic. The study design

was intentional, and to produce a reliable and valid conclusion, care and effort were taken to reduce the limitations that are inherent in this type of study.

Suggestions for Further Research

After an extensive review of the literature, it appears that models for Inclusive Postsecondary Education are under-researched. This study identified several specific practices that promote social inclusion at Metro University. Because of the nature of case study research, this study cannot generalize the specific practices that promote social inclusion in all IPSE programs. Additional and similar case studies could provide insight into more practices. A meta-analysis of several cases could draw generalizable conclusions that could become the standard of practice at universities nationwide.

Additionally, this study could extend to other groups of historically marginalized populations. By exploring the specific practices of social inclusion for different groups (i.e., persons of color, English language learners, immigrants, persons living in poverty), the landscape of practices that promote social inclusion on college campuses in a variety of contexts could create a standard of practice for equity once students are on campus. While it is doubtful that there is a model that will work for every population on every campus, this may create an opportunity for schools struggling with social inclusion to research models that work elsewhere. Most of the major themes from this study would only be applicable for social inclusion efforts that were part of a program, rather than efforts by the entire university or college. Most of the efforts mentioned are extremely individualized, and without proper support staff to provide services such as person-centered planning or a curriculum that promotes participation, these efforts would not be possible.

Through the interviews, a recurring conversation of note was the transfer of support as students graduate from the program. More often than not, adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities have limited options for careers, even if they complete an IPSE program. This means that, financially, they may not live independently and may need to rely on government assistance or family support post-graduation. Additionally, many students with IDD are not capable of living completely independently and will rely on a network of people to help support them after college. One area that the IPSE program at Metro University is still developing is the transition process out of the program. Staff revealed concern about the loss of skills and lack of continued social inclusion outside of the educational setting. Future research on transferring skills to post-academic life may provide an interesting perspective on social inclusion outside of higher education.

This research study left several unanswered questions that could be answered through further research. This study aimed to identify the leadership practices that promote social inclusion, but the efficacy of those practices needs further exploration. Assessment of the efficacy of the curriculum used in the program concerning the promotion of meaningful participation would be a natural enhancement to this study. In addition, a comparison of refined leadership practices of the future of this program to the practices discovered in this current study could inform changes needed for the continued support of social inclusion in a maturing program.

This study provides a platform to start the conversation revolving around social inclusion in higher education for students in Inclusive Postsecondary Education programs. The Metro University program provided insight into the specific leadership practices they use to promote social inclusion. Using *relationship-building* and *problem-solving* techniques, students gain

access where there once was none. Through *IPSE curriculum* development and structured *support*, students develop a sense of belonging and can meaningfully participate in campus activities. And students are empowered to take control of their postsecondary experience through *Person-Centered Planning*. Using these specific practices, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be a part of a college campus in a meaningful and worthwhile way.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Emails

Dear Students,

You are invited to participate in a focus group (small group) discussion that explores the policies and practices of your IPSE program that promote social inclusion. In this conversation, you will have the opportunity to discuss how the IPSE program's leadership has helped facilitate social inclusion at your school and allow you to provide feedback to the IPSE program staff.

Each focus group will be made up of members of the same cohort and will last no more than 90 minutes. These discussions will take place using the Microsoft Teams application.

As you may know, I am a doctoral student at Georgia State University, studying Educational Leadership. The data collected in these focus group discussions will contribute to the research for my dissertation titled *Access, Participation, and Empowerment: Exploring Leadership Practices that Promote Social Inclusion.* While I hope that you will be able to join, your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. If you choose not to attend, it will not affect your course grades or any other aspect of your participation in the IPSE program.

If you would like to participate, please fill out this form with the times and dates that work best for you.

Have a great day,

Dear Mentors,

You are invited to participate in a focus group (small group) discussion that explores the policies and practices of the IPSE program that promote social inclusion. In this conversation, you will have the opportunity to discuss how the IPSE program's leadership has helped facilitate social inclusion for students enrolled in the program and allow you to provide feedback to the IPSE program staff.

This group will be comprised of IPSE program mentors and coaches that have been identified as knowledgeable of the program by the Peer Mentor Coordinator. This meeting will last no more than 90 minutes and will use Microsoft Teams as a virtual platform.

As you may know, I am a doctoral student at Georgia State University, studying Educational Leadership. The data collected in these focus group discussions will contribute to the research for my dissertation titled *Access, Participation, and Empowerment: Exploring Leadership Practices that Promote Social Inclusion.* While I hope that you will be able to join, your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. If you choose not to attend, it will not affect your standing with the IPSE program.

If you would like to participate, please fill out this form with the times and dates that work best for you.

Have a great day,

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, I am a doctoral student at Georgia State University, studying Educational Leadership. I am currently working on collecting data for my dissertation project. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview that explores the policies and practices of the IPSE program that promote social inclusion. This semi-structured interview will use Microsoft Teams as a virtual platform and will last no more than 90 minutes.

The data collected in this interview will contribute to the research for my dissertation titled *Access, Participation, and Empowerment: Exploring Leadership Practices that Promote Social Inclusion.* If you would like to participate, please fill out this form with the times and dates that work best for you.

