Career Choice and Career Construction of Undergraduate Students at For-Profit Institutions: The Effect of Institutional Marketing on Students

A dissertation presented to

the faculty of

The Patton College of Education of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Daniel J. Harper

December 2018

This dissertation titled

Career Choice and Career Construction of Undergraduate Students at For-Profit Institutions: The Effect of Institutional Marketing on Students

by

DANIEL J. HARPER

has been approved for

the Department of Counseling and Higher Education

and The Patton College of Education by

Laura M. Harrison

Associate Professor of Counseling and Higher Education

Renée A. Middleton

Dean, The Patton College of Education

Abstract

HARPER, DANIEL J., Ph.D., December 2018, Higher Education

Career Choice and Career Construction of Undergraduate Students at For-Profit Institutions: The Effect of Institutional Marketing on Students

Director of Dissertation: Laura M. Harrison

"Research that positions students as primary stakeholders occupies space at the margins of higher education scholarship" (Iloh, 2016, pp. 428-429). This fact is especially true in the realm of for-profit, post-secondary education where much of the research has been focused on institutional operations and quantitative outcomes. As institutions which advocated career education and promoted a growing call for higher education to be jobs-focused, for-profits represented the fastest growing sector of higher education in the United States (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2012). Using career construction theory as a theoretical framework, this qualitative study was designed to create better understanding about how students at for-profit institutions had made career choices and constructed their careers as a result of institutional marketing. The findings of this study revealed that participants had largely made career choices prior to experiencing institutional marketing but that students had been highly influenced in their construction of careers as a result of the marketing by for-profit institutions. Ultimately, the findings from this study reveal potential implications of for-profit marketing on students and how students and the public view the role and value of higher education.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to all students and their journey to a better life through education.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Laura Harrison who has been a constant supporter and mentor. Without you, this project would not have happened. You have inspired my writing and encouraged this project from the very beginning. Always willing to meet and talk and to read and provide feedback, your selfless offer of time and insight have helped to make this academic dream come true. Thank you for the many kind words, for the honest critiques and, most of all, for being my teacher.

I also want to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Pete Mather, Chuck Lowery, and Emmanuel Jean-Francois. I could not have asked for a better committee throughout the proposal and final presentation of this project. Your feedback has been invaluable in the shaping of this study and in the final documentation of findings.

I also want to thank Dave Nguyen. You suggested readings, offered perspective, and were integral in the creation of the proposal for this project. From intentional meetings to chance encounters, conversations with you helped to evolve an idea into a proposal and ultimately into a study. You gave selflessly of your time and I hope you know it was greatly appreciated.

Katy Mathuews, we began as cohort classmates. We became collaborators. Most of all, we have supported each other in this final step and came out the other side as friends. Your tireless dedication to scholarship has been an inspiration.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Patton College of Education for financially supporting this study through a Graduate Research Grant.

Lastly, in the Summer of 1990, I started college as an 18-year-old farm boy with big dreams for my future. Over the next 28 years, one person has consistently been there to help me turn those dreams into reality. She has been there to help fix my mistakes and to celebrate my successes. Still today, my mom is my biggest supporter. Thank you. I hope I have made you proud.

Table of Contents

Page

List of Tables

Page

Chapter 1: Introduction

Deming, Goldin, and Katz (2012) reported that, "fall enrollment in for-profit degree-granting institutions grew by more than 100-fold from 18,333 in 1970 to 1.85 million in 2009" (p. 1). This growth was largely attributed to what Kinser (2006a) referred to as the supersystem model of for-profit educational institutions. Recognized for their size and reach but also their corporate structure and operation, Mettler (2014) suggested that the supersystem model was responsible for enrolling three of every four students attending for-profit institutions. Through marketing and their physical presence, some with 200+ campus locations, supersystem for-profit institutions quickly began to influence the landscape of higher education with their career-education focus (Kinser, 2006).

Surprisingly, a 2014 report published by Public Agenda, *Profiting Higher Education? What Students, Alumni and Employers Think about For-Profit Colleges*, revealed that for-profit students were largely unaware of the concept of *for-profit* as it related to colleges and universities. Further, only "four out of ten undergraduate for-profit students said they considered other schools before enrolling in their current institution" (p. 2). The apparent disconnect between the increasing market share of this segment of higher education and the lack of recognition of for-profit as a model in higher education calls into question the popularity of for-profit institutions with students and their marketing practices and the influence of those marketing practices on students.

Problem Statement

As profit-seeking entities that invest hundreds of millions of dollars annually in the marketing of career education (Lawrence, 2012; Miller, 2013), little was known about the influence this marketing had on students beyond its increasing ability to attract students to for-profit campuses and programs. To date, the literature on for-profit institutions of post-secondary education has been dominated largely by two broad areas of focus: (1) operational practices of for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs) and (2) quantitative investigation of institutional outcomes (Cottom, 2017; Hentschke, Lechuga, & Tierney, 2010; Kinser, 2006; Lechuga, 2006; Mettler, 2014; and Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). Yet, at a time when traditional colleges and universities (TCUs) were being challenged to model the perceived innovation and business-like efficiency of for-profits, (Blumenstyk, 2016; Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2015) it was vital to develop a deeper appreciation of the student experience at those institutions and how the for-profit model shaped the long-term outcomes of students. I argue that, given these facts, more investigation was needed to better understand how students' career decisions and their construction of careers had been influenced by the marketing of for-profit institutions and their career-focused platform.

Purpose of Study

Through this study, I sought to develop a deeper understanding of how career decision-making and career construction by students at for-profit institutions were influenced by the marketing practices of those institutions. Inspired by the qualitative research of Iloh (2016) and Iloh and Tierney (2014) and their study of for-profit students,

the intent of this study was to place the student experience rather than the actions of the institutions at the center of the investigation. While it is impossible to separate experiences from the context in which they happen, my aim was to continue Iloh (2016) and Iloh and Tierney's (2014) work in developing qualitative understanding of the student experience at for-profit institutions.

Seminal work by Iloh (2016) and Iloh and Tierney (2014) explored concepts of institutional choice and sought broad understanding of the student experience at for-profit institutions. In this study, the intent was to next focus on specifics of the student experience and how those experiences shaped the decisions and futures of students, beyond graduation. Honoring the approach of Iloh (2016) and Iloh and Tierney (2014), I hoped to push beyond the rhetoric of "for-profits are good" and "for profits are bad" in favor of concrete understanding of student experiences and outcomes at for-profit institutions.

Research Questions

With the intent of moving from quantitative analysis into qualitative understanding of the student experience at for-profit institutions, I proposed to answer the following questions:

Q1: How do students translate FPCU marketing into career choices and construct careers?

Q2: How have post-graduation experiences compared to enrollment expectations specific to career decisions and career construction?

The research questions were designed with the intent to explore the experiences of students at for-profit institutions and how the marketing of that segment of higher education may have influenced students' actions specific to careers. Additionally, by sampling from a population of students who had graduated from a specific for-profit undergraduate degree program, I explored post-graduation experiences of participants to establish understanding of how expectations that existed at the time of enrollment did or did not align with realities after graduation.

Conceptual Framework

The existing data on for-profit colleges and universities revealed that a significant portion of the for-profit student population was comprised of non-traditional students. Research on this population revealed that these students were particularly attracted to, among other things, the career-education focus of for-profit institutions (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2015; Hentschke, Lechuga, & Tierney, 2010; Mettler, 2014).

Savickas' (2002) contemporary definition of career construction theory had evolved from previous studies and theories of vocational behavior (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Parsons, 1909; and Super, 1953) and offered the potential to create meaning for the process of career choice by students at for-profit institutions and how the marketing of for-profit institutions may have influenced construction of careers.

Significance

The historic appreciation of post-secondary education in this country had been that higher education was a public good and had inspired democracy and allowed citizens to break through barriers of inequality. By promoting career education, for-profit

institutions of post-secondary education had attracted significant numbers of non-traditional students to their ranks, students who seemingly would have benefited most from the known rewards of higher education. With the promise of satisfying and lucrative careers following graduation, these students had become some of the nation's largest borrowers and ultimately represented the largest percentage of loan defaulters as well. The current economic climate in higher education and the declining appreciation for post-secondary education as a public good had put pressure on not-for-profit institutions to be more like for-profits. Not-for-profits were under continual pressure to model the perceived innovativeness of for-profits and their laser-like focus of managing the bottom line above all else. At stake was the value of education that had existed in this country for nearly 400 years.

With the goal of pushing beyond the existing rhetoric which seemed to overshadow productive examination of for-profit education, the intent of this study was not to conclude with a value-judgement of for-profit institutions or institutional practices. It was, however, unethical to ignore the sheer volume of lawsuits which had been filed against for-profit institutions as the impetus for this study. Called into question was the ability of for-profit institutions to deliver on careers, a central tenet of their existence as observed in the marketing carried out by these institutions.

The growth of for-profit institutions over the last four decades and the lawsuits that they have inspired challenged our historic belief in higher education and the motives of some institutions. The significance of this study was its potential to create

understanding about how students have been influenced by the marketing of for-profit institutions in making career choices and constructing careers.

Definition of Terms

Because of the extensive literature on post-secondary education and the diverse perspectives in the literature on for-profit education, I provide the following list of terms and definitions used in this study to clarify their meaning and use:

For-profit colleges and universities (FPCU)

Defined by the U.S. Department of Education as "a private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives compensation other than wages, rent or other expenses for the assumption of risk" (McFarland et al., 2018). Kinser (2009) used a similar, earlier version of that definition but added that this institutional type was defined by its motivation for profit as a result of operations and the distribution of profit to owners and shareholders as a component of its corporate existence.

Supersystem

In Kinser's (2006a) *From Main Street to Wall Street: The Transformation of For-Profit Higher Education*, the term *supersystem* is used to identify the most recognized and most influential model of for-profit institutions. Supersytems are shareholder owned, multi-state and multi-campus institutions which enroll large numbers of students, 500+. They are unique from the previously popular enterprise institutions which were typically privately owned and smaller in both enrollment and geographic reach. Supersystems have grown by acquiring and absorbing enterprise institutions.

Non-Traditional Students

Hentschke, Lechuga, and Tierney (2010) and Mettler (2014) have established that for-profit institutions largely serve a population commonly identified as *non-traditional students*. According to Horn and Carroll (1996):

> age acts as a surrogate variable that captures a large, heterogeneous population of adult students who often have family and work responsibilities as well as other life circumstances that can interfere with successful completion of educational objectives. Other variables typically used to characterize nontraditional students are associated with their background (race and gender), residence (i.e., not on campus), level of employment (especially working full time), and being enrolled in nondegree occupational programs. (p. 3)

While the understanding and definition of non-traditional students had morphed, the 1996 definition paralleled the context for many of the studies examined as part of this investigation. Additionally, it was important to acknowledge that the for-profit student body was not solely comprised of non-traditional students. It was important, for the purposes of this study, to recognize how this population of students was served by for-profit institutions.

Career construction

Closely tied to career choice, career construction was the process through which individuals chose and used work as a way of creating meaning for themselves and others (Savickas, 2002, 2005). As the nature of work changed, so had the need to redefine and reimagine the process of career construction.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Institutions. A study of for-profit institutions must acknowledge two defining characteristics. First, as Kinser (2006a) pointed out, the very innovation that garnered admiration also presented a challenge to researchers. Unlike their TCU counterparts known for consistency in name, organization, and program offerings, for-profit institutions were recognized as being more chameleon-like, reorganizing and reinventing themselves in response to market demands in the span of months versus years which is more often the case with TCUs. Secondly, as Iloh and Tierney (2014) noted, the study of for-profits could be challenging given the critical discourse that has followed their rise to prominence over the last four decades. This and the related lawsuits filed against them have caused for-profit institutions to be leery of researchers and more averse to opening themselves up to further critique. Thus, access to for-profit institutions could be limited.

Students. The study of for-profit students also presented challenges atypical of studies involving students at traditional colleges and universities. Iloh (2016) pointed out that for-profit students are highly mobile and often attend multiple institutions over the course of the educational journey. It, therefore, was important to recognize that fact when compiling the sample of this population. Likewise, given the focus of this study, Iloh's (2016) reporting on for-profit matriculation was part of the interpretation and analysis of the data collected.

Limitations. The intended focus of this analysis was to study the experiences of students at a single for-profit, post-secondary institution, the International Academy of Design and Technology (IADT). In my design of this study, I considered the entire span

of the educational journey from a student's first interaction with the institution through to the post-graduation outcomes. Data collection was limited to students at two related campuses of the institution, IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago. The objective was not to compare the experiences of students at for-profit institutions and students at not-for-profit institutions nor was the intent to study numerous for-profit institutions or students from multiple campuses of a single institutions but who might have been spread out geographically. The nature of how supersystems grew and expanded their market share over the last four decades suggested that students at different campuses may have had unique experiences and thus, future studies could address institutional variation across the supersystem model. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Creswell (2014) suggested:

> When conducting qualitative research, the inquirer reflects about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data. (p. 186)

In an effort to acknowledge and avoid possible bias in this study, it was important to disclose my work history as it related to for-profit education. In 2006, I began my teaching career at a for-profit institution in Schaumburg, IL. Similar to the findings revealed in the 2014 Public Agenda report, I did not have a conceptual framework through which to understand the differences between not-for-profit and for-profit education as it existed at that time. Additionally, as an adjunct instructor, I shared in the

experiences, common of adjunct faculty, of juggling teaching assignments at multiple institutions. My tenure in the for-profit higher education realm had spanned five institutions owned by two corporations and included both face-to-face and online instruction.

While I acknowledge that my experience gave me specific insight into the activities and processes common to for-profit education, I have reported those experiences as part of the overall narrative and avoided any undue influence on how I collected data and interpreted findings for this study. This is discussed further in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. As noted by Creswell (2014), "Good qualitative research contains comments by the researcher about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background" (p. 202).

This study is framed by the use of career construction theory. The findings of this study could be generalized to career construction theory but will not, and should not be used to generalize across the spectrum of the for-profit segment of higher education.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I introduced the topic of for-profit education and provided a brief overview of this segment of higher education. I identified that the literature on for-profit education is largely focused on the operation of these institution and quantitative analysis of student outcomes. I shared previous research that suggested the connection between non-traditional students and the marketing of career education at for-profit institutions and discussed the need for qualitative research to develop more knowledge in that area. Further, I introduced career construction theory as the theoretical framework for this

analysis and introduced the research questions to be used in this study. In concluding Chapter 1, I identified that this study was significant in developing an understanding of how career decisions and career construction have been influenced by for-profit marketing.

In Chapter 2, I will review the existing literature on for-profit education and the quantitative data specific to the students who enroll at those institutions. I will also be overviewing career construction theory as a contemporary theoretical framework for this analysis. In Chapter 2, I will be discussing the limited literature on marketing at for-profit, post-secondary institutions and providing a summary of critiques specific to that marketing.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The design of this study is focused on how students who had attended for-profit institutions made career choices and constructed careers as a result of marketing at those for-profit institutions. The research questions which guided this study were:

Q1: How do students translate FPCU marketing into career choices and construct careers?

Q2: How have post-graduation experiences compared to enrollment expectations specific to career decisions and career construction?

Critiques of contemporary for-profit institutions existed in both the literature and the courts yet little research had been conducted to study how the marketing strategy of for-profit institutions had shaped the student experience, either during or after enrollment at those institutions. By conducting this study, I intended to address that gap in the literature and designed the research to include three topical areas aimed at creating a foundation of understanding and context for this study:

(1) For-Profit Institutions and the Students They Enroll

While there was a considerable body of literature related to the operation of for-profit institutions and their perceived successes and failures, little was known about the student experience at those institutions beyond quantitative, outcome-based data. This section outlines the key characteristics of the contemporary for-profit institution and the demographics of students who enrolled at those institutions. A foundational understanding of both the for-profit industry and the students who had chosen to attend

that type of institution helped to establish an understanding of the symbiotic relationship that was purported to exist.

(2) Career Construction Theory

In this section, I detail the conceptual framework which was used for this investigation. Career construction theory had evolved from the fields of psychology and sociology and offered a path toward understanding how and why students choose careers and how students constructed careers.

(3) For-Profit Marketing, Techniques and Critiques

The economic climate in higher education since the 1970s had increasingly shifted the economic burden of cost of attendance to the student and their family and led to increased performance-based funding pressures on institutions. Those pressures had changed the way institutions talked to students about higher education and the marketing strategies used to attract students. In this section of Chapter 2, I explore the intersection of students and marketing in higher education and review the critiques, both positive and negative, of the for-profit strategy in the current literature.

FPCU History and Classification

History. The flurry of research activity during the past four decades studying for-profit education might lead one to believe that the for-profit segment of post-secondary education was a new phenomenon. Conversely, what this activity primarily illustrated was simply the post-1978 focus on a new kind of for-profit, the supersystem. What is a supersystem and why is it import to know about this model? To contextualize an understanding of the role of the for-profit segment in post-secondary education and the

contemporary models of operation, the following section provides a brief overview of history, context, and typologies.

For-profit education began in Greece in the 5th century. This early model included traveling teachers and a collection of proprietary schools providing educational opportunities to students and families able to pay for it (Coulson, 1999). The idea of education for hire continued with another, similar model developed during the Renaissance. Reigner's (1959) *Beginnings of the Business School* noted that while universities were offering what has become known as classical education, private teachers could have been hired to provide lessons in accounting and other business skills that then could be marketed to employers.

In the United States, the for-profit business school model became popular during the early period of colonial settlement. Dutch entrepreneurs offered private tutoring to fee-paying students in subject areas significant to early settlement activities such as surveying and accounting (Ruch, 2001). As colonial settlement continued and populations stabilized, settlers demanded education in additional areas to further their ambitions. Ruch (2001) pointed out that the next wave of education innovators expanded offerings into the topical areas of farming and engineering, two subject areas of keen interest to individuals who lacked skills in those areas and who needed immediate instruction for survival in colonial America. The exchange of knowledge for money continued into the era of the Industrial Revolution when for-profit education peeked during a time of high demand for job-specific skills training (Kinser, 2006).

In 1890, approximately 250 institutions were in operation and enrollment topped 81,000 students (Kinser, 2006). Following a period of relative stability in demand for higher education, the mid-1900s was witness to an increase in popularity of for-profit education following the end of World War II and the passage of the GI Bill. The GI Bill was significant across the spectrum of higher education but especially in the for-profit sector. The GI Bill allowed for federal funds to be used toward education offered at for-profit institutions thus creating opportunities for for-profits to tap into new revenue streams (Pusser & Harlow, 2002).

Classification. While the tradition of for-profit education dates back to ancient Greece and continued to the present, the contemporary understanding was spurred on by the 1972 amendments made to the Higher Education Act 1965. In that 1972 reauthorization, students who were attending for-profit institutions were, for the first time, granted access to Title IV funding (Pusser & Harlow, 2002). In the pursuit of profit, that newfound access to federal funding raised the stakes for institutions to tap into a larger and more lucrative market of students by increasing the number and types of educational offerings.

In *From Main Street to Wall Street*, Kinser (2006a) discussed the challenge of classifying profit-seeking institutions for study purposes and ultimately elaborated on the Education Commission of the States' suggested approach. The Education Commission of the States' approach was developed in response to drastic shifts in the for-profit market in the 1990s. In that classification system, degree-granting, for-profit institutions were

categorized into three distinct categories: enterprise colleges, supersystems, and Internet institutions. Brief descriptions for each are:

(a) Enterprise colleges – locally oriented institutions owned and managed by an individual, family, or small corporation. They generally have fewer than five hundred students enrolled in a single campus or a small group of campuses, and they teach a limited career-focused curriculum to meet regional needs. (Kinser, 2006a, p. 28)

(b) Supersystems – multi-state, multi-campus institutions with stock that trades on Wall Street. They are growth engines of the for-profit sector, adding campuses in new regions and showing increased enrollment to meet the quarterly profit expectations of their shareholders. (Kinser, 2006a, pp. 28-29)

(c) Internet institutions – virtual universities of the for-profit sector. They have no physical campus, deliver all of their programs over the Internet, and often have substantial international enrollments. (Kinser, 2006a, p. 29)

This classification model from Kinser's 2006a examination illustrated how quickly the landscape had shifted from the days of traveling educators and the unique variations across the industry. Kinser's (2006a) classification was not perfect. As for-profits continued to evolve, some for-profits existed in a grey area between the enterprise and the supersystem categories, differentiated primarily by their size and reach. Savannah College of Art and Design and Columbia College of Chicago, for example, were institutions that surpassed the enrollment threshold of 500. That statistic would disqualify them as an enterprise but the lack of the multi-state, multi-campus characteristic which

was a key component of the supersystem meant they would not fit neatly into that category. Kelly's (2001) research noted that the Education Commission of the States had identified that the large, corporate-owned institutions dominated the for-profit market at the time and therefore the supersystem was identified as the focus for this study of student experiences with for-profit institutions.

Reflecting on the history of for-profit education, a pattern of activity illustrated the link between employer demand for trained employees, job seekers pursuing skills-based training, and the willingness of institutions to provide educational services in the pursuit of profits. In a report from the Center for College Affordability and Productivity, Bennett, Lucchesi, and Vedder (2010), suggested that the same drivers of for-profit education present today were the same or similar motivators for earlier models: profit and unregulated freedom to operate.

For-Profit Students

The understanding of for-profit institutions had been grounded primarily in quantitative data which reported on the successes or failures of for-profit institutions yet little was known about the student experience beyond those data points. Iloh (2016) suggested, "Research that positions students as primary stakeholders occupies space at the margins of higher education scholarship" (p. 429). This and other, similar thoughts about the lack of understanding of the lived experiences of students at for-profit institutions had informed the direction of this study. In the section above, I have shared a brief history of for-profit institutions and the popular and contemporary classification system used in studying FPCUs. Understanding that FPCUs existed in response to market

demand, this section now turns to a discussion of students and examines the data specific to students. In this section, I will detail demographics of for-profit college and university (FPCU) students and will share findings from previous studies related to the student population at FPCUs.

Wilson (2010) reported that, since 1980, the increase in enrollment at for-profit institutions had outpaced enrollment at not-for-profit institutions by a factor of nearly nine. This growth had come from populations typically not well served by the traditional model of higher education which included working adults and individuals with children. The individuals that Wilson (2010) referred to had been quantitatively investigated by Deming, Goldin, and Katz (2012), Kinser (2009), and Ullrich and Pratt (2014) and the findings were that for-profit students tended to be female, individuals of color, often single parents, and older adults versus traditional age students.

From their research, Deming, Goldin, and Katz (2012) and Kinser (2009) both reported that students, then categorized as being in the minority, comprised nearly one half of the attendees at for-profit institutions while at public and private institutions, their numbers represent one-third of the total population. Further, Kinser (2009) noted that this minority enrollment was primarily seen in the supersystem model with some 60% of enrolled students being from minority populations.

Across the for-profit industry, generally, the proportion of minorities enrolled dipped no lower than 48%. (Kinser, 2009). Nearly “two-thirds of students at for-profit institutions are female, 16% higher than all types of higher education” and “being a single parent increases the probability of taking the for-profit route by between four and

six percent" (Ullrich & Pratt, 2014, p. 59). Looking further into Ullrich and Pratt's (2014) study, additional probabilities were observed. "Black and Hispanic students are statistically more likely to attend for-profit schools than White students, while students of other races are less likely to attend than Whites" (p. 60) and "students whose parents have higher incomes and education levels are significantly less likely to attend for-profit schools than those with lower incomes (Ullrich & Pratt, 2014, p. 60).

Income and borrowing data were also important when considering the profile of for-profit students. For-profit institutions tended to charge more than not-for-profit institutions and, as a result, students who attended for-profits received larger awards of Title IV funding (Cellini, 2010; Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2012). For-profit students were also 26.3% more likely than their peers at other institutions to utilize federal loans (Ullrich & Pratt, 2014, p. 60). Likewise, Ullrich and Pratt (2014) found that for-profit students tended to borrow more money and have higher default rates on that borrowed money.

Career Construction

While for-profit institutions were colloquially referred to as career colleges, there was little evidence in the literature that connected the student experience at for-profit institutions to career choices or career construction carried out by those students. In this section, I review related research that will act as a bridge to the development of understanding of for-profit students and how career construction theory might act as a theoretical framework.

While Savickas' (2002) career construction theory was a contemporary framework through which to understand students and vocational behaviors, it was important to acknowledge the origins of this theory, the evolving study of career guidance, and how the understanding of career construction had changed over time.

Psychological Approaches to Vocational Behavior

Early studies investigating vocational behavior began at the turn of the 20th century with the work of Frank Parsons and his research in the field of psychology and career guidance. Parsons' (1909) research first focused on identifying personality traits that could be used to place individuals in discrete personality categories. With an understanding of what differentiated each personality category, Parsons (1090) suggested using that knowledge to then help guide individuals into specific careers. Rather than random assignment or selection, that approach paired individual traits with career demands by a system of cross-reference. With the aim of job satisfaction and career success, that approach served as the seminal work of its time in vocational behavioral psychology and career guidance.

The next major push in the study of vocational behavior came after WWII. Post-war shifts in both the makeup of the labor force and types of career opportunities available made that era a particularly unique time to study the psychological connections between individuals and careers. Super (1953) evolved the traditional approach to vocational psychology by examining how careers were constructed versus simply chosen and tied that examination to ideas of personal meaning being created by individuals through their careers. Super (1953) also explored the role of career changes over the

lifetime of an individual and how such changes resulted in greater satisfaction over time. The component of time was significant as it moved the thinking of researchers and practitioners away from the conceptualization that the choice of a career was a singular event happening early in life which then remained constant throughout an individual's lifespan.

Those early studies of vocational behavior illustrated two distinctly different approaches. In Parsons' (1909) work, the focus was considered to be more occupational in nature by aligning personality traits to specific job requirements whereas Super (1953) studied the development of careers over time and how, as the person changed, satisfaction with roles and careers changed as well. The former was occupation-driven, the latter was development-driven.

Sociological Approaches to Vocational Behavior

From a sociological perspective, early work exploring the connections between education and occupations by Blau and Duncan (1967) established the role of education as a factor influencing occupational choice and pointed to several social factors such as family, community, race, and gender as influencing education and ultimately occupational choice. Blau and Duncan (1967) also acknowledged that inequality existed specific to an individual's access to education and, therefore, in occupational choice, regardless of the supportive influence by other social influences. For example, labor market inequalities between men and women and among different ethnic and racial groups could either support or suppress an individual's access and choices, depending on which group an individual belonged to (Kerckhoff, 1995). Similar to Super (1953) and

the belief that time was an implicating factor, Elder and O'Rand (1995) also found that a developmental approach was appropriate when considering career choices and career decisions and indicated that this had become increasingly true with contemporary students and workers. Over the lifetime, different social factors shaped choices and decisions about work.

Johnson and Mortimer (2002), in their review of career choice and career development, pointed out that the sociology of work was often focused on the study of social mobility and socioeconomic inequality. Both education and occupation were acknowledged contributors to increased social mobility and had helped counter inequality. Thus, according to Johnson and Mortimer (2002), "Occupation is a strong determinant of a person's status within the community, earning, wealth, and style of life" (p. 37).

Blended Approaches to Vocational Behavior

Others in the field of vocational behavior blended the two approaches and credited both psychological factors and social influences in an individual's decision-making about careers. The 1970's, studies by Sewell and Hauser (1976) and Hauser (1971) found that an individual's academic ability and the encouragement they received from family, peers, and educators both contributed to career aspirations and educational attainment. Other interdisciplinary considerations included Bronfenbrenner's (1979) interest in how the social setting influenced individual's actions, either positively or negatively and Heckhausen's (1999) investigation into life transitions and how they advantaged and disadvantaged an individual.

In a similar appreciation, Johnson and Mortimer (2002) acknowledged a changing society and suggested that researchers consider new paradigms in their study of career choice and career construction. That later research recognized that individuals engaged in careers later in life compared to the experiences of the early 1900s. Johnson and Mortimer (2002) also suggested that individuals' choices about careers and how to construct them had been delayed as compared to earlier scenarios. Similarly, Shanahan (2000) investigated the realities of alternating secondary schooling with work, the advent of the GED, and other factors which influenced how individuals extended formal decision-making related to careers and the economic and educational realities of young people. While nearly two-thirds of high school graduates entered some form of higher education, less than half of those students would obtained baccalaureate degrees (Johnson & Mortimer, 2002, p. 64). As reported in the earlier section of Chapter 2, women and minoritized populations were especially vulnerable and relied heavily on for-profit institutions to start or continue their educational journey.

Career Construction as a Theoretical Framework

Savickas (2002, 2005) built on those early studies and substantially evolved the developmental ideas of Super (1953, 1954, and 1984) into a contemporary model of career construction. His revised model of sixteen propositions about career construction were grouped together into three subcategories in an attempt to simplify understanding about career choice and career construction. Savickas' (2002) subcategories were (1) the context of development, propositions 1-3, (2) the development of self-concepts, propositions 4-10, and (3) developmental tasks, propositions 11-16 (pp. 154-157).

Through those 16 propositions, Savickas (2002) proclaimed that “careers do not unfold; they are constructed” (p. 154). The full sixteen points of Savickas’ (2002) theory can be found in Appendix A.

Savickas (2002), in the discussion of contextual development, was referring to social influences that shaped individuals and the decisions they made about careers. Those influences were, for example, family, friends, and spouses. Conversely, Savickas’ (2002) subcategory of self-concepts were related to ideas of personal development. In explaining personal development, Savickas (2002) used the example of a child developing independence from their mother and forging a separate identity from others as well as developing personal interests and ambitions. Collectively, the interactions that occur in those first two subcategories were referred to as the variables of self and society. Savickas’ (2002) final consideration in making sense of career construction was related to the individual and their engagement with careers and career-related tasks. In that last category, the belief was that both positive and negative experiences with work and work communities would lead to decisions-making about careers. Positive experiences would result in a continuation of the current construction process and negative experiences would result in altering the path. That final attempt at understanding career construction was recognized as evolving over the lifetime of the individual and was divided into five different stages:

Growth - generally framed between the ages of four and thirteen and could be conceptualized through the use of the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”.

Exploration - generally framed between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four when the individual was initially engaging in actual work and both tested and confirmed career ideals.

Establishment - framed between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four during which time an individual was clarifying their identity through either the career they engaged in or through some other role such as family, friend, or leisure.

Maintenance or Management - framed between the ages of forty-four and sixty-four, this was seen as a time when individuals asked themselves and others for confirmation specific to their worth and the type of work they engaged in.

Disengagement - framed between the ages of sixty-five and older when individuals disengaged in the activity of maintaining careers and transition into other activities related to retirement. (Savickas, 2002, pp. 167-182)

In considering career construction theory as the theoretical framework for this study, it was important to recognize that the theory was not predictive in nature but rather aimed to explain. Career construction theory created useful heuristics about why and how individuals engaged in careers and career decisions and not if they would (Savickas, 2002). It was also important to note that both Savickas (2002) and Navarro (2014) framed the reality of work in contemporary society as unstable, uncertain, and competitive. This fact underscored the importance of strong career construction on the part of the individual. It was viewed as preparation for entry to an otherwise unsatisfying situation which helped to highlight the importance of the decision-making process and the influencing factors.

Career Construction Theory in Application

At the time of this study, Savickas' (2002, 2005) career construction theory had been applied in a number of research settings though no other studies had specifically explored the career construction experiences of for-profit students. The theory had been utilized to explore the experiences of Division I student-athletes, a population which had similar experiences to those of for-profit students. In the next section, I discuss studies applying Savickas' (2002, 2005) career construction theory to Division I student-athletes as I begin to make the make argument why this theory might be applicable to for-profit students.

Division I Student-Athletes' Career Construction. The critique of for-profit institutions often focused on the institution's treatment of students and the exploitation of students in the gain of profit (Cottom, 2017; Mettler, 2014; Schade, 2014). A similar critique existed in the realm of Division I intercollegiate athletics and the treatment of student-athletes in multi-million-dollar athletic enterprises at post-secondary institutions. Because the study of students at for-profit institutions was limited, it was useful to consider other, similar models to explore opportunities in the design of this study. Studies of student athletes provided such a model. Haslerig and Navarro (2016) and Navarro (2014, 2015) provided a guide for how student experiences might be explored and studied specific to career choice and career construction.

Navarro (2015) began her study by first reiterating the work of Savickas et al. (2009) concerning the contemporary American labor market as being highly competitive with rising unemployment rates. Because of this reality, Navarro (2015) underscored the

role of higher education: “to provide meaningful academic training in support of students’ undergraduate academic major coursework, but also to assist students in fostering transferrable lifelong skill sets” (p. 364). This, Navarro (2014, 2015) argued, justified the use of career construction theory in the examination of the student-athlete experience in post-secondary education. Importantly, Navarro (2014) noted that “less than 3% of student-athletes who participated in college sport would eventually pursue professional careers in their sport” (p. 222). However, in an effort to meet eligibility requirements to participate in athletics, the undergraduate degree became a commodity rather than the primary endeavor in the scenario of Division I student-athletes. Navarro (2015) referred to this as the “commercialization of intercollegiate athletics” (p. 365).

Navarro’s (2014, 2015) study of Division I student-athletes revealed two key findings: (a) student-athletes were required to balance divergent roles of student and of athlete, roles which created unique sets of expectations for student-athletes and, (b) student-athletes experienced role conflict, the psychological struggle of competing demands placed on an individual from two opposing roles. When compared to for-profit students, several similarities existed between the two groups of students. From the work of Deming, Goldin, and Katz (2012), Kinser (2009), and Ullrich and Pratt (2014), we know that for-profit students are largely non-traditional with work and familial demands in addition to their role as student. While the roles of FPCU students were different from those of Division I student-athletes, the requirement to balance those different roles was similar. Likewise, the role conflict experienced by Division I student-athletes was similar

to the psychological struggle for-profits students experienced when challenged to fill the role of parent, employee, student, etc.

Navarro's (2014, 2015) study added to the earlier work of Gaston-Gayles and Hu's (2009) study of student-athletes. Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009) originally reported on the concept of role conflict and its negative impact on student engagement and the broader concept of student-athletes and campus integration beyond athletics. Navarro's (2015, 2015) findings corroborated Gaston-Gayles and Hu's (2009) findings in that role conflict had a negative impact on student engagement. Significant to the understanding of career construction, Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009) also suggested that the personal development of student-athletes resulted from participation in and with specific, purposeful activities related to careers, a parallel to the Savickas' (2002, 2005) model of career construction and specifically the exploration stage of development. Not only was engagement important but the level to which student-athletes engaged in career exploration and career preparation was key to achieving the student's desire for employment. As Navarro (2014, 2015) and Savickas (2002) suggested, intentional career construction was a response to a competitive job market and economic instability. If fewer than three percent of students continued on into sports-related careers (Navarro, 2014, p. 222), the exploitation of student-athletes at the expense of campus engagement compromised career decision-making which Savickas et al. (2009) suggested was the responsibility of American higher education, to prepare students for lifetime success and prosperity.

Additionally, Navarro's (2015) study of Division I student athletes reported on the concept of identify foreclosure. Building on Wittmer, Bostic, Phillips, and Waters' 1981 analysis, identity foreclosure was the idea that students defaulted to an undergraduate major without first thoroughly exploring their options for majors. Navarro (2015) found, in the study of Division I student-athletes, that such a default was the result of role conflict and the pressures on student athletes to perform in their role as an athlete and the resulting limitations placed on a student and their ability to engage with the broader on campus. Navarro (2015) noted that such foreclosure could result in a misalignment of aspirations and goals in favor of more convenient peer clustering, the second concept elucidated in Navarro's (2015) analysis of Division I student-athletes. In academic clustering, the controversial approach of clustering students who share common challenges, resulted in students defaulting into majors simply out of convenience for both the student and the academic or athletic advisor. Navarro (2015) suggested that such defaulting challenged the tenets set forth by career construction theory and ultimately disadvantaged the student in their long-term pursuit of employment aspirations and goals.