Have a great day,

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Questions are based on the Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education Framework, which includes three underlying theories:

- Neoliberalism: Access
- Social Justice: Engagement and Equity
- Human Potential: Empowerment

Interview Questions- Interview Participants (Director, Program Coordinators)

Interview Questions based on Theoretical Framework

- Introductory questions (name, position, years working with students with IDD)

Establish inequalities

- In what ways is the college experience for a student enrolled in an IPSE different from a typical student?
- What does social inclusion mean to you?

Neoliberalism: Access

- What are the specific practices of the IPSE that provide access to various aspects of campus for enrolled students?
    - In what aspects you feel there are barriers to access due to student disability (not their enrollment status)?
        - What could or should be done to break these barriers?

Social Justice: Engagement and Equity

- What are the specific practices of the IPSE that facilitate meaningful engagement with campus?
    - In what aspects you feel that enrolled students struggle to engage due to their disability (not their enrollment status)?
        - What could be done to improve this?

Human Potential: Empowerment

- What are the specific practices of the IPSE that foster empowerment for enrolled students?
    - In what aspects do student feel powerless to be successful as a student with a disability?

Exploration

- How does the IPSE program improve the student experience in ways that support access, engagement, and empowerment on campus for enrolled students?

Interview Questions- Focus Group Participants (Mentors)

Interview Questions based on Theoretical Framework

- Introductory questions (name, position, years working with students with IDD)

Establish inequalities

- In what ways is the college experience for a student enrolled in an IPSE different from a typical student?
- What does social inclusion mean to you?

Neoliberalism: Access

- From your perspective, what are the specific practices of the IPSE program that provide access to various aspects of campus for enrolled students?
    - In what aspects you feel there are barriers to access due to student disability (not their enrollment status)?
        - What could or should be done to break these barriers?

Social Justice: Engagement and Equity

- What are the specific practices of the IPSE that facilitate meaningful engagement with campus?
    - In what aspects you feel that enrolled students struggle to engage due to their disability (not their enrollment status)?
        - What could be done to improve this?

Human Potential: Empowerment

- What are the specific practices of the IPSE that foster empowerment for enrolled students?
    - In what aspects do student feel powerless to be successful as a student with a disability?

Exploration

- How does the IPSE program improve the student experience in ways that support access, engagement, and empowerment on campus for enrolled students?

Interview Questions- Focus Group Participants (Enrolled Students)

Interview Questions based on Theoretical Framework

- Introductory questions (name, year, career goal)

Establish inequalities

- How does being in the IPSE program make the college experience different for you compared to typical students?
- What does inclusion mean to you?

Neoliberalism: Access

- In what areas of campus do you feel like you have access?
    - How does the IPSE provide access to different parts of campus?
- What parts of campus are you not able to use or access?
    - What should the IPSE do to allow you to access that?

Social Justice: Engagement and Equity

- Thinking only about the areas of campus that you can access, do you feel that you are an active participant while on campus?
        - If needed: For example: I can access class, but I don't participate in the class discussion. OR I can access my class, and I participate in group projects.
    - How does the IPSE program help you engage and participate while on campus?
    - In what ways do you feel that you can't participate on campus?
        - What should the IPSE program do to help you be a participant in that?

Human Potential: Empowerment

- I'm going to define empowerment as taking control of your life and advocating for what you need. In what areas of your college life do you feel empowered?
    - How does the IPSE help you feel empowered?
    - In what ways should the IPSE help you learn to make your own decisions?

Exploration

- What are the most important things done by the IPSE to provide access?
- What are the most important things done by the IPSE to foster engagement/participation?
- What are the most important things done by the IPSE to support empowerment?

Appendix C: Consent Form

Georgia State University
Informed Consent

Title: Access, Participation, And Empowerment: Exploring Leadership Practices That Promote Social Inclusion
Principal Investigator: Will Rumbaugh
Student Principal Investigator: Ashley McKeen

Introduction and Key Information
You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study. The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership practices at your IPSE program that promote social inclusion. Your role in the study will last 90 minutes over one meeting. You will be asked to do the following:
Answer questions related to leadership practices that promote social inclusion.
For focus group participants: Interact with the other members of the focus group to construct answers to the questions.
Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day. This study is not designed to benefit you. Overall, we hope to gain information about your perspective on the leadership practices that promote social inclusion at your IPSE program.

Purpose
The purpose of the study is to explore the specific policies, procedures, and practices of the IPSE program at your university that align with the Social Inclusion for Quality Higher Education framework. You are invited to take part in this research study because you are either enrolled in the IPSE program at your university, work with the peer mentorship program with the IPSE program at your university, or you are employed by the IPSE program at your university. A total of 55 people will be invited to take part in this study.

Procedures

Student Focus Group participants:

If you decide to take part, you will participate in a single focus group that will last no more than 90 minutes with other members of your cohort. During this time, you will be introduced to the concept of social inclusion and asked several questions about your perspective of the efforts made by the IPSE program regarding social inclusion. This meeting will take place at a time that is convenient to all focus group participants and will meet on Microsoft Teams. If, at any time, a participant feels uncomfortable with continuing their participation, they may leave the focus group and request that any or all of their responses are deleted from the record.