Other findings from both reports of Navarro's (2014, 2015) study of Division I student-athletes revealed additional linkage to Savickas' (2002, 2005) career construction theory and provided credence to the role of higher education in developing career pathways. Notably, from Navarro's (2014) study, the social influences of family and school on a student-athlete's career choice and construction of careers were revealed.

Participates discussed how initial childhood career aspirations tended to be shaped by four major themes: observing vocations of mentors outside of the home,

> developing career aspirations in the form of idealistic dreams, observing vocations of family members, and developing a sense of personal passion. (Navarro, 2014, p. 227)

As might be expected through the lens of Savickas' (2002, 2005) career construction theory, in Navarro's 2014 study, parents and teachers were identified by participants as a source of career knowledge and mentorship about career opportunities. Equally as important, Navarro (2014) also found that idols from media were sources of inspiration. Associated with this sort of idol-worship specific to careers, Navarro (2014) found that the majority of participants suggested that while they had visions for careers, those visions were not founded on specific talents or skills but rather, were aspirational and idealistic in origin. Finally, Navarro (2014) reported that "individuals tended to describe the process of career choice as occurring primarily during the higher education experience" (p. 229) which reaffirmed the role of higher education and the importance of better understanding how students at for-profit institutions were influenced by institutional activities in their choice of careers and the construction of those careers.

After having considered the similarities between the experiences of Division I student-athletes and students enrolled at for-profit institutions specific to role conflict, Navarro's (2014, 2015) analysis of Division I student-athletes illustrated how career construction theory could be leveraged in this study. Navarro's (2014, 2015) findings suggested that career construction theory provided a framework for interpreting the influences on career choice and construction and helped to cull both individual

aspirations and social influences of student-athletes and, in a similar way, the same could be done for students at for-profit institutions.

Marketing in Higher Education

In this section I will overview marketing in higher education, the pressures to increase marketing as a business-like strategy in higher education, and share critiques found in the literature of marketing specific to for-profit higher education.

A perfect storm of shifting market demands, tightening state budgets, and increasing and competing demands on state budgets for things such as healthcare, K-12 education, security (prisons) have changed the landscape of higher education in the United States over the last four decades (Anctil, 2008). As a result of those economic shifts and demands, a steady decline in state financial support of post-secondary education has forced institutions to increasingly adopt business-like strategies to deal with the tightening financial environment. While historically only for-profit and private institutions relied heavily on tuition, the economic paradigm shift to less state support of not-for-profit institution had also forced those institutions into that tuition-dependent category. As a result, attracting and retaining students had become a major priority (Wright, 2014). Tarasova and Shein (2014) suggested that the shrinking pool of possible students to enroll had made competition and the role of marketing a reality across all segments of higher education. As Auster (2011) pointed out, states and state funding models had inevitably tethered higher education to enrollment and performance-based funding and thus had forced not-for profit institutions to adopt the business-model approach more commonly seen in the for-profit segment of higher education.

Hentschke, Lechuga, and Tiernery (2010) pointed out that "the growth of FPCUs over the past four decades was largely attributed to successful marketing and marketing that took advantage of economies of scale" (p. 26). The supersystem model of a multi-state and multi-campus presence allowed those for-profit institutions to easily canvas large geographic areas and audiences, funneling enrollment into branded, career-oriented programs. Driven by profit, Anctil (2008) suggested that FPCUs were highly motivated to increase enrollment and became ruthless in their pursuits to do so, modeling their marketing activities after successful businesses to drive enrollment. According to Tierney and Hentschke (2007), "the average FPCU spends about 15% of its revenue on sales and marketing. Of this total, about half is spent on promotions (e.g., advertising) and about half on a mix of enrollment management, marketing, and direct-sales expenses" (p. 61). As a business model, how does this compare to other businesses? College Inc.'s 2010 analysis found that "for-profit investment in marketing had outpaced that of top commercial brands such as FedEx, Tide, and Revlon," which illustrated the seriousness of the endeavor and the strong desire for successful outcomes.

Marketing Strategies

Higher education was constantly evolving in response to changing demands of students, parents, employers, and state funding authorities (Longden & Belanger, 2013; Svoboda, Voracek, & Novak, 2012). The ability to quickly change in response to market conditions had been cited as one of the characteristics which had made for-profit institutions superior to traditional colleges and universities (Breneman, Pusser & Turner, 2006). Not surprisingly, the birth of the supersystem model of for-profit higher education

was also the advent of a new model for marketing of higher education. Praised for their business-like approach to education, for-profits began to borrow heavily from the marketing strategy of the business world in the 1980's (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004). While state colleges and universities had enjoyed the benefit of name recognition as part of their recruitment of students and had a reliable stream of recruits because of the heavy influence of tradition (Bronner, 2012), for-profits, specifically the supersystems, had to make themselves known as a new option worth exploring.

Part of the for-profits' success in recruiting students had been their focus on populations of students which had not historically been well served by traditional colleges and universities (TCUs). For-profit enrollment was comprised largely of non-traditional students, a population that TCUs had not historically attracted to any significant level. Lawerence (2012) and Schade (2014) and their analyses of the for-profit market segment found that these institutions did not just market to students but specifically target vulnerable populations as part of their enrollment efforts. Non-traditional students, underemployed and out-of-work individuals, military personnel and their families, and low-income and homeless individuals who were able to benefit from state and federal aid programs had therefore become popular in the eyes of for-profit institutions (Cottom, 2017 and Mettler 2014).

In addition to the questionable targeting of specific populations, the techniques used by for-profit institutions and their owners had also been increasingly scrutinized over the past decade. In a 2010 study conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), thirteen of fifteen for-profit schools included in the study were found to

have used statements, strategies, and recruitment practices which were deemed deceptive and/or misleading (Kutz, 2010). Lawrence's (2012) study of for-profit marketing and recruiting also found that those deceptive marketing and recruiting tactics included misrepresentation of both the potential for employment and the associated salary potential for graduates while also falsely representing themselves as institutions of higher learning. Lawrence (2012) found that predatory institutions used both strategies to justify higher tuition when attempting to sell themselves as a better option than their non-profit counterparts. Ultimately, Johnson (2011) found that for-profit institutions had used deceptive and often high-pressure sales tactics to increase enrollment in programs and yet offered little to no improvement in job prospects or employment outcomes.

Schade (2014) suggested it was that targeted marketing of individuals and the predatory nature of that marketing which drew criticism to the for-profit segment of higher education. In addition, because of the economic pressure to attract students, institutions had become adept at marketing strategies. Wright (2014) suggested that enrollment pressures driving for-profit marketing had resulted in educational mismatch or the idea that successful marketing campaigns would attract large numbers of students without regard for the labor market's ability to absorb the number of graduates produced by those programs. Collectively, the practices and outcomes shown negatively on for-profit education and their practices.

Marketing of Online Education

As a whole, for-profit higher education had been criticized for commodifying education, in other words, for positioning education as a sellable product and for viewing

students as customers purchasing that product (Anctil, 2008; Conway, Mackay, & Yorke, 1994; and Wright, 2014). Anctil (2008) suggested that the approach used by for-profits signaled a shift in higher education from a social institution (public good) to an industry focused on education as an individual responsibility. In the 1980s and 1990's the United States economy began to shift toward an economy based on knowledge potential and knowledge acquisition. Such an economy was viewed as more technologically sophisticated and institutions which were more entrepreneurial and specifically those that were motivated more by profit versus the promotion of public good began to leverage programming and boosting online education as the delivery method of higher education of the future. Prior to the 1990s, online education was considered a niche market and served a narrow population. "The marketing of convenience, access, and ease of attendance have increased the share of online education considerably" (Anctil, 2008, p 24).

Contemporary Marketing

The growth of Internet technologies and the continually increasing number of Internet users had shifted marketing activities of businesses, including higher education (Tarasova & Shein, 2014). Contemporary marketing was heavily reliant on the internet and found to be successful primarily because students trusted the Internet (Svoboda, Voracek, & Novak, 2012). Online marketing was diverse but the most effective online campaigns, according to the study by Svoboda, Voracek, and Novak (2012), were ones which tapped into social networking interests of potential students. The proclivity of individuals to create networks based on personal interests followed the logic of using

people to attract people (Svoboda, Voracek, & Novak, 2012). When social networking was paired with pay-per-click strategies, institutions were able to quickly reach a number of potential students with their message (Svoboda, Voracek, & Novak, 2012).

Given the new economic paradigm for higher education and shifting demographics in the student population, marketing as a component of higher education was here to stay for the foreseeable future. Krachenberg (1972), perhaps summed it up best with the following: "marketing itself serves a basic service to society. Marketing helps organizations identify needs, develop products and services to address those needs, and puts those goods and services into the hands of people in need, if anything is undesirable about marketing it is not in the activity per se; rather it is in the motives of those guiding the activity and the manner in which it is carried out" (p. 380).

Chapter 3: Methodology

In Chapter 1, I introduced the topic of for-profit, post-secondary education and pointed out that much of the research on this segment of higher education had focused on the management and operation of those institutions. Previous studies had documented that much of the research about students at for-profit institutions focused on quantitative analysis of student outcomes and largely ignored the student experience (Iloh, 2016; Iloh & Tierney, 2014). In Chapter 2, I discussed the history of for-profit institutions and a contemporary framework used to categorize for-profit institutions. I pointed out that much of the research over the last four decades had focused on one particular model of for-profit institutions known as the supersystem. I also discussed the population of students who had enrolled at for-profit institutions and emphasized that this population of students was predominantly non-traditional and that the typical student was likely to be a female of color. In Chapter 2, I introduced career construction theory as the theoretical framework for this study and summarized the research of Savickas (2002, 2005) in developing a contemporary model of career construction theory and overviewed how career construction theory had been applied in the study of Division I student-athletes, a student population that paralleled for-profit students in their experience of role conflict. Finally, I reviewed marketing as an economic reality of higher education and specifically reported on the marketing at for-profit institutions in recent history.

In this chapter I begin by overviewing the research design and constructing the argument for the use of qualitative research methods in the study of career construction of for-profits students. Next, I will introduce and discuss social constructivism as the

research paradigm which gave meaning to this study and, later, the interpretation of findings from this study. Then, I will discuss the case study as a research method and why it was appropriate for this study. I will then share specific information about the International Academy of Design and Technology (IADT), the institution from which participants were selected for this study and discuss the specific recruiting and selection processes of the sample of participants. Finally, I will share the data collection techniques used and how I analyzed the data to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. I will conclude Chapter 3 by sharing the limitations of this study.

Overview of Research Design

As a qualitative study, this analysis employed three primary techniques for collecting data, a reflection scenario by participants, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of marketing collateral of the campuses being studied. As an introduction to the interview, participants were given the opportunity to reflect, generally, on their experiences with higher education, career choice, career construction, and IADT. Following the opportunity to reflect, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to ascertain the types of marketing they encountered and to contextualize participants' experiences specific to career choice and career construction. Lastly, I sought out and reviewed existing examples of marketing and advertising by IADT as suggested by participants as part of a document analysis process. Framed by a constructivist worldview and guided by career construction theory, this study was designed to answer the following questions:

Q1: How do students translate FPCU marketing into career choices and construct careers?

Q2: How have post-graduation experiences compared to enrollment expectations specific to career decisions and career construction?

While primarily focused on how participants were influenced by institutional marketing, the sharing and findings in Chapter 4 and discussion in Chapter 5 reflect a holistic consideration of influences on career choice and decisions made about careers.

Research Paradigm

"Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). This study honored the basic tenet of constructivism by developing deeper understanding of the student experience, specifically how students and their career choices and construction of careers were shaped by the marketing of for-profit institutions. Creswell (2014) also stated that a constructivist worldview acknowledges a "complexity of views rather than narrowing meaning into a few categories or ideas" (p. 8). In this tradition, the narratives collected from participants revealed a myriad of diverse student experiences. In addition, data collected from interviews helped to build on the understanding of those experiences. As suggested by Creswell (2014), the constructivist approach relied heavily on how study participants viewed the scenario being studied and encouraged participants to create meaning of a situation through their responses to broad and open-ended questions. The interview questions were therefore designed to encourage participants to tell their story in a way that revealed the unique quality of the individual experience. As an inductive

process, the analysis was guided by career construction theory but was not intended to be predictive about outcomes. Rather, this study investigated the experience students had with institutional marketing and considered how those experiences shaped students' choices and their careers after graduation.

Qualitative Methods

Creswell (2014) stated, "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). By first giving participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and then interviewing participants about their experiences at IADT, a framework of understanding was developed about participants, their experiences, and institutional marketing. By then reviewing advertising and marketing documents from IADT that were identified by participants during reflections and interviews, the hoped-for outcome was an ability to see and understand how participants had been influenced by the marketing practices of IADT and ultimately how participants translated the marketing messages into career choices and constructed careers. Qualitative study allows for the inductive approach Creswell (2014) notes as important when the desire is to better understand a complex situation.

Creswell (2014) also stated that qualitative research is especially useful when the population being studied has not been extensively studied in the past. Here it is important to reiterate that much of the research on for-profit students, to date, had been quantitative in design. Specifically, Iloh (2016) suggests the importance of placing the student

experience at the center of the research given the historic approach of marginalizing qualitative experiences and the lack of data that renders those experiences.

The Case Study as a Qualitative Approach

Yin (2014) shared that the case study, as a qualitative method, has evolved over time as a tool of empirical inquiry. The use of the case study approach acknowledged the complexity of situations and allowed me, the researcher, to focus on a specific instance or case while still recognizing that the case being studied exists in a larger context. Additionally, the case study method allowed for in-depth discovery and nuanced understanding. Given the complex nature of individuals and their experiences, the case study narrowed the breadth of the investigation in favor of depth of understanding.

The Case Study as a Qualitative Approach for this Study

Earlier work by Kinser (2009) found that the University of Phoenix had been extensively referred to by researchers in the study of for-profit education. Kinser (2009) argued that, while the general use of the University of Phoenix offered some insight into the world of for-profit education, it should not limit the search for broader understanding garnered from the study of other institutions within the supersystem category of for-profits. Due to the diverse institutional characteristics, demographics, and operational uniqueness across the spectrum of supersystems, there existed an opportunity for additional research to be undertaken to increase understanding of the supersystem model. In this case, the site chosen for research was categorized as a supersystem but, as Yin (2014) stated, the "value of the case study method is that it honors the case as a contemporary issue that is shaped by context of place and time" (p. 16). The institution

chosen for this study was unique from the University of Phoenix in the types of degree programs offered. A case study of an institution other than the University of Phoenix offered the potential to reveal data that supported Kinser's (2009) argument against such a narrow view of the for-profit industry. Additionally, this study focused on a specific program offering and one which was not offered at the University of Phoenix, the bachelor of fine arts in interior design.

The Case: The International Academy of Design and Technology

The International Academy of Design and Technology was established in 1977 as the International Academy of Merchandising and Design, Ltd. in Chicago. Founded by Clem Stein, Jr. as an enterprise institution, it later evolved into an early example of the prominent supersystem model of for-profit education which emerged and developed in the United States starting in the late 1970s. Supersystems were characteristically corporate owned and organized to include multiple locations in different states and garnered enrollment typically surpassing 500 students at each campus location. After being purchased by Career Education Corporation (CEC) in 1984, IADT quickly grew and expanded into major cities across the United States including Tampa, FL, Las Vegas, NV, Nashville, TN, Orlando, FL, San Antonio, TX, Seattle, WA, Pittsburgh, PA, and Sacramento, CA. CEC's expansion also included smaller satellite campuses in Schaumburg, IL and Detroit, MI. Additionally, Career Education Corporation attempted to expand into the international market by opening a campus in Toronto, Canada.

As part of the Career Education Corporation conglomerate, the IADT brand was unique from other for-profit supersystems. For-profit institutions most notably offered

career-oriented programs in areas of business, criminal justice, and nursing (Mettler, 2014). IADT stood out as one of only a few for-profit supersystems which offered undergraduate degrees in the creative fields, specifically interior design, graphic design, fashion design, photography, and later in its existence, game art and design and digital media and communications. Not all degree programs were offered at all campus locations with some campuses developing market-specific programming in creative fields in response to regional demands and employment opportunities.

Career Education Corporation's other branded school, Sanford-Brown, grew out of the St. Louis-based Brown's Business College. Sanford-Brown, after being purchased by CEC, grew to include 18 different locations. Originally separate and unique from IADT, Sanford-Brown offered more typical undergraduate degrees in business and eventually expanded its program offerings into the healthcare field.

The International Academy of Design and Technology was accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) until 2016 when the U.S. Department of Education revoked their recognition of ACICS as an accreditor. Perhaps more importantly for this study, IADT-Chicago (and other locations) also held program-level accreditation from the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), the accrediting body for undergraduate and graduate programs of interior design.

In 2007, after a three-decade long period of growth and expansion, the combined effects of multiple student-led lawsuits leveled against CEC and a global economic recession led to declining enrollment at IADT campuses across the country. As a result, Career Education Corporation announce the intent to close campuses. In 2008, the

Pittsburgh campus would be the first campus location to close followed by seven years of additional closures. Marred by lawsuits, the IADT brand was eventually merged with the Sanford-Brown brand. CEC had hoped that the rebranded IADT programs under the Sanford-Brown name would reinvigorate those programs and salvage the remaining campus locations and programs. This move proved unsuccessful and CEC's offering of programs and degrees in the creative fields would eventually disappear.

While IADT was a national brand with similar programming offered at multiple campuses, this case study was focused on the experience of students in the Chicago market, specifically the downtown Chicago campus of IADT and its satellite campus in the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg Illinois. Because of the program-level accreditation of the interior design program, this study focused on the experiences of students who had graduated from the interior design program. While the institution as a whole was moving in the direction of a national curriculum, IADT's multiple interior design programs did not achieve that goal prior to their demise. This fact was important in the selection of campuses to study in that students at different campuses could have had very different expectations and experiences based on marketing, advertising, and curricular variations across the various campus locations.

Recruitment and Sample Selection

For this investigation, I studied the experiences of graduates from IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago, two campuses of an institution which was no longer in operation. In doing so, this mitigated many of the issues revealed by earlier studies of students at for-profit institutions (Iloh, 2016; Iloh & Tierney, 2014). In those earlier studies, the

researchers noted that, because profit motivates for-profit institutions, any threat to that mission may be viewed as too risky by the institution and thus, the attempt to gain access to students and institutional knowledge can be challenged. IADT was an example of the supersystem model of for-profit institutions described by Kinser (2009) as being corporate owned and typically having shareholders, having multiple campus locations, typically in multiple states, and having a large enrollment, 500+ students.

The sample for this study was selected from the population of graduates of the bachelor of fine arts in interior design program. This program was unique among the programs offered at IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago because of its program-level accreditation. No other programs at these campuses held or were required to have program-level accreditation. This differentiating factor served as one way to cull the participants and to help ensure credibility and trustworthiness of findings and in later discussions of those findings.

Participant Recruitment

Through this analysis, I intended to study experiences of student who had graduated from the IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago and, more specifically from the interior design program at those two campuses. Iloh (2016) suggested that students who attended for-profit institutions were highly mobile and often attended multiple institutions during their educational journey. Further, for-profit institutions typically lacked the alumni association model found at not-for-profit institutions. Those characteristics paired with the fact that IADT was no longer in operation, made it difficult to identify and reach graduates. As a way of overcoming those obstacles, social media

and less formal social networks were relied upon to promote this study and to reach potential study participants. To attract attention to the study and solicit participation, an invitation to a Qualtrics survey was initially posted on Facebook. The invitation is located in Appendix B. In addition, seven former faculty of the interior design programs at IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago were contacted through Facebook Messenger and were asked to share the same invitation to the survey via social media. Of the seven contacted, two faculty expressed a willingness to do so. Through this survey, initial demographic data was collected and respondents were qualified into and out of the study based on the pre-established criteria of degree type and degree completion. The survey can be found in Appendix C.

This first attempt to attract participants resulted in twelve responses with only ten qualifying into the study. Five of those ten would ultimately take part. It is not known why the survey approach had limited success. It is possible to imagine that the disappointment surrounding the closure of IADT and the frustration graduates had with finding careers in interior design after graduation, as later revealed through participant interviews, may have acted as a deterrent. Likewise, the limited participation by former faculty in support of data collection for this study was not anticipated. As the researcher, I had struggled with misgivings about a study that could potentially surface ill will toward faculty associated with the now defunct programs or uncover hurt feeling related to the IADT experience. Because of this, it is reasonable to suggest other faculty could have similar concerns in supporting the study and, as a result, distanced themselves from the study.

A second attempt to attract participants to the study involved direct outreach. Individuals known to have graduated from the interior design program at either campus were contacted via Facebook Messenger or LinkedIn and were invited to take part in the study. Through this strategy, nineteen individuals were contacted as well as nine additional individuals as a result of a peer-to-peer connections. Of the twenty-eight individuals reached through direct contact, thirteen agreed to take part in the study. Ten of those thirteen ultimately took part in the study. A total of fifteen participants, thirteen females and two males ultimately comprised the interview sample.

Data Collection

Once survey responses were reviewed and participants were selected and agreed to take part in the study, the primary data collection tool was the semi-structured interview using an instrument designed by me specifically for this study. In an effort to maintain a consistent interview and data collection approach, all interviews were conducted via telephone, regardless of the location of participants. Each interview was guided by the same pre-established interview protocol. The interview protocol is located in Appendix D with interview questions mapped to the theoretical framework in Appendix E. Each interview was audio recorded and professionally transcribed afterwards and shared with each participant as part of a member-check process to ensure accuracy and to allow participants to confirm their statements.

Consent and confidentiality. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Yin (2014) emphasized the importance of protecting participants in ethical research. In this study, when an individual's educational experiences could potentially implicate future career

construction and given the litigious realities of the for-profit segment of higher education, the protection of participants was central to the research design and execution of the data collection and reporting. In preparation for this research, the proposed study and researcher-designed interview instrument were reviewed and approved by Ohio University's IRB. A copy of the IRB approval is available in Appendix F.

Given that reflection scenario and semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone, each participant received an overview of the study and a consent form as part of the participation scheduling. As an introduction to the reflection scenario, each participant was reminded of the purpose of the study and granted verbal consent in taking part in the study. Additionally, each participant was made aware of and agreed to the audio recording and professional transcription of the data collected. The identity of participants was kept confidential throughout the process by referring to participants through a randomly assigned participant number in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this study reporting. Additionally, when participants raised questions regarding who else might or might not have been part of the study, no confirmations were given. All participants of the study remained anonymous to others beyond me as the principle investigator.

Triangulation. Creswell (2014) suggested triangulation or the strategy of using multiple methods of investigation to check the accuracy of findings and to help develop an appreciation for different perspectives which might emerge on a topic. To triangulate, two supplemental methods of data collection were used as part of this study. First, prior to officially starting the semi-structured interview using the established interview

questions, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences related to higher education, career choice, career construction, and IADT. Additionally, as a result of findings based on participant sharing through reflection scenarios or during the semi-structured interview process, extant marketing and advertising documents were sought out as a way of contextualizing the marketing undertaken by this institution. Ultimately, this included a review of existing websites and archived web pages of IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago.

Analytic Plan

As part of the data collection and analysis process, several steps were taken to support the interpretation of data. This process started with analytic memoing which took place during both the reflection scenario and the semi-structured interviews conducted with participants. In an effort to identify what Saldana (2016) referred to as the five R's (routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships) and with the goal of identifying emerging themes, processes, or habits, analytic memo helped to inform the first steps of analysis.

At the completion of reflections and semi-structured interviews and after member-checking of transcribed recordings, analysis of the data continued following the guidelines set forth by Saldana (2016). Beyond analytic memoing, Saldana (2016) suggested a specific path of analysis which included first cycle coding and second cycle coding. Saldana (2016) defined codes as a "research-generated construct that symbolizes or 'translates' data and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes" (p. 4). As part of first cycle coding, I

examined the transcribed reflections and interviews through multiple lenses, first using process coding in an effort to identify process as it related to decision making and career construction, the foundation of this study. I then reviewed the data a second time through the lens of structural coding. The aim of structural coding was to develop a more basic index of important points from the interview reflection and interview transcripts that might be culled for discussion. Saldana (2016) made two points about coding that were significant for this study. First, "a code can sometimes summarize, distill, or condense data, not simply reduce them" (p. 5) and second, "during the coding process, an observed idiosyncrasy should be considered a pattern" (p. 7) and was important as part of the process of honoring the unique experiences and processes detailed by study participants. Saldana (2016) suggested that, first cycle coding concludes once saturation is reached and that another round of coding could take place as part of the coding process, if warranted. For this study, the consistency and clarity in emergent processes and themes brought closure to the analysis.

To this point I have primarily focused the description of the data analysis on the reflection scenario and semi-structured interview transcripts. The same process, as described above, was also applied to the document analysis portion of the study. The examples of marketing documents, websites and archived web pages, were analyzed using analytic memoing and coding and will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Analytic Reflection

Yin (2014) stated that four tests are used to ensure quality for qualitative research, which includes the case study method being used for this study. These tests included construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

To ensure construct validity, Yin (2014) suggested using multiple sources of evidence, to establish a chain of evidence, and to have key informants of the study review draft reports of the finding. In response to Yin's (2014) suggestions for construct validity, I have identified three key sources of data collection: (1) participant reflections, (2) semi-structured interviews with participants, and (3) websites and archived web pages which have been strung together as reflective of an intentional chain of events. Likewise, participants reviewed both the transcript of their reflection scenario and interview as well as the draft presentation of findings and were given the opportunity to comment and revise based on those reviews.

Yin (2014) suggested that to support internal validity, the process of pattern matching and construction explanations along with addressing rival explanations are necessary. To accomplish internal validity, I will adhere to Saldana's (2016) established framework for coding and analysis of qualitative data.

Specific to external validity, Yin (2014) frames this largely as generalizability and states that, in qualitative research and specifically in the use of the case study method, findings are "generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes; the goal is not to extrapolate probability but rather to expand and generalize theories" (p. 21). As previously noted, this research did not intend to predict behavior or

outcomes but rather, in this case, resulted in deriving possible relationships between for-profit marketing and the student experiences related to those marketing techniques specific to career choices and career construction theory.

Lastly, Yin (2014) wrote on the need for reliability. Reliability translated to the ability of a future researcher to conduct the same case study I have and to find that the results and conclusions of both my study and those of the future researcher to match. The implication of reliability would be that the study was void of bias and had minimized errors. To support reliability, I have been explicit, in this chapter and as outlined in the Appendix, in documenting steps for identifying a population and establishing a sample, in collecting data in terms of how and what is to be collected, and in the analysis of that data using Saldana's (2016) memo and coding framework.

Researcher Positionality

Creswell (2014) stated that "qualitative research is interpretative research: the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants; this introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the qualitative research process" (p. 187) and that "inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status that shape their interpretations formed during a study" (p. 187). To Creswell's (2014) point, it is important, as the researcher, to disclose that I have taught interior design and general education courses at five different for-profit institutions as an adjunct instructor. The intimate experiences and knowledge that come from working at a for-profit inform my personal opinions about that segment of higher education. The

experience teaching at for-profits exposed me to many of the negative aspects and characteristics of for-profits reported in other research (Cottom , 2017; Mettler, 2014). At the same time, it was equally as important to acknowledge that I, at the time of this writing, was teaching interior design at a public, not-for-profit institution and have co-authored a manuscript advocating for increase support of public institutions, a position which could be interpreted as being at odds with the for-profit mission. Finally, it is important, given what I know about the demographics of for-profit students, to acknowledge that my socio-economic status and gender are likely going to be different than the participants of this study. All of this said, I have made every attempt to honor the experiences of students and to eliminate bias in my interpretation of the data collected.

Study Limitations

Earlier studies by Iloh (2016) and Iloh and Tierney (2014) identified the rapidly changing nature of for-profit institutions as a challenge to effectively researching them. As previously stated, the sites selected for this study, IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago were no longer in operation at the time of this study. Likewise, the corporate owners of IADT experienced the kind of characteristic volatility suggested by Iloh (2016) and Iloh and Tierney (2014) during its forty-year existence. Because of this, the findings of this study are time and place dependent.

As a case study, this analysis considered only the students who had graduated from a single institution and specifically from the interior design program at the IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago campuses of that institution. Assumptions and generalizations to other programs, campuses, and institutions were not part of the

findings of this study. As a qualitative analysis, the intent of this research was not to predict outcomes or to generalize for-profit education but rather to understand the connection between this institution's marketing and how marketing strategies shaped career choices and influenced career construction for the participants of this study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study examined the experience of students at for-profit institutions. Its primary purpose was to develop an understanding of how students' decisions specific to career choice and the construction of their careers before enrolling at the International Academy of Design and Technology (IADT), while matriculating at IADT, and after having graduated from IADT were influenced by the marketing of that for-profit institution. A review of the existing literature on for-profit education found that much of the research had focused on institutional outcomes and institutional business practices with students positioned as part of a quantitative analysis. This study differed from many of the earlier studies of for-profit institutions in that students rather than institutional operations were placed at the center of the study. The intent of doing this was to create qualitative understanding of the student experience rather than the more typical quantitative analysis of the successes or failures of the institution. More specifically I sought to develop an appreciation for students' experiences at two specific campuses, IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago and how those students may have been influenced by institutional marketing. Likewise, I designed this study to analyze how careers were constructed by participants and surveyed the post-graduation attitudes about career choices and career construction. Finally, through this study, I examined the alignment of pre-enrollment and post-graduation views of interior design as a profession on the part of participant.

The Educational Landscape

Given that this analysis was a study of the experiences of students who attended for-profit institutions in Chicago and the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg, it was important to contextualize the educational landscape of Chicago. The educational landscape, at that time, included several for-profit, private, and public institutions with a range of post-secondary degree options. Most significant to this study were the options for undergraduate degrees in creative fields and specifically those offering degrees in interior design. A number of for-profit programs have historically existed in Chicago. Harrington College of Design, founded in 1931 as Harrington Institute, was purchased by Career Education Corporation (CEC) in 2003. After the purchase of Harrington, CEC created graduate program offerings in interior design, graphic design, and photography to complement their undergraduate degrees in those same programs. Harrington existed as one of only a few institutions offering a graduate degree in interior design in the state. As part of CEC, Harrington College of Design experienced similar enrollment and economic struggles as IADT and held its final graduation in June of 2018. Other for-profits in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs included the Illinois Institute of Art, Chicago and the Illinois Institute of Art, Schaumburg, as well as the lesser known Westwood College with four locations in and around the Chicagoland area. Of these, only the Illinois Institute of Art campuses continued to offer undergraduate degrees as of August, 2018.

Chicago was also home to two private institutions which offer degrees in interior design. Founded in 1866 as the Chicago Academy of Design, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago was located in downtown Chicago and existed as an extension of the

Art Institute of Chicago. Also located in downtown Chicago was Columbia College which was founded in 1890 as the Columbia School of Oratory. A third private institution also existed in downtown Chicago, Robert Morris University of Illinois. While it did not offer an undergraduate degree in interior design, it did offer undergraduate degrees in technology fields allied with the interior design profession.

As of August, 2018, there were no public institutions offering degrees in interior design in the city of Chicago. While the University of Illinois had an urban campus in Chicago, they did not offer a degree in interior design. Students who desired to study interior design at a public institution had to consider institutions beyond the city limits of Chicago. Other public institutions in the state of Illinois included Northern Illinois University in DeKalb (64 miles from Chicago) which offered a bachelor's degree in art with emphasis in design studies, Illinois State University in Normal (132 miles from Chicago) which offered a bachelor's degree in interior design, and Southern Illinois University in Carbondale (330 miles from Chicago) which also offered a bachelor's degree in interior design.

Study Sample

As a result of outreach efforts detailed in Chapter 3, 15 participants took part in this study. Of the 15 participants, five had graduated from IADT-Schaumburg: one Asian-American female, one Caucasian male, and three Caucasian females. Ten participants had graduated from IADT-Chicago: one Asian-American female, one African-American and Asian-American female, one Caucasian male, and seven Caucasian females. Two IADT-Chicago participants self-identified as having immigrated

from Germany prior to enrolling at IADT. Eleven of the 15 participants self-identified as having attended one or more post-secondary institutions prior to attending IADT. Of the 15 participants, one IADT-Chicago participant shared that she had delayed graduation intentionally by having a second child, the other 14 participants indicated that they did not have the role of parent prior to or during their time at IADT. One IADT-Chicago participant indicated that she held the role of part-time caretaker for a parent while enrolled. Of the 15 participants, two IADT-Chicago participants indicated that they were military veterans. Of the 15 participants, four indicated full-time employment and 10 indicated part-time employment during post-secondary education at IADT. This demographic information is graphically summarized in Table 1, below.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Demographic Data, n=15

Participant	Campus	Gender	Race	Work Status
Amy	Schaumburg	female	Caucasian	full-time
Stephanie	Chicago	female	Caucasian	part-time
Sofia	Chicago	female	Caucasian	part-time
Lauren	Schaumburg	female	Caucasian	part-time
Emily	Schaumburg	female	Caucasian	full-time

Table 1 continued

Rachel	Chicago	female	Asian-American	part-time
Jennifer	Chicago	female	Caucasian	part-time
Linda	Chicago	female	Asian-American & African-American	full-time
Melissa	Chicago	female	Caucasian	part-time
Anna	Chicago	female	Caucasian	part-time
Nathan	Chicago	male	Caucasian	not employed
Natalie	Chicago	female	Caucasian	full-time
Ragan	Schaumburg	female	Asian-American	part-time
Samantha	Chicago	female	Caucasian	part-time
Matt	Schaumburg	male	Caucasian	part-time

Note: Participants 3 and 10 self-identified as having immigrated to the U.S. prior to enrollment.
Note: Anna self-identified as a parent while enrolled.
Note: Melissa self-identified as having part-time caretaker role of a parent while enrolled.
Note: Participants 11 and 14 self-identified as a veteran of U.S. military service.

As seen in Table 1, the sample was composed primarily of Caucasian females which is characteristic of interior design programs, both for-profit and not-for-profit, in the United States. This representation will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Methods

Two research questions were established to guide this study:

Q1. How do students translate FPCU marketing into career choices and construct careers?

Q2. How have post-graduation experiences compared to enrollment expectations specific to career decisions and career construction?

As a qualitative study, two methods were used to collect data in response to the established research questions. First, a reflection scenario and a semi-structed interview was conducted with each of the fifteen participants. Second, document analysis of web-based documents was undertaken to contextualize the institutional marketing that was revealed through participant responses. Findings from each method are detailed and reported below.

Study Findings

Guided by a pre-established set of interview questions and a semi-structured interview approach, fifteen pre-qualified participants were contacted by telephone. Prior to the start of semi-structured interviews, participants were given the opportunity to reflect on their educational experiences and career choices and careers. The semi-structed interview followed and was guided by the pre-established interview protocol. Interviews averaged 45 minutes in length and were audio recorded to help ensure accuracy in the

collection and interpretation of data. Following each reflection scenario and interview, the audio recordings were professionally transcribed using the www.rev.com online transcription service. Transcripts were shared with the participant as part of the member check process and transcripts were edited based on participant feedback. Transcripts were then imported into the Dedoose data-analyzing software and coded. Coding included the consideration of major themes related to process and structure as revealed through reflection scenarios and semi-structured interviews. The findings from this study are presented in the pages that follow and are organized in support of the two research questions.

Reflection Scenario

As an introduction to the interview, participants were first asked to reflect on their experiences with higher education, career choice, career construction, and IADT. This opportunity to reflect was not necessarily intended to garner specific responses but rather was an opportunity for participants to verbalize some initial thoughts about career choice, institutional choice, career construction, and to capture reflective, post-graduation attitudes of participants. The reflection component of the data collection process revealed the beauty of qualitative research in that each participant had a personal story to share. While some common themes began to surface, the reflections showcased the uniqueness of each individual experience. My interpretation of each participant's reflective sharing follows. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms have been used in place of each participant's actual name.

Amy was thinking about the fine arts, a passion that had been part of her life up to that point, but was seeking some way to translate that interest into a career. As a student who had studied at other institutions and had experimented with different possible trajectories, a career in interior design became a way of combining her passion and a career. For Amy, IADT revealed itself to be focused on career and employment goals and it became a very comfortable scenario for her.