Mentorship Team Focus Group Participants:

If you decide to take part, you will participate in a single focus group that will last no more than 90 minutes with other members of the mentorship team. During this time, you will be introduced to the concept of social inclusion and asked several questions about your perspective of the efforts made by the IPSE program regarding social inclusion. This meeting will take place at a time that is convenient to all focus group participants and will meet on Microsoft Teams. If, at any time, a participant feels uncomfortable with continuing their participation, they may leave the focus group and request that any or all of their responses are deleted from the record.

Interview Participants:

If you decide to take part, you will participate in a single interview that will last no more than 90 minutes. During this time, you will be introduced to the concept of social inclusion and asked several questions about your perspective of the efforts made by the IPSE program regarding social inclusion. This meeting will take place at a time that is convenient to the participant and will meet on Microsoft Teams. If, at any time, the participant feels uncomfortable with continuing their participation, they may request to end the interview and request that any or all of their responses are deleted from the record.

Future Research
Researchers will remove information that may identify you and may use your data for future research. If we do this, we will not ask for any additional consent from you.

Risks
In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. No injury is expected from this study, but if you believe you have been harmed, contact the research team as soon as possible. Georgia State University and the research team have not set aside funds to compensate for any injury.

Benefits
This study is not designed to benefit you personally. Overall, we hope to gain information about specific leadership practices that promote social inclusion.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time.

Confidentiality
We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- **Dr. Will Rumbaugh**
- **Ashley McKeen**
- **Dr. Yinying Wang**
- **Dr. Sheryl Cowart Moss**
- **GSU Institutional Review Board**
- **Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)**

We will use a letter assigned to you rather than your name on study records. All participant information, focus group recordings, and interview recordings will be stored on a password and firewall encrypted dropbox that can only be accessed by Ashley McKeen. The code sheet used to identify your responses with your name, any video recordings, and any sound recordings will be destroyed once the paper is finalized. When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you.

Focus group participants are asked to keep the content of the conversation in confidentiality. However, the researcher does not have complete control of the confidentiality of the data that is shared by other members of the focus group. The participant should be aware that data sent over the internet may not be secure, however, the Microsoft Teams platform being used is only accessible to individuals with an invitation and the proper university login information.

Contact Information

Contact Ashley McKeen at 404-353-0752 or abidlack1@student.gsu.edu or Will Rumbaugh at wrumbaugh@gsu.edu

- **If you have questions about the study or your part in it**
- **If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study**

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

Appendix D: Table of Participants

Table I. Demographics of the Study Participants

Participant ID Code	Role	Gender	Years of Program Participation
Staff 1	Career Coordinator	F	4
Staff 2	Lecturer	F	5
Staff 3	Lecturer	F	5
Staff 4	Director	M	7
Staff 5	Mentorship Coordinator	M	3
Staff 6	Lecturer	M	4
Freshman 1	Student	F	1
Freshman 2	Student	F	1
Freshman 3	Student	F	1
Sophomore 1	Student	M	2
Sophomore 2	Student	M	2
Sophomore 3	Student	M	2
Junior 1	Student	M	3
Junior 2	Student	F	3
Senior 1	Student	F	4
Senior 2	Student	F	4
Senior 3	Student	F	4
Senior 4	Student	M	4
Senior 5	Student	M	4
Mentor 1	Mentor	M	4
Mentor 2	Mentor	F	2

Appendix E: Document Review Items

Title of Document	Document Description
Parent Guide	A handbook provided parents and guardians of IPSE program students as a reference for the IPSE program policies, procedures, and program requirements. The guide is a supplement to the university's regulations and is not a complete listing of all policies, procedures, regulations, programs, and services.
Student Handbook	A handbook provided to students as a reference for the IPSE program's policies, procedures, and program requirements. The guide is a supplement to the university's regulations and is not a complete listing of all policies, procedures, regulations, programs and services.
IPSE Program Website	The program website is a resource that contains information on the program including but not limited to: A promotional video Program development information IPSE program news Mentorship team information Internship information Curriculum and course offerings

Appendix F: Certificate Requirements for IPSE Program

Certificate	Certificate Requirements
Certificate 1 (Awarded after second year in program)	Sixteen (16) Completed courses with a grade C or higher; each course requires a minimum of 45 contact hours; all courses must be completed within six years Four (4) Career courses PEERs Social Skills Course Financial Literacy Course Four (4) Inclusive Courses Courses offered to undergraduate students; IPSE students attend as a guest student with modified expectations and assessments Two (2) fundamentals classes Four (4) Electives Electives can be inclusive courses or fundamental classes
Certificate 2 (Awarded after third year in program)	Sixteen (16) Completed courses with a grade C or higher; each course requires a minimum of 45 contact hours; all courses must be completed within six years; courses counted toward first certificate cannot be re-taken for second certificate Four (4) Career Courses Two (2) Transition courses Two (2) Inclusive courses Eight (8) Elective courses Electives can be additional inclusive courses, fundamentals courses, or internship hours earned toward a course credit