Stephanie had positive memories but reflected mostly on things that she did not like: the pace of the program and the pressure to perform, for example. Stephanie shared that she graduated feeling unprepared to enter the job market.

Sofia reflected with pride on how she was embarking on a similar path as her grandfather and recalled that she was, at the time, projecting into the future of her career and thinking about working with her grandfather after graduation.

Lauren, similar to Amy, was exploring ideas about careers and how to connect creative passions to some sort of career path. She commented similarly about the idea of focusing on completion and transitioning to the world of work.

Emily talked about achievement and was excited to have reached the graduation milestone and then transitioned into the world of work. She highlighted that her internship experience translated into a job after graduation and recognized that as key to her success.

Rachel reflected on her career search. She was looking for something that interested her and kept her attention. To her, location was a factor. Rachel talked about how the idea of a long-term connection to IADT, after graduation, appealed to her as a

sort of support network. As a result, this participant expressed deep regret about the school closing and talked at length about the disappointment of for-profit education. Her sharing suggested that she took it very personally and, of those interviewed, seemed to be the most knowledgeable about for-profit education and specifically the negative connotation associated with for-profit institutions.

Jennifer shared that she sought out a different career path than her peers growing up and shared that she was breaking from the ties of her hometown. With no previous knowledge of interior design, Jennifer saw that IADT was a break from traditional education as well and was attracted by that fact.

Linda shared that she was able to work in the profession with a fine arts degree and returned to college as a way of cementing her role as a professional. Linda shared that her formal interior design education was a way of connecting, more intentionally, her fine arts passions to a career.

Melissa stated that design was a way to combine both her passion for creativity and her experiences of working with people into a career. She lamented the closing of IADT because she had considered it a professional network for the future as she constructed a career.

Anna shared that she had explored other career options before settling on interior design. Anna first explored teaching and nursing, what she referred to as traditional careers. Anna, like others, was seeking a way to combine her artistic passions and interests into something that would allow for an interesting and fulfilling career. IADT

seemed to offer that career path. She also reflected on the role of her family in establishing the value the arts and how this had influenced her career choice.

Nathan was heavily influenced by family. For him, the location of the school was an opportunity to stay near family while he began his career journey. Nathan commented on having first been attracted to the intimacy of the smaller IADT-Schaumburg campus. After learning more about interior design, he transferred to the Chicago campus from which he graduated. Nathan shared that interior design, as a career choice, had been imprinted on him by another family member already involved in architecture. He suggested that architecture, as a career path, was overwhelming and that interior design allowed him to be more focused.

Natalie shared that she was aspirational and was seeking an opportunity to be creative while considering enrolling at IADT. Natalie sought a career that would allow her to grow and help others and ultimately wanted a career which would challenge her in the future.

Ragan seemed to fall into the career path and shared that she was following an interest that surfaced while in high school. Of the fifteen participants, Ragan seemed the least committed to her career choice and her reflections were noticeably the least passionate of the fifteen about interior design.

Samantha shared that she had an early passion for architecture and design and yet the path towards a career had left her disappointed because of the IADT experience. Her journey toward a career had included forays into business education and also attempts to follow a family tradition of law enforcement and military service.

Matt was excited to be part of something. He was inspired by television programming about design, specifically HGTV, and sought ways to also be creative but at a scale that was more comfortable to him. Matt seemed to be seeking personal fulfillment and satisfaction through creative endeavors and by creating things.

Through the reflection scenario, participants revealed that a robust and diverse range of influences had contributed to their career choices. While some participants had more to say than others, all seemed to find it relatively easy to find and express their thoughts on the topic of career choice. While not all that was shared was positive, the majority of participants seemed to recognize the value of the journey and suggested that they had learned from their experiences and were moving forward. Collectively, the opportunity to reflect seemed to allow participants to settle into the discussion and sharing that followed the initial reflection scenario.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview questions that followed the reflection scenario were intended to garner more of the career choice and career construction narrative from each participant's experience. The findings from the interviews are presented below, first organized broadly in support of established research questions and secondarily organized by the individual interview topic.

Findings related to Research Question #1. Q1: How do students translate FPCU marketing into career choices and construct careers?

Marketing and advertising. Interview questions were formulated to garner a broad appreciation for the types of marketing being used by these institutions, how

students learned about IADT, and how that marketing influenced individuals' career choices and ultimately how they constructed careers. Having taught at both campus locations, I was familiar with some types of advertising being utilized by these two institutions to include web-based marketing, television commercials, signage on mass transit vehicles (placards displayed both on the inside as well as the outside of subway trains and buses), and posters displayed in transit stations and at subway platforms. The related interview questions were intended to better understand what other types of marketing existed and how students were influenced by those marketing strategies.

During the interview, participants were asked to identify how they learned about IADT. Overwhelmingly, 10 of the 15 participants stated that they had discovered IADT as a result of an intentional search for schools offering degrees in interior design. Of the 15 participants, five recalled the more traditional forms of advertising, Emily faintly recalled television advertising: "…I think I may have seen one or two commercials…" while Samantha recalled a very specific experience related to her seeing a television advertisement and the excitement in her voice revealed her joy about the discovery:

> I was actually watching TV, and I think there was a video...it was either that or Facebook, and it was just after my sister died, that I was like, "I need to finish my bachelor's." And I was like, "Oh, this is a great place. I might as well call, make an interview, and go in to show them, okay, I have my associate's, and here's my portfolio." So, it was just kind of like I saw it ... It wasn't the first design school that I had seen or heard of, but it was just something that kind of clicked in me, that I was like, "I should really try this place."

Linda also had a clear memory of her discovery of IADT in relation to marketing via Chicago public transportation:

> I happened to be standing on the EL platform one day, and I saw literally a billboard for IADT and I was like, "Oh." And so I was like, "Well I haven't heard of this school," and so two weeks later I made an appointment, and took a tour of the school, and then signed up.

Rachel was more critical in tone and shared:

> At that point in time, they had a bunch of ad campaigns, specifically on buses and trains. And if you look at it close enough and think about it enough, it's something that kind of sticks with you so, while I saw those campaigns, mostly around the CTA [Chicago Transit Authority], it just stuck with me enough to actually look into what the schools offer, where the campus was, what I could actually be studying.

Alternative forms of discovery and decision making. Beyond traditional marketing and advertising techniques discussed above, five of the participants indicated a very different scenario of discovery of IADT, one which resulted from participants seeking out potential schools at which to study interior design via the Internet. Two participants, Sofia and Jennifer, shared that they were living outside of the Chicagoland area at the time of their search and thus would not have been witness to the more traditional forms of marketing being used to target potential students in the Chicagoland area. Additionally, two other participants, Sofia and Natalie, offered that they had been made aware of IADT through friends or acquaintances who were or had attended IADT.

Rachel who, in addition to noting more traditional forms of marketing, also shared her experience of IADT's online marketing as follows: "At the time there were a lot of ad campaigns for IADT and so it kept popping up and so it kind of...I went with interior design."

In addition to Rachel, other participants also shared how and why they discovered and chose to attend IADT. Stephanie, who learned about IADT through a friend shared:

> I wanted to do something different with my life, and I always had been interested in interior design, so that's when I started. I had a friend that lived up in Chicago, so I kind of wanted to move closer to her so that I could just ... And I wanted to move on with my life and do something different, and that's what kind of came to mind why I decided to move to Chicago.

While Natalie who also learned of IADT through a friend shared:

> I was older. I was 25. I was working a full-time job and there was a friend that I met through work and he was going there for, I think it was media production. I think it was something in that area. But, he was going and I was like, huh. Okay. Let me give them a call and let me see what goes from there.

Through this initial interview questioning, a wide range of marketing techniques were revealed by participants as having been used by IADT. Table 2, below, summaries the responses by participants specific to how they discovered IADT.

Table 2

Summary of Participant Discovery of IADT, n=15

Participant	Internet	TV	Friend	Other
Amy	X			
Stephanie			X	
Sofia	X			
Lauren	X			
Emily	X	X		
Rachel	X			X
Jennifer	X			
Linda				X
Melissa	X			
Anna	X			
Nathan	X			
Natalie			X	
Ragan				X
Samantha		X		
Matt	X			

Note: Participants 6 and 8 discovered IADT through print-based advertising located in or on public transportation.
Note: Ragan discovered IADT through advertising mailed by the institution.

Career exploration and career choice. In an effort to develop understanding of how students made career decisions and how they were taking steps to construct careers, participants were asked to discuss their educational pursuits prior to attending IADT. Of the fifteen participants, four (Sofia, Nathan, Natalie, and Ragan) indicated that they had made IADT their first choice for post-secondary education. Sofia indicated that her grandfather had been an architect and, because of those family ties, she had known this was her intended career trajectory. Once having arrived in the United States, she began to make plans toward that goal by enrolling at IADT. Likewise, Nathan also had familial connections to a career in design; Nathan's older brother was an architect. After completing a stint in the military, Nathan indicated his desire to pursue a creative career and, with the help of military educational benefits, had chosen IADT to fulfill this aspiration. Natalie had delayed enrolling in post-secondary education, choosing first to work for nearly a decade prior to seeking out additional education and cited that the required student loans for higher education were an initial deterrent. Natalie also shared the influence of media and specifically movies and television programming had informed her career direction:

> I'm really influenced by television and movies, but there was that movie with Mel Gibson, "What Women Really Want." And, Helen Hunt was ... It was like this whole creative media position she held. And, I was like, "That's so cool." Being able to think creatively on how to provide something to someone. Like, if somebody wanted to sell Nutella. How do you get people to look at that, and what

> creative ways, and commercials, and marketing, and prints, and… So, that really inspired intrigued me when I was in high school.

This influence seemed to continue with Natalie also sharing what had inspired her just prior to enrolling at IADT:

> It was kind of when the whole TLC Trading Spaces was popular...and, I was like watching that. And I was like, oh, I liked it. And then, that's kind of what influenced me more. But, I always knew that I wanted something creative. And so, now I'm thinking of other things later on in my life too. But, it's, like I said, it's always been the creative aspect. I never wanted to be a lawyer, or doctor, or anything. I was like, oh, I want to be in the creative field.

Ragan, while having no immediate familial connections to design, indicated that she had taken a construction class in high school and acknowledged her interest in a creative career. Sofia, Nathan, and Ragan also spoke about academic rigor and their lack of interest in a career in architecture given their perception of that profession at the time. Sofia, Nathan, and Ragan considered interior design to be an acceptable alternative with potentially better job prospects following graduation.

While four participants chose IADT as their first option for post-secondary education, the remaining eleven participants all explored other opportunities prior to enrolling at IADT. Four of those eleven participants shared that they had completed some type of associate's degree at a community college prior to enrolling at IADT. Samantha, who had completed studies in three different fields, shared her experience as:

> "Oh, accounting. I can do this." So, it was something that I had the ability to do. I wasn't in love with it, but I was like, "Well, I'll make money. I'll have a job. I'm sure I'll go somewhere in a few years after accounting." And then afterwards, I was like, "Okay, accounting isn't cutting it. I can do it, but I'm too bored to even pay attention." And so, I did do the year of small business management, and it was great until I found myself and that I was not the best all-around person for a small business management position. So, I was just like, my thought about criminal justice, because I had always had a...in the back of my mind, I always wanted to join the Army. I tried to join the Army after I was a senior in high school. I was accepted to West Point, but the governor did not get my papers in, so that kind of stopped everything. And my father was a police officer in Phoenix. And so I just always had the military or police in my family, and I was like, "I can do this." And justice was a huge thing, equality. And so I went through criminal justice and when I was in there, I met my husband, and I did a horrible thing, which was, I stopped doing what I wanted to do, and only paid attention to him, and I was dumb and young, and I quit school.

Matt had attended two different institutions prior to enrolling at IADT and shared his experiences as:

> I studied architectural technology at Harper College. I was only there, I think, a year, but I had enough general credits from my experience at NIU [Northern Illinois University] previously, which was also about a year. So, I actually got a Certificate of Architectural Technology, for whatever that's worth. I got

> something out of that. Yeah, so, I was really into architecture and buildings and space, but I couldn't find what capacity would keep my attention and inspire me.

Linda had also completed studies at an institution prior to enrolling at IADT and shared her interests and experiences from high school onward as:

> When I was in high school I wanted to be a marine biologist. And then something just fizzled and I was just no longer interested in marine life, things like that. And then I always had a passion for drawing, and I did get my first degree in fine arts. And from there there's always that comparison of, "Oh, you're going to be a starving artist, or you're going to become a shoe salesman," and so even though I graduated with a fine arts degree I felt like I still needed something a little bit more stable. Not knowing what interior designers made or did was just kind of like, "Oh, okay well that sounds kind of neat."

Likewise, Emily shared that she had completed coursework at a community college but was still searching for a career direction afterwards:

> You know, when I finished community college, I really honestly had no idea what I wanted to do. I just knew it was something I wanted...I wanted to be in a creative field. In a field where I thought that I could be successful, though.
>
> *Fine arts.*

The experience of exploring the fine arts was common among participants yet not all pursued this and completed coursework toward a certificate or degree. Amy shared her experience as:

> I first kind of landed on interior design it started with NIU, I was doing fine arts there and enjoying the classes. I had done a semester in speech therapy, just trying to figure out what I would be interested in, what I'd be good at… I'd always done fine arts classes throughout high school, and junior college, and then at NIU, so I was really just trying to find something that related to fine arts, but that I could build a career with. Just getting my bachelors in just fine arts classes, I considered doing that and then continuing on, but that's kind of how I came to the realization that I wanted something that I could work with my bachelors right away…kind of more focused on a career path, getting all the classes you need, still having some architecture and history classes and all that, but being more focused on having a career, and finalizing it that way.

Similarly, Lauren was thinking about career opportunities up front and shared the following:

> I originally wanted to go into fine art and decided that design is a better career choice rather than a starving artist plan. So, I looked into doing interior design. I actually went to a university for a year and decided it wasn't really for me. So, I took a year off and then looked into doing a more core study instead of having to apply to a program and waiting to get in and that kind of thing. So, I found IADT and I was living out of Illinois at the time and I wanted to get back. So, I said, "Oh, I'll look into this." And went for it and decided I could graduate in the four years that my parents required me to graduate in. I really liked that it was a focused trade school, basically, but still getting your bachelor's degree.

Three other participants found design and the possibility of a creative career later in their exploration of careers after having first explored in non-art fields. To be noted is the influence of television programming on Jennifer and Melissa which seems to have led them to pursue interior design as a career opportunity. Jennifer shared:

> I grew up in a small town where it was a little bit more typical for you to go to school to be a teacher or a doctor or sort of more those traditional things. There was no real emphasis on the arts and so I never really knew about design in high school, none of my family members knew anything about it, and so I went to school of psychology first at the University of Minnesota and it wasn't until I kind of got into that that I realized I didn't want to do that and then spent some time thinking that, I actually really like this thing called interior design, and I kind of grew up in the time of Trading Spaces had started to come on TV, and so that was sort of what I thought it was and did a little bit of research.

Melissa complements this perspective of the influence of television on her career trajectory with her story:

> When I decided to get back into school, I couldn't see myself being a teacher. And I was okay well I have all of these areas of knowledge. I have amazing people skills from my restaurant industry experience. I have psychology background. Where do I really create a place of focus where I can utilize all aspects and interior design became one of those. You know what, I can probably utilize all of those and make a little bit of money doing it with a flexible, not the same routine everyday which I was used to being in the restaurant industry. HGTV was kicking

> it, right. They were killing it and it was really popular at that time and I'm sure that they had some sort of an influence on me. Whether or not I knew it at the time, but in retrospect I would say that it probably did.

Rachel, who acknowledged her loss of interest in studying in other fields, shared the following:

> At the time that I applied to the school I was studying social science and English at a different school and I kinda lost interest or any desire to keep studying that. And, so I wanted something more creative and IADT sounded really great because it had offered this awesome location, where you are by these historic buildings.

Finally, Anna who immigrated to the United States shared her story of career exploration and ultimately arriving at a career in a creative field:

> I didn't feel comfortable teaching with English being my second language. So decided to go into nursing. And I did enroll in a community college in the suburbs of Chicago, going into nursing. And just realized it's not something I could do all my life. It just became very boring very fast. It didn't engage me enough I would say. I did an internship also before that interlude, at the hospital, and here I just couldn't see myself doing this day in, day out.

and

> I was also very, in a way, a lucky child that my parents dragged me to any art museum and any town all over Europe for my entire childhood for various occasions. So, I was always exposed to those things. It didn't dawn on me to

> combine all these things into interior design. It actually was suggested by my mother that why don't you look into interior design. It didn't dawn to me to combine fine arts and architecture as a career, I always thought it was something that was just a hobby. So that's how I came to interior design and I was in my late 20s when I came to the conclusion.

Table 3, below, summarizes the experiences of participants prior to enrolling at IADT. The table illustrates which participants had enrolled at other institutions prior to IADT as well as indicating which participants had delayed post-secondary education and why.

Table 3

Summary of Participant Educational Experiences, n=15

Participant	Prior Post-Secondary	Delayed Enrollment-Military	Delayed Enrollment-Work	Delayed Enrollment-Family
Amy	X (1)			
Stephanie	X (1)			
Sofia				
Lauren	X (1)			
Emily	X (1)			
Rachel	X (2)			

Table 3 continued

Jennifer	X (1)				
Linda	X (1)				
Melissa	X (1)				
Anna	X (2)				X
Nathan		X			
Natalie			X		
Ragan					
Samantha	X (3)				
Matt	X (2)				

Note: Parenthetical following "X" indicates the number of other programs or institutions a participant enrolled in prior to enrolling at IADT.

Beyond advertising to marketing benefits. While some participants reflected on a direct memory related to institutional marketing, it was not possible, by way of this study, to conclude whether participants simply did not remember such marketing or if they had been perhaps subconsciously influenced by the marketing they had experienced. This research did reveal though, that IADT had promoted other components of their portfolio to prospective students as part of the recruiting effort. Through the interview process, nearly every participant revealed that accreditation was an evaluation criterion for them in their search for and consideration of where to study interior design. Lauren, for

example, suggested that accreditation along with other key terms were part of the actual search phrasing used:

> Probably "accredited" and ... What am I trying to say? Like career-focused, trade school, those probably keywords. Probably like, "Get your degree," and "three years" or something. Something like that.

Responding with a critical tone of reflection, Rachel recognized IADT's use of accreditation as a marketing tool:

> They would tell you things that sounded really great, right? Sounds like stuff that other schools have and so they, you know, are on equal footing with other schools.

Likewise, a second component of IADT's promotional package to students was what IADT referred to as the continuous education benefit. For this institution, continuous education was the concept that graduates could return to the institution and audit classes, for free. This benefit was revealed to different participants at different times during their investigation of IADT. For example, Amy shared:

> I remember when I met with the rep to interview and kind of learn about the school, he talked a lot about continuing education, and how you can take continuing classes as technology changes, and I thought that was really interesting.

Sofia shared a similar scenario of learning about IADT's continuous education benefit but the tone of her voice and the phrasing used in describing the scenario revealed Sofia's frustration about IADT and their marketing tactics. Sofia shared:

> They said I'd be able to come back for life to get free classes. They were saying it's important in the interior design field because there's always new technology that comes out, yada yada. We always have to take refresher classes. I was like, "Oh, lemme go to this school, then."

Sofia also shared that IADT was the only school in Chicago to offer such a scenario making IADT especially interesting to her. Likewise, Melissa shared a similar scenario of decision-making:

> I looked at other schools and when I landed it was because of the continuing education program. I knew that technology was always going to be advancing and I wouldn't be able to keep up with it without that and that was what made me choose that.

Rachel shared a common sentiment witnessed among the participants and seemed especially astute and critical of the for-profit model and recognized how they were using marketing:

> I kind of knew that they weren't the best choice as far as a Chicago design school but, again, they market themselves in different ways that seem really interesting to people who don't necessarily have a lot of money to continually take classes to stay up to date. You have this promise of continual education for free, which is a really big draw. But, yeah, I think I knew that they weren't on necessarily the same quality as the Columbia College or like a non-profit or state-owned school. Like I knew there was something wrong, but you always know that they're...what that means when they're a for-profit.

Rachel went on to elaborate on this point and further discussed how her decision to enroll at IADT resulted from an especially appealing perception of the kind of opportunity IADT was offering:

> I was looking for a change and then there's a school that presented itself as a change-a change to the lower class, at our benefit and so I said, sure, why not? Let's go ahead and do this.

A diverse range of appealing features.

As interviews progressed, students talked about other aspects of the overall portfolio of offerings that were revealed to them that collectively made IADT attractive. Jennifer spoke about open access admission and how the experience of seeking admission to IADT was encouraging because there were no required entrance exam test scores. For Jennifer, the application process and wait time for an admission decision were noticeably compressed. Jennifer contrasted this to her experience with a public institution and how "easy" IADT had made it seem and how this eagerness to admit students made a positive impact on her. Jennifer lamented that she later questioned this policy when observing the difference in skills and abilities between she and other students. Along with open admission, Samantha also discussed IADT's credit transfer policy in relation to her experience at other institutions by sharing:

> Other schools would not accept or transfer credits from previous work, they were only going to take 18 of my hundred and some-odd credits from my school. So they weren't even going to transfer my whole associate degree, they weren't even

> going to take that. So it was almost like I was going to have to start all over, and then I was just like, “No. Columbia, absolutely not.” IADT would though.

Seeming to build on a recognition related to school reputation and character as suggest by Rachel, Samantha also mentioned this in her discussion of the decision-making process:

> I heard of The Art Institute, but I didn't even try there because I was like, "I'm not even that good, so I'm just not even going to bother." But with the Academy [IADT], it was almost like, "Okay. I can do this. It sounds like they can help me fulfill my bachelor's degree." And so I just went in and interviewed, and the guy, and I wish I could remember his name. I know it's on paper at my house, but he was just so excited that I brought in my portfolio and I got to sit in on a class. It was crazy how fast it happened.

Rachel concluded her sharing on a somber note, “Yeah, there was a message about kind of, it insinuated there was a better choice,” and that recruiters seemed to fall back on location as a primary decision-making factor, “hey you know if you do design school with us we're a Chicago school, kind of connections and possibilities and doors opening.” While location did come up with other participants as an important consideration for reasons including proximity to friends and family or the desire to escape family, Rachel’s sharing seemed to offer location as a last resort proposition to latch on to.

Students imagine careers. To conclude the discussion of career choice, participants were asked to mentally travel back to the time prior to enrollment at IADT and to recount their expectations for a career in interior design. Participant responses varied across the spectrum of possibilities.

As reported earlier, two participants, Sofia and Nathan, had generally more familiarity with the profession given that close family members were already involved in the industry. Their vision for the future, therefore, was very specific in terms of the kinds of roles they imagined for themselves and even how they would construct those careers, post-graduation. Likewise, Linda was already working with an interior designer so her vision was very consistent with her current role and education was, again, simply a path to achieving legitimacy as a designer.

Not all participants were either as specific or as determined about a career path. Jennifer, for example, shared the following:

> Gosh. Gosh, I don't know what I thought it would be. I don't really remember having that thought or to be honest, I can't really remember if I had a clear picture of what I thought it was gonna be like.

In a similar fashion, Ragan shared that she had not necessarily envisioned what the future looked like and rather shared that she was more concerned about simply attaining a job and less focused on what that job would be. Ragan shared:

> I guess I was under the impression my first job out of college was going to be whatever I can get my hands on.

and further

> Honestly, I don't really think I knew. I knew some of my options obviously.

Of the fifteen participants, four recounted that location was at least part of the consideration for career direction beyond specific roles or activities related to a career. Stephanie, for example, shared:

> I don't think I really...I've always thought of moving to Florida, and it ended up happening for me, but I always envisioned working somewhere warm, but I didn't have a specific, like a place I suppose. I didn't think of anybody to work for. I wasn't thinking of that.

Similarly, Samantha shared:

> I'm in the Chicago area, and this is one of the best places to be, to be a designer. I mean, there's so much history, especially with design, and of course, I really loved Frank Lloyd Wright, and I was so lucky to be close enough to visit his houses, and look at his designs almost on an everyday basis. And so I couldn't think really, of a better place to start as the Merchandise Mart, you know, start working in one of those businesses, and if something came of it, maybe I tried to venture out and go to one of the larger companies.

With enthusiasm, Samantha continued:

> Oh my gosh, this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to live in Chicago and work for one of these designers, and my husband and I are either going to live in the Loop or…you know, we really didn't think of living too far into the suburbs, but I didn't have any children yet.

Ultimately, Samantha's sharing turned to thoughts about lifestyle and shared the following:

> The lifestyle would be, we had what we needed, we were doing what we really wanted to do, and things were kind of finally going to fall into place.

In a similar manner, Lauren also suggested a sort of lifestyle related to work roles and envisioned the following path:

> And my pipe dream thought was, "I'm not going to be in a cubicle, I'm not going ... I'm going to be traveling and I'm going to work with a bunch of different people" and I envisioned working for an actual interior design firm. Working with people, more residential and working with people closely with their...doing home design. And what people think of when you say interior design, I think that's what I was envisioning.

Matt, who had previously identified as being influenced by television programing, revisited this influence when speaking to the idea of his future career:

> I guess I pictured a life like Candace Olson! I pictured I would have probably a design firm, more like I would be working at a design firm. Probably more involved in the city. Very different goal in mind than where you end up, I guess! You can never plan, but I suppose it was more like TV show life, living in an urban setting, doing maybe some commercial spaces.

While some participants ventured to discussions about location and lifestyle, others seemed more grounded in activities of work and the type of scenario they aspired to. Emily, for example, shared:

> You know, I think initially I imagined myself working for an architectural firm and, I guess just living an ordinary, normal life. And when I say normal I mean normal pay, not living this extravagant lifestyle.

Similarly, Rachel shared:

> Thee goal at that point and time was that I was going to land a job with some sort of firm that did commercial spaces. So restaurants, bars, offices maybe. Just more commercial leaning firm than a solely residential firm. So I would say nothing too spectacular, maybe enough to get by and work my way up the design ladder.

The above findings, represent a summary of how participants remembered thinking about their future careers at the time of enrollment. At the close of the next section of this chapter, Table 4 is presented as a comparison of the findings above to the career reflections presented later in this chapter as part of the post-graduation reflection of careers.

Findings related to Research Question #2. In addition to research question #1: "How do students translate FPCU marketing into career choices and construct careers?", this research also intended to answer a second research question: "How have post-graduation experiences compared to enrollment expectations specific to career decisions and career construction?" In an attempt to answer this question, participants were asked to reflect on their feelings and desires at the time of graduation. As a whole, students affirmed the desire to pursue interior design as a career. In other words, students either found their expectations of interior design as a career to have been met or their expectations shifted but interior design as a career choice and direction was still desirable. While participants indicated their desire to work in the field of interior design, the range of responses illustrate the post-graduation experiences for participants, their feelings about their career preparation, and a reflexive consideration about a degree from

IADT. This section concludes by sharing findings about how some continue to construct their careers, both in the field of interior design and in other careers trajectories.

Post-graduation reflection. Several participants spoke generally about their experiences. Linda shared:

> I just felt like I was getting the foundation that I needed to legitimately call myself an interior designer. The courses themselves I felt like prepared me to hold my own in the world of interior design.

Emily was generally happy with the decision to pursue interior design as a career but shared few specifics about the IADT experience or how it had influenced her construction of a career. Emily stated: “I'm very happy for it, for making that decision.” Some participants were more specific and shared detailed accounts about how they constructed their careers. Matt, for example, shared:

> I didn't want to run my own firm, and do all that. I guess I was more focused on baby steps. I wanted to get my foot in the door to a design firm or maybe help out, maybe answer the phones or whatever I could do to just kind of be in the environment. Then, I kind of ended up at the Home Depot kitchen design for a little while which was not quite the design experience I was planning for, but it was a start.

Other participants conveyed their interest in employment but shared their struggle to find the type of employment they had envisioned. Natalie, for example, shared:

> Yes, I was. But when we graduated in '08, there was no jobs. So it was a really difficult time and I think a lot ... You probably may hear this from a lot of people,

> it was difficult getting that dream job that you think you're gonna get. So, no I did not work for an architecture firm like I wanted to, and I think we kind of just took jobs as we could. 'Cause I had tried getting jobs at firms and even when I was doing the internship part, my whole thing was the firm. I want to work for a firm. And, it was extremely hard. And, I was sending in my portfolio from school and writing cover letters, and writing the companies. And so, when I realized that I couldn't get into a firm with an internship ... "Okay, you don't have to pay me." But, I still couldn't get in, I was starting to be like, again, reality started settling in a little bit. Like, okay.

At another point in the interview, Natalie reiterated her experience after graduation:

> So, when I graduated, I was like, oh, this is gonna be so hard. So, again, I applied to all these firms, and nothing. And, I even had people help me as far as when I was working full-time, we had an architect, 'cause I worked at a corporate building, and we had an architect come and they're the ones that purchased the cubicles and the seats and everything. And so, I kind of reached out to them. I was like, "Hey, I don't know if you guys remember me, but I worked at this building."

Other participants talked about the challenges of finding employment upon graduation and the process involved in finding the right position. Melissa, for example, shared:

> I was out of that professional job market for, I think, two years. Maybe a year and a half. So, I've always worked. I was always a bartender, even when I was in school. So I never left that but then I also when I couldn't find something at a commercial firm...I found that to be very intimidating and hard to get a job in.

> The market was really bad for that. They weren't hiring and so I took a job selling furniture. Walter E. Smithe. I worked there for ten months or something. I hated it. It was like the worse. All the while, I'm keeping my bartending job. And then I quit there, took some time off, and then I found a job in cabinetry. So, residential kitchen and bath industry and I've been there ever since. I believe I got that job in 2012.

One participant, Lauren, shared her frustration with finding employment and spoke about this framed by IADT's marketing specific to career services:

> I think, as a student we had, or I had expectations to get that job right out of school and the career person to help you with your career path and what are you going to do. And so part of me faults the Academy for giving that impression. But also I don't know if I can fault them completely because of the time and the economy at the time.

Ragan shared her experience of a career in interior design. In her sharing, this participant also talked about the realities of interior design as a career choice and her observations about other paths that she saw former classmates pursuing:

> I still can't really imagine myself doing anything else, but at the same token, it's not the easiest industry to work in. I wouldn't necessarily recommend people go into it unless I feel like they're just super passionate about it, and are willing to do whatever it takes to make it in this field. I don't know. I feel like a lot of people that I know from school, or at least from the field, wind up doing more of sales-type jobs. It's still within the industry, but it's more sales-driven. I guess for them,

> it might be fine, or for other people it might be okay, but that's not something that I was ever interested in doing.

Of the fifteen participants in this study, three expressed passionately negative opinions about IADT, about their decision to study interior design at IADT, and ultimately their views about interior design as a career path. Sofia shared:

> I feel like when I graduated, I was not even remotely prepared for what I needed to be prepared for out in the world, if I would've actually wanted to succeed in the interior design business, I was absolutely not prepared. In my naïve mind I thought that I would be able to work for a firm where I'd be able to go back and forth between Germany to do projects. And that, I thought I would start out doing some projects with my grandpa and then build a portfolio. And then start a small business in Chicago. But then my grandpa passed, the last year of me being in a program, so that fell flat. Then, once I graduated, I built a tiny little business in interior design, whatever, but it quite fast fell apart, because we didn't realize how much work it was…I had envisioned it very differently than how the reality actually was. I envisioned that I would be traveling back and forth from America and Germany doing projects in both countries, working for a smaller firm. I didn't envision going to a bigger firm and being a CAD monkey or something like that. I thought I would be part of a smaller firm where I would have more responsibilities, but also more freedom, like creative freedom and whatnot. I kind of gave up, because I was not really prepared.

Further, Sofia expressed remorse about her experience at IADT:

> I would've loved to be able to have, to have a real degree, because I literally feel like I don't have a degree. Even though I walked on stage and I was handed a degree and everything like that, in my mind, because my school was so unprofessional and crappy, I just feel like I don't even have a degree. So, overall, not a very positive reflection on the Academy.

Rachel shared her initial thoughts about constructing a career in interior design after graduation but also revealed being similarly disillusioned and shared the following:

> I think that when I was studying design during IADT, the goal at that point and time was that I was going to land a job with some sort of firm that did commercial spaces. So restaurants, bars, offices maybe. Just more commercial leaning firm than a solely residential firm. So I would say nothing too spectacular, maybe enough to get by and work my way up the design ladder. Yeah. I don't think I would've gone through all that and the kind of torturing of a student. I did wanna go into interior design, I think that even at graduation that was kind of the goal, right? Somehow I was gonna land a job in interior design and I actually, for probably about a year, kind of looking for that position that was gonna get me in the door, that was going to…yeah, that launching pad to climb up the design ladder and I interviewed for a bunch of places, interviewed for a bunch of different parts of interior design and it just didn't work out, it wasn't what I was thinking it was going to be.

The third participant, Samantha also struggled after graduation with finding employment and the fact that she had earned a bachelor's degree for a specific career track and yet

stated, during the interview, that she did not feel prepared for employment as a result of several unsuccessful job interviews. Participant14 narrated her experience as follows:

> So, even with my internship, with helping build out the fifth floor of the academy, and being on that, which was an amazing experience that I still love that I was able to do that, they were just like, "Well, you just don't know enough. If you can try and work harder on the software, if you can try and work harder on learning a lot of the design concepts..." I guess maybe I wasn't the best student that I thought I was, so I just didn't feel prepared to be out in the design world.

Samantha's comments are unique from those of Sofia and Rachel in that she finds fault in herself and her abilities while Sofia and Rachel implicate IADT. To this point, Jennifer surfaces concerns about rigor and administrative practices at IADT and shared the following specific to career preparation and potential implications for employment after graduation:

> Well, I think my only thing that kind of as I got further into the program and then closer to graduation was just some kind of feeling of ... How do I explain this? Like you'd be presenting and you feel like you've put in all the time and effort and you come up with this great project and you go to present it and most of your colleagues have done all the same stuff and they're really great, and then you get one or two people in there that, in my humble opinion, had not done a great job or had bad projects or just not great at all, and just sort of thinking, "Okay, so this person is gonna graduate and I have to compete with them for a job." What does that mean for this program and the degree I'm getting and the name that's gonna

> be on my degree? What does that mean if this person is graduating with the same exact thing that I am, but they seem galaxies away from what maybe me and some of my other colleagues in class are doing.

Continued career construction. As an extension of the previous line of inquiry specific to post-graduation reflections, participants were also asked how they viewed their career trajectory, how they saw their careers continuing to unfold, and how they continued or planned to continue the construction of their careers.

Starting first with individuals cited in the previous section, Samantha lamented that she had stopped searching for a career in the interior design field and had started a family. Her intent was to later return to school for something other than interior design:

> I have a three-year-old and a five-and-a-half-year-old. So, my five-and-a-half is in kindergarten, three-year-old is in preschool, so once they get like six or seven ...well, especially my three-year-old, I'd like to get some more formal training and education, just because I do want to go back to work after my kids, when I can.

Framed by a degree of regret, Rachel indicated that she was still interested in interior design but did not see things working out for her in that career path and shared:

> It's definitely something that I love to do, again it's kind of going by the way-side, unfortunately. So I decided to go back to school and I knew that I was always going to go back to school and try something else. There's so much business in everything that numbers matter and so I when you kind of know about business you understand the choices that a company's making. I decided to go back and get a degree in business. So yeah, not really near interior design at the moment.

Likewise, Sofia, after unsuccessful attempts at employment and starting a small business, stated the following with a obvious note of remorse:

> Then I just kind of gave up, because I was like, "Well, my school is nonexistent now, so I feel like my degree is worthless and I haven't had experience anywhere. And any places that I'm going to be applying for, everybody else that went to the school is also going to be trying to apply to." So then I just kept nannying and then I just kept getting raises where I was nannying. I eventually was just nannying for three families at the same time, when I was actually making more money than my friends that were actually, I have two friends I had that actually did get interior design-related jobs and I was actually making more money than them with nannying. And I was like, "Well, shit, I guess I'm a nanny now full-time and this is my thing." And so I did that for a couple years. And then for the last two years, I've just been a plus size model and I've got my first red carpet premiere in two weeks in Vegas and that was just on PB Germany yesterday and I'm in magazines and all kinds of stuff. Now I don't have to worry about career type thinking anymore, because I have it now. But if I would've ever wanted to do anything interior design-related again, I would've had to go back to school I feel like, all over again.

As with Sofia, Stephanie, also did not find employment in the interior design field following graduation, and had worked as a nanny. Stephanie reported that she had not given up on a career in a related field though, and shared the following:

> I am looking into doing like some professional organizing classes. I don't really know where I'm going to start with that, but that's something I'm looking into as something like a side job right now because the kids are getting older now, so that's going to, that position probably will change within the next few years

Jennifer, who questioned the rigor and administrative practices of IADT went on to study interior design at the graduate level at a school which was also owned and operated by Career Education Corporation, the same parent company which owned and operated the IADT brand. Jennifer shared that she had not been able to secure employment as an interior designer following graduation and saw graduate school as an acceptable alternative. Jennifer was part of the first cohort of students to matriculate at Harrington College of Design in their Master of Interior Design program. Having graduated from a sister institution, the enrollment process at Harrington College of Design was easy and fast and Jennifer progressed through the program and graduated in less than two years.

Having earned two interior design degrees from the same for-profit entity, Jennifer was still not able to secure steady employment as a practicing interior designer and eventually relocated to another state and found employment teaching interior design at an IADT campus.

As an interior design faculty member at an IADT campus, Jennifer shared her experience:

> I actually taught kind of an intro level general study course, so I had all the different programs' students in my course, and that's when I really kind of saw, "Okay, hold on. This person, I'm glad they're here, but this person can barely read or write or do basic math." And I had a student in my class, Intro to Design, that

> didn't know how to use a ruler. I was talking about drafting and what that means and the kid didn't know how to use a ruler. I thought, "Okay, this is crazy. This is not good. Why are you here? You're spending so much money to be here and you're not ready yet. This is absurd," and that's kind of when I first started thinking about it and seeing the really kind of bad stuff about it. Yeah, it just was not ...you started to see on the inside, this is not good. You'd have a student that had multiple, multiple, multiple absences or several just didn't even show up for a test or you wanted to give them a failing grade and administration kind of just, "No, they need to go through. They need to keep going, so push them through" or "Give them the makeup. He'll come in, you'll give him a makeup." And then it's like, "This is crazy. This is not okay. This is not normal," and I only worked there for a couple of quarters.

While teaching interior design, Jennifer did eventually secure a position as an interior designer. That first position lead to other design positions and a move to another state upon which Jennifer reported positively about her career in the practice of interior design.

Ragan, who in the previous section spoke about the determination needed to be successful in an interior design career, had been laid off from a position she enjoyed and had found employment in a similar position for another company but was not as satisfied. Ragan shared the following:

> Ideally, I would like to find something in the same vein as Walgreens [corporate headquarters as a store planner] was. I was working for a perfect company. I've interviewed twice now for two different companies in Nashville, basically being a

> store planner. One of them, I passed up on. They did make me an offer, but I passed on it, and the other one, it was done between me and a friend, and she got it, so I was happy for her. Yeah, that's what I'm looking for, but it's just hard. I feel like I'm being picky. I'm not really sure where I'm going to wind up, but I'm not really...I like the company that I work for, but the work itself is not really what I want to be doing. It's just a lot of red tape and a lot of...It's not very fulfilling, I guess. There's, like I said, not really any creativity that goes into it.

Matt who had earlier wanted to take baby steps into the profession, circled back to the desire for a creative outlet and a career path that allowed for those types of opportunities. Matt shared the following:

> I've been thinking a lot about that [his future], because I do feel I need to move on from this job for many reasons. I don't know where else, or what else I would do. I keep considering other interior kitchen designs, maybe cabinet sales, but I feel like I've got a pretty good set-up now. I have had other, some of the contractors I work with want to start selling cabinets, and they have let me know that if they start a shop, they're going to steal me away! Okay, so I've got all these cabinet sales jobs lined up, hypothetically, but I don't know what else I would want to do. I keep thinking I want to do something more creative, and just focus on making art, but that's not really consistent or realistic. I don't know where the future will take me. I try not to, I guess it's good to have goals, but I try to just go with the flow and see what pops up and where it takes me. The job I have now is just kind of a fluke. I don't know how...it popped up right after I moved back home, and I

> was just happened to be on Craigslist, and I found it. I don't know, it's meant to be. I feel like probably the next thing will come along.

Natalie had shared positive past employment experiences. Specifically, Natalie was encouraged by opportunities to grow in terms of project responsibilities and reported that she had garnered increased respect from supervisors as a result of her work performance. When asked about the future, Natalie shared the following:

> Um, I don't know, honestly. Again, I'm just trying to expose myself to so much and like try different things. And, that's kind of why I'm like doing the freelance thing, 'cause I'm like I think I might like this. And, some of this stuff I'm really liking right now, but I think I'm realized myself that I don't necessarily want to work for a corporation. And, that's exactly where I'm at right now. And, I think I'm all about ... Like, I want to work for a company that I can get behind and that I'm proud to work for. And, I believe in their mission statement. And, I didn't feel that before, but it was all about, okay, what can I gain from this company and what can I learn? And, now, it's more like, you know what? I want to stand behind something that's more substantial and that treats their company's right. Or, their employees right. Because, I've been, like I said, at Sears it was a little, "Okay." Not that we weren't treated right, but at the time we were contractors and we were replaceable and, the company itself was not doing very well. I mean, it's still not doing very well. K-mart and Sears are closing all over and it's like, okay, I don't want this. And, Guitar Centers, they have, like I said, they treated their employees so good. And, they have really fun events. And, they promote inner city schools

> for music class. So, there's a lot of stuff that I love there. It was just like other situations that were ... There's no opportunity to grow and I don't know about management. But, now, I just feel like I just want to expose myself to so many different fields and areas. And, just keeping exploring and keep learning. And, keep going from there. So, it's a little different than what it was in college. 'Cause I was like, oh, I'm gonna have all these amazing things. And, I can see my life. And, now. I'm kinda like, you know what? I'm good where I'm at. I'm just gonna keep pushing myself, but it's not about the materialistic things anymore and the status of where I'm at. It's more like, what am I learning and who am I learning it with? And, am I leaving a good impact on life, and the Earth, and that kind of stuff.

Likewise, Amy was very optimistic about the future and how she had constructed her career to date. Having experienced different roles in the practice of interior design, Amy shared:

> I hope I can keep doing this for a long time. I feel like I'm in a position that I could do it for a long time. I enjoy it, and I would like to continue doing what I'm doing in my position, and I know that's sometimes hard when you're at a company. You have to move up and get more responsibilities as you're there longer, so I think that's a little bit up in the air, because I kind of like where I'm at right now, but that may change in five, ten years, I don't know.

Additionally, Anna shared a similar outlook but also offered what she saw as limitations to the career path. Anna narrated her thoughts as follows:

> I could see myself very much staying where I'm at until I'm about 50. And I could see myself staying with the same company until then. I could see myself retiring at that age. I think every interior designer, and in my role, it would be extremely difficult to stay up on top of technology. And in my role, I'm a client-facing person. I just feel like once you're past your 50s, people might want to hear more of a younger, trendier voice. No matter what you do. I've seen it at my other company, how as a female, it's hard to stay on top in this world. Unless you're acting as an adviser, or a little bit different role, as an interior designer, I think it's very hard to make it into your senior years, especially as a woman.

How participants conceptualized their future.

Finally, participants were asked to talk about their satisfaction with IADT, the future and how their decision to attend IADT had or might have implicated their future, and the continued career construction process. Questions for this final section of the interview process were reflective in nature. Specific to their careers, participants were asked to look to the future given that their alma mater was no longer in existence. Natalie first reflected on her time at IADT and shared the following:

> When I think about the actual learning, and the classes, and the teachers, and the exposure, and being challenged, yes. They were all positive. I wouldn't change any of that, at all.

But continued the discussion with concern about future opportunities to further her education given that IADT was no longer in existence. She foreshadowed issues with the likelihood that credits would not be accepted by other institutions and not being able to

transfer to other institutions. Lauren also brought up this concern. Having already explored going back to school, Lauren shared that she would not be able to transfer her credits from IADT. Revealing the original surprise at learning this, Lauren shared:

> I was trying to think of maybe doing something else. I was transferring transcripts. And they're like, "Oh, these aren't transferrable." And I was like, "I have a bachelor's degree. Shouldn't they all be transferrable?" Hardly any of my credits transferred. Or would've transferred. I was like, "Wait a minute? What? Why?"

Lauren did not elaborate on how this was resolved and appeared not to have pursued it further. Similarly, Amy, who was generally positive about the educational experience, hinted at concerns about the closure of IADT:

> That's a little scary. I mean, I don't know...obviously I still have my degree, and I have a career, but just thinking about that, and how people would perceive that, I think is a little unnerving, but I feel pretty settled in where I'm at, so I don't think I really have to be too concerned with it.

Ragan acknowledged a positive educational experience at IADT, when asked to comment on the school closure, she offered the following:

> I guess that it was a private school, and obviously like I said, there were a lot of good things that fit my needs, but at the same time, it was so expensive. I feel like maybe it just wasn't, that part of it wasn't worth the money. Again, I don't know if I would have been able to get a better education somewhere else that would have fit the needs that I have.

Linda's response complements the positive aspects shared earlier by other interview participants and attributed the school closing to administrative practices and shared the following:

> I'm sad that it's gone, because some of my best friends I've made at the academy. And even though we're not in the same state anymore I do still keep in contact with a good handful. I've become really good friends with some of the instructors. My only one qualm about the school itself, I felt like sometimes they did just take students just to fill the number. 'Cause there was a couple of students in school that I was like, "Oh my goodness, I'm sorry, there's no business," like they had no business being there. I'm sorry, like they just didn't, I almost felt bad for them, because now hearing through the grapevine of what they're doing, it has nothing to do with interior design. I mean one of them is actually a sanitation manager.

Melissa acknowledged her unique situation but also, as with Linda, reflected on how she and others experienced IADT:

> I wouldn't say it was a bad experience but I certainly wouldn't say that it was something that I would recommend to others. I think there are a lot of variables in my journey that others won't have and perhaps theirs will be different. But, knowing my classmates that I graduated with, I know that just being at that school was a struggle in general. So, I wouldn't say it was a bad one, but I wouldn't say it was super awesome and I loved it. I definitely wouldn't say that.

Lastly, Sofia concluded the interview with perhaps the most dire scenario: “If I would've ever wanted to do anything interior design-related again, I would've had to go back to school I feel like, and do it all over again.”

Table 4 is presented here as a summary of the alignment between participants’ pre-enrollment expectations and post-graduation realities as reported by participants. Alignment exists if the pre-enrollment expectations matched the post-graduation realities of interior design as a career. Alignment does not exist if pre-enrollment expectations did not match the post-graduation realities of interior design as a career. The final column of the table reports the participant’s perception of their career as an interior designer. It is important to note that alignment does not exist for all participants and yet, the interior design career perception, as reported by participant, may still be positive in some cases. This finding illustrates that the career as an interior designer was not what the participant had imagined yet they were still happy with the career outcome.

Table 4

Summary of Career Alignment Between Pre-Enrollment Expectations and Post-Graduation Realities, n=15

Participant	Alignment Exists	Alignment Does Not Exist	Participant Perception of Career Outcome
Amy	X		Positive
Stephanie		X	Negative
Sofia		X	Negative
Lauren		X	Positive
Emily	X		Positive
Rachel		X	Negative
Jennifer	-	-	Positive
Linda	X		Positive
Melissa		X	Positive
Anna	X		Positive
Nathan		X	Positive
Natalie	X		Positive
Ragan	-	-	Positive
Samantha		X	Negative
Matt		X	Positive

Note: Jennifer and 13 reported no pre-enrollment expectation.

Document Analysis

This study was informed primarily by interviews with graduates of the interior design programs at IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago. Interviews with study participants revealed two topics for further examination through additional research methods:

1. Participants of this study reported that the continuous education benefit marketed by IADT was a determining factor in their decision to attend IADT over other institutions.
2. Two-thirds of the fifteen participants reported frustration with securing employment after graduation. As an institution focused on career education, this drew into question how IADT had marketed career services to potential students.

As an inquiry intended to better understand how student decision-making specific to career choice and career construction was affected by marketing of for-profit institutions, document analysis of marketing collateral was used as part of this investigation. Given that both IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago were no longer in operation, a review and analysis of the marketed benefits and services, as cited by participants, relied on archived materials including web pages and a program catalog available via the internet.

Active web-based resources. An initial Google search revealed that a version of the IADT-Chicago website was still accessible via the internet. While participants did not

indicate where or how they were informed about the continuous education benefit or career services, participants had suggested that an online search for educational opportunities was part of their discovery of IADT. A review of the various resources available via the www.iadt.edu/chicago website showcased some of what IADT considered to be important considerations for students. Specifically, the *Why Students Choose IADT* page highlighted a range of perceived benefits marketed to potential students and included the career services benefit previously identified through participant interviews. While the continuous education benefit is not one of the benefits listed, career services is listed under the heading, *A Commitment to Your Career Development.* It is important to note the specific phrasing "We are committed to providing you with career assistance for as long as you choose to take advantage of it," a statement which seemed to support the career education claim of IADT and their focus on job training but countered Lauren's experience. Lauren had shared the following specific to career construction support:

> I think, as a student we had, or I had expectations to get that job right out of school and the career person to help you with your career path and what are you going to do. And so part of me faults the Academy for giving that impression. But also I don't know if I can fault them completely because of the time and the economy at the time. But you go in there and you're like, "Oh, everyone's placed in a job, right when they graduate." Well that wasn't really the case. So I think we had a skewed vision of what real world is gonna be like.

Further review of the www.iadt.edu/chicago website did not reveal a reference to the continuous education benefit as identified by nearly every participant who took part in this study. The absence of details about the continuous education benefit from the *Why Students Chose IADT* list seemed to signal an oversight on the part of IADT about how such an institutional benefit had influenced students and their enrollment decision-making specific to IADT. Delving deeper into this website, several hyperlinks to pages beyond the home page returned error messages, presumably an indication that the website had been partially decommissioned at the time of campus closure. However, the hyperlink to a PDF of the course catalog appeared to not have been disabled correctly as the PDF was briefly available for download before the hyperlink returned an error message. The downloadable PDF was a link to a Sanford Brown-Chicago program catalog dated 2014-2015. Recalling that Sanford Brown was a sister institution of IADT under the corporate ownership of the Career Education Corporation and that the IADT brand was ultimately rebranded as Sanford Brown, this catalog did provide some insight to the continuous education benefit. In the Table of Contents of this catalog, under the Student Services Information heading, is listed "Continuous Education Benefit Available to Alumni" to be found on page 12 of the catalog. The wording of the benefit was as follows:

> Alumni are welcome to audit the courses from their original program(s) of study, provided class space exists. The audited courses must be part of the program from which they graduated.

> There is no tuition cost to alumni who choose to audit one or more courses. Books, supplies, and fees are the responsibility of the alumnus. Alumni who wish to audit a course for non-credit must obtain an Audit Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The audited course name and "AU" grade designation will be recorded on the official transcript. Financial aid is not available when course are audited. Alumni with outstanding financial obligations to the Institution are not eligible to audit courses until such balances are paid in full.

Other than this catalog reference, no other mention of the continuous education benefit was discovered on the www.iadt.edu/chicago site.

Webpage archive. Further investigation into the web history of IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago was conducted using the virtual web archive service, webarchive.org. While not a complete history of every page of a website's history, this archive did contain 112 archived web pages for the website www.iadtchicago.edu captured between the dates of August 5, 2003 and September 27, 2016. Likewise, this archive also included 86 captured web pages from the www.iadtschaumburg.com website dating from March 18, 2004 and August 4, 2018. Similar to previously stated findings, a review of these archived web pages revealed no mention of the continuous education benefit and only a similar, cursory detailing of career services. The archived web pages did not allow for hyperlinking to date-specific program catalogs as was reviewed in the previous section so any possible consistent strategy for documentation of the continuous education benefit could not be established.

It is worth noting that a review of the IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago web histories reveals strong consistency in information shared through the website across time. During the time spans reviewed, year over year, the wording used to describe programs, campuses, locations, and other institution-related information changed in only subtle ways. The most pronounce differences between the various pages appeared to be in the visual branding elements. For example, the logo for IADT evolved subtly over time as did the color blocking of the website transitioning from blue, grey, and black to red, grey, and black. Likewise, there were subtle variations in how information was presented. On May 9, 2008 for example, the same information presented under the page heading of *Why Students Choose IADT* had been showcased on the IADT website but the title was then: *10 Reasons to Join IADT*. On May 27, 2010, that same list was presented as: *Top 10 Reasons to Attend*. Based on this review and given the findings from participant interviews on the topic of the continuous education benefit, it could be safe to assume the benefit, as described earlier, also remained consistent over time.

The findings from the document analysis portion of this study provide some evidence of how a key benefit offered by IADT, as identified by participant interviews, was marketed to students by the institution. The findings support, as suggest by participant interview responses, that additional communication about such benefits took place through verbal communication between campus representatives and potential students during recruiting events. Given that transcripts are not available from recruiting events, the only supporting documentation of the continuous education benefit was the program catalog as detailed above.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shared the findings from the reflections of fifteen participants involved in this study as well as the findings from the subsequent semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the fifteen participants. With the intent of better understanding how participants made career choices and constructed careers, the findings suggest a range of experiences for participants, from positive to negative. Through their sharing, participants revealed the influence of institutional marketing, family, friends, and television. Participants revealed their motivations specific to career choice, their anticipation for career outcomes, and the realities of their careers following graduation. Through not only the words used to describe their experiences but also the tone of voice in narrating those experiences, participants helped create context for their journey to and through post-secondary education and specifically the role that marketing by the for-profit IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago played in their decision-making about careers and their associated construction of careers.

In this chapter, I have also shared the findings from the review of the then active IADT-Chicago website and archived IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago webpages accessed through the webpage archive service webarchive.org.

In Chapter 5, I will reflect on the findings presented in this chapter and draw conclusions supported by these findings. I will frame that discussion using career construction theory and share possible implications as a result of this analysis. I will conclude the study with suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this concluding chapter, I reflect on and discuss the findings of this study and their connections to career construction theory, the theoretical framework used to structure this analysis. I also offer recommendations based on those findings as well as suggest future research in an effort to further the understanding of the student experience in for-profit higher education. This chapter concludes with a summary and closing thoughts about the study of for-profit higher education.

Purpose of Study

As a qualitative study, this research was undertaken with the intent to help fill a gap in the existing literature on for-profit education. Overwhelmingly in the existing literature, students had been represented as a quantitative measure of the success or failure of for-profit institutions. This quantitative understanding had historically then been used as part of the critique of the for-profit segment of higher education, both positive and negative, but revealed few details about the actual student experiences at those institutions.

The design of this study was unique in that the student experience was placed at the center of the investigation. Through the design of this study, I focused on graduates of two campus locations, Schaumburg and Chicago, of the now defunct for-profit institution the International Academy of Design and Technology (IADT). Participants of the study were interviewed in an attempt to contextualize their experiences in making career decisions before, during, and after matriculation at IADT. In this way, I sought a different sort of understanding about the contemporary for-profit segment of higher education.

Rather than focusing on the operational aspects of for-profit institutions and their disputed nimble or predatory existence in post-secondary education (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2015), I was focused on the student experience at these two campus locations with the intent of a more informed discussion about for-profit higher education and the role of profit-driven institutions in post-secondary education in the United States.

Research Questions

At the onset, two questions were established to guide this study:

Q1. How do students translate FPCU marketing into career choices and construct careers?

Q2. How have post-graduation experiences compared to enrollment expectations specific to career decisions and career construction?

At the conclusion of this study, the research findings answered these questions and will be discussed in the pages that follow.

Researcher's Experience

My career as an educator in the post-secondary setting began at a for-profit institution. Having since left for-profit education, I had often reflected on my experiences teaching in for-profit higher education and thought about the students I taught during that time. During my tenure in the for-profit segment of higher education and since my departure, many for-profit institutions had been plagued by lawsuits which argued deceptive and illegal practices by those institutions specific to their recruitment and enrollment of students, the data reported about those students, and many other unethical administrative concerns. As a result, several for-profit institutions had been forced to

close and continued to close even at the time of this writing. Because of this, I had often wondered how the students I taught at the beginning of my career felt about their experiences in higher education. I was also curious about how the career-education model had influenced the decisions made by those former students specific to careers. And lastly, I wanted to know if and how those former students had transitioned to careers after graduation. The argument often made in support of for-profit education was that it was a last-chance opportunity for life-changing career education for individuals who would otherwise not have access to it. That for-profit mantra continued to intrigue me over a decade after having first started teaching at such an institution.

Given my own experience in higher education as a first-generation college student, I was also keenly aware of the potential that higher education holds for individuals. Had it not been for higher education, my own trajectory in life and specifically my options for a career would have been limited. It was that combination of curiosity about the experiences of the students I had taught at for-profit institutions and my own experience having positively benefited from higher education that led me to this study.

Subjectivity. Qualitative research relies on the interpretation of findings by the researcher. Creswell (2014) suggested that a researcher's personal experiences, biases, and beliefs shape how findings are interpreted. Likewise, familiar relationships with participants, such as the teacher/student scenario of this study can shape the interpretation of findings. Having taught in the for-profit segment of higher education at a time when declining enrollments and loose regulation of for-profit institutions encouraged

administrators to drift from an altruistic mission of higher education, I had first-hand experience of many of the negative aspects of for-profits which had been identified in the contemporary critique of them. Acknowledging this fact, I had taken steps as the researcher to help ensure an accurate collection and interpretation of the data. By first giving participants of the study an opportunity to reflect on their experiences followed by semi-structured interviews, a rich and thick narrative was captured from each participant. Those narratives and the findings which resulted from them were then shared with the participants as part of a member-checking process. This data was then compared to findings revealed through the analysis of marketing documents of both campus locations which were part of this study. This triangulation of data and the member-checking process supported a clear and accurate collection and interpretation of the data and helps to establish credibility and trustworthiness.

Ultimately, the work of Tressie Cottom (2017), Suzanne Mettler (2014), and other researchers who have focused on the student experience, informed this study and illustrated that a researcher's first-hand experiences with the negative aspects of for-profit education do not necessarily preclude accurate research of and reporting on the student experience at those institutions. Regardless of personal opinions about for-profit education, this study became a way to honor the student experience and to expand on the literature about for-profit education. By acknowledging and reporting these experiences, both positive and negative, my hope was to improve the higher education experience for current and future students.

Limitations

Diversity of study sample. This study focused on individuals who had graduated from an interior design program at two locations of the defunct International Academy of Design and Technology, Schaumburg and Chicago. Because interior design programs had program-level accreditation in the United States, this criterion was central to the selection of institutions to be studied as part of this analysis. Program-level accreditation separated the interior design program at IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago from other, non-accredited programs at each campus and helped to ensure some measure of consistent career preparation as provided by these institutions.

Earlier studies had established that interior design programs and the profession of interior design lacked the type of racial and ethnic diversity which for-profits higher education is often characterized as attracting. As Iloh (2016) and Kinser (2006a) had suggested, statistically, the typical for-profit student was a person of color, female, who had one or more jobs, and was a single parent who had attended multiple institutions during their journey towards a degree. The participants of this study represented a very different population with the majority being Caucasian, single, and, excluding Anna, without parental responsibilities at the time of matriculation. The study sample did represent the typical for-profit student population in that the majority of participants were not traditional-age college students and eleven of the fifteen had attended at least one other post-secondary institution prior to matriculating at IADT. (see Table 1 for a complete summary of participant demographics and Table 3 for a summary of prior educational experiences)

As a qualitative study, the intent was not to generalize across the for-profit student population. Kinser (2006b), in his study of for-profit higher education, suggested that the University of Phoenix did not represent all for-profit institutions. Likewise, the sample of participants for this study did not represent the lived experiences of all students who had enrolled at or graduated from a for-profit institution. Rather this study revealed a nuanced experience situated in the larger understanding of individuals who enrolled at for-profit institutions. Additionally, this study filled a gap in the literature about the broader student experience and studied the student experience specific to programs in a creative field, a field not typically associated with for-profit, career education. Ultimately, this study provided a unique perspective on for-profit higher education, who enrolled at for-profit institutions, and what programs were available through the for-profit model. This study helped to establish that the reach of for-profits is far greater than might be assumed given the existing literature.

Additionally, it was important to note that the participants of this study were qualified into the study on the basis of having graduated from this institution with a degree in interior design. It does not necessarily represent the experiences of students who were enrolled but did not persist to graduation. This was significant in that Kinser (2009) reported that persistence rates for students at for-profit institutions were often a point of criticism of the for-profit model.

Discussion

Career choice and career construction. Savickas (2002) suggested that career choice and construction of careers by individuals could be divided into three primary

categories of understanding. The first category was identified as the *context of development*. In this category, individuals were seen to be shaped by social influences such as family, friends, and institutions. Those influences shaped how and what an individual initially thought about careers. The second category was referred to as the *development of self-concepts*. In this category, individuals were seen to have developed independence from the social influences identified in the first category, typically parents. In other words, individuals develop a sense of themselves or as individuals, often as a reaction to social influences and, as a result, made career choices and constructed careers. The third category was defined as *developmental tasks*. This category of career choice and career construction recognized that individuals made choices and constructed careers as a result of their engagement with careers and tasks associated with those careers. Savickas (2002) suggested that the choices individuals made about careers and how individuals construct their careers could be understood through one or more of these categories. The findings from this study offer support for this claim and are elaborate on below.

Family and friends as influencer. While this study was initially designed to analyze the influence of institutional marketing on the career choice and career construction of participants, the interview process revealed that participants had largely decided on a career prior to experiencing institutional marketing. Participants revealed that their career choice had encouraged them to seek out educational opportunities through which to execute a career as an interior designer. Consistent with career construction theory though, family and friends had acted as an influence for several. This

influence played out in a few different ways. Most directly, Sofia and Nathan had immediate family members practicing in the design field. That direct association with design clearly encouraged Sofia and Nathan in their career choice. Amy's affinity for design was born out of a sense of family and how a career was intended to support the goal of having a family: "Just knowing that I wanted a family, and that I wanted to be able to do something that I could support a family." Likewise, and perhaps on the opposite end of the spectrum, the desire to be different than family and friends was also a factor. In her sharing, Jennifer talked about breaking free from family, career expectations as suggested by family members, and cultural and familial predispositions to specific careers: "I think I also wanted to move to Chicago and just sort of get away from Minneapolis where all my family was."

For at least two participants, the influence of friends was notably obvious. For Sofia who had expressed clear career goals, the decision to attend IADT was attributed to a friend and, in a similar way, Stephanie shared rather casually, "I wanted to do something different with my life. I had a friend that lived up in Chicago, so I kind of wanted to move closer to her."

From career choice to the decision of where to pursue higher education, participants shared that varying degrees of influence from family or friends had implications on their career choice and how they had constructed careers.

Passion, fulfillment, and enjoyment. As Savickas (2002) suggested, individuals become both independent from social influences and develop thoughts about career options and career construction as a result of engaging with different career-related tasks.

Again, the participants of this study confirmed Savickas' proposition. Anna, for example, notably shared her search for a career, "I went different routes and always ended up with the same dilemma as it became pretty boring pretty fast to me. My mind just didn't work that well with doing the same activities every day." Likewise, Samantha shared a similar clarity about career choice and how her pursuit of a career first led her down a different path. Specific to career decisions prior to pursuing interior design, she shared the following, "I'm sure I'll go somewhere in a few years after accounting and then afterwards, I was like, okay, accounting isn't cutting it. I can do it, but I'm too bored to even pay attention."

Over and over again, throughout the fifteen interviews, participants reiterated themes of *passion*, *fulfillment*, and *enjoyment* when talking about what they had hoped for in a career. From the fifteen interviews, not one participant talked about earning potential or status as a result of a career choice. To the contrary, participants seemed to downplay their expectations of income and economic status in favor of lifestyle and personal satisfaction. For example, Emily conveyed the following as part of her decision about a career in interior design:

> I think initially I imagined myself working for an architectural firm. And, I guess just living an ordinary, normal life. I just knew it was something I wanted...I wanted to be in a creative field.

Amy put it simply as, "I would be doing something that I really enjoyed. I think that was my main focus". Similarly, Anna was quite frank in her discussion about interior design as a career, "I never envisioned making very good money in it."

Overwhelmingly, the recurring theme from the fifteen interviews was that participants indicated that they were seeking a career that supported their interest in creativity and being creative and provided a sense of personal satisfaction. The career drivers of income and status seemed to be secondary considerations.

Constructed careers. Savickas (2002) suggested that "careers do not unfold; they are constructed." (p. 154) The findings of this study seemed to be supported career construction theory in that all but one participant, Ragan, spoke of a constructed path and how they envisioned a career outcome and anticipated employment as a result of their efforts toward that goal. Through their sharing, participants revealed that their construction processes were similar yet unique across the group of fifteen participants.

Interviews revealed that eleven of the fifteen participants had explored higher education opportunities at other institutions prior to enrolling at IADT. As a result, for those who had completed some form of higher education, IADT became a bridge to a career. This transition from other institutions to IADT was an intentional process rather than random unfolding of events. Most participants shared their desire to build a career out of a passion for fine arts which Amy summed up in the following statement, "I was really just trying to find something that related to fine arts, but that I could build a career with." Lauren, who also talked about the desire for a career related to fine arts, shared that she had initially explored career options at a university but continued to detail her career construction process by reporting, "I took a year off to kind of decide really what I wanted to do and how I was going to go about it."

The idea of a focused path surfaced in several of the experiences shared by participants. Lauren, in her discussion of choosing IADT, reflected on the career education aspect of for-profits, “I really liked that it was a focused trade school, basically, but still getting your bachelor's degree.”

Persistence, resilience, and career construction. This study revealed that many students faced hardship upon graduation specific to finding employment in the field of interior design. As narrated by Lauren, “It was a really difficult time and I think a lot…you probably may hear this from a lot of people…it was difficult getting that dream job that you thought you were going to get.”

Participants of this study were largely clustered in cohorts which graduated just before, during, or shortly after the 2008 Recession, an economic reality with particularly severe implications on the building industry as a whole but specifically the design and architecture professions. As a result, it was not surprising to hear participants attribute their struggles to find employment to the strained job market.

Participants who struggled to find employment persisted and continued to construct their careers. This construction process varied by participant with several, as Lauren suggested, accepting positions that were perhaps not what they had envisioned at the time of enrollment. Others as with Jennifer, continued on to graduate school and pursued other career opportunities before finding career satisfaction. As a whole, eleven of the participants of this study persisted into design careers and, in varying degrees, reported general happiness with their career choice and having felt successful in constructing a career. For the four participants who did not find employment in the

profession following graduation, they were resilient and continued to construct careers in others ways. Of those four, three continued to pursue creative fulfillment in other fields or post-secondary studies while Samantha, who had left the job search to start a family, suggested leaving the door open to interior design: “Design is still back there, and I don't know...I've thrown around getting a master's, just to see...”

Institutional choice as a component of career construction. Where students chose to matriculate for post-secondary education was part of the career construction process. Notably, the reputation of an institution could have implications on a student’s career opportunities after graduation. While public, not-for-profit institutions are recognized for their reputation as a public good, the value of a degree from for-profit institutions has been extensively argued in the literature. Surprisingly then, the 2014 Public Agenda report, *Profiting Higher Education? What Students, Alumni, and Employers Think about For-Profit Colleges*, suggested that students, parents, and employers were largely unaware of the difference between for-profit and not-for-profit institutions and yet this study found that participants had found other ways to differentiate between the two institutional types. Three participants in particular had first enrolled at state institutions and spoke about how their experiences and perceptions had influenced their choice of IADT. Amy, for example, talked about the experience as a commuter student:

> I wasn't crazy about just the campus experience, and I was a commuter student, so I had a little bit of a disconnect there. So, when I went to IADT, essentially almost everybody was a commuter student, so it was a different environment there.

Lauren was motivated by the perceived focused, job-training curriculum and the speed of the process:

> I took a year off and then looked into doing a more core study instead of having to apply to a program and waiting to get in and that kind of thing. I really liked that it was a focused trade school, basically, but still getting your bachelor's degree.

Jennifer's sharing revealed another dimension to the idea of perceptions and experiences of students and their enrollment decisions. When thinking back to her consideration of IADT as an enrollment option, Jennifer shared her thoughts as:

> Oh, this is like a real professional school. Oh, this isn't just like college. I can't just wake up and wear pajamas and go to class. This is a real professional program, I have to dress up when I go to class.

For-profit institutions promote themselves as providing job skills and career education. They talk about reduced time to graduation and the ability to start a career sooner when compared to the traditional college experience at a not-for-profit institution. For participants in this study, the ideas promoted by for-profit institutions aligned with a range of perceptions, anticipations, and expectations participants had about the role and purpose of higher education and career construction and, as a result, led to their enrollment at IADT.

Policy Implications

Responding to educational desires and demand. In the for-profit realm of interior design education, the major players (supersystems) who offered career-oriented programs in interior design and other creative fields continued to gradually disappear. As

this study revealed, students who enrolled at IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago were seeking a career path which leveraged their creative interests and built upon their studies at previous institutions. The participants of this study suggested that their research into possible institutions at which to attend was limited to for-profit institutions. Not a single participant indicated the they considered a not-for-profit institution.

As of 2015, IADT and its rebranded Sanford Brown campuses across the United States ceased operations. The other significant player in for-profit education which offers degrees in creative fields, The Art Institutes, announced in July of 2018 that it would be closing thirty of its brick and mortar campus locations. This closure announcement would leave thirteen locations in operation in addition to their online offerings administered through the Art Institute of Pittsburgh – Online Division.

This study found that students were generally satisfied with their career choices and with the evolution of their careers over time. Students had been able to build on their previous coursework in the fine arts, design, or architecture at other institutions and completed a bachelor's degree which then opened doors to various employment opportunities. While students suggested that they were frustrated with the administrative aspects of the for-profit IADT, the interior design curriculum provided a desired stepping stone to a career that was fulfilling.

Given the critique of the for-profit model as being more expensive for the student and that for-profits suffer from low persistence and graduation rates, not-for profit institutions, which also offer degree programs in creative fields including interior design, must find ways to address an obvious student demand. Often criticized for being rigid in

traditional ways of operating, not-for-profits need to find ways to be more responsive to the needs of diverse student populations and do so in locations where students are not being served by post-secondary institutions. By offering pathways which leverage previously earned college credit and by finding ways to be flexible to the non-traditional student, a demographic which is quickly becoming the new traditional student, not-for-profits have the opportunity to reinforce and reiterate their role as a public good.

Career choice in creative fields. Most participants narrated a story that seemed to indicate a sort of stumbling across interior design as a career option. Ten of the fifteen participants suggested that their discovery of interior design as a career resulted from a self-directed internet search. (See Table 2) Participants narrated that they had pursued an interest in fine arts through secondary and initial post-secondary education and were seeking ways to translate those interests in fine arts and general tendencies for creativity into a career. Career construction theory suggested that individuals make career decisions and construct their careers based on social influences such as friends, family, and social networks such as schools and churches. Further, career construction theory suggested that individuals seek careers and construct careers that provide social and psychological fulfillment. Given this, not one participant discussed or hinted at guidance toward interior design as a career option through career counseling in secondary education or the discovery of interior design through a career or majors fair. The findings from this study suggested that educational institutions, broadly defined, could do a better job of supporting students in this process. Given the emphasis on STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math] education and career pathways, students who derived fulfillment

through creativity seemed largely on their own to find career options to satisfy those desires. While the push to evolve STEM into a more inclusive STEAM [science, technology, engineering, art, and math] scenario holds promise for education in the arts, a persistent, negative perception of the arts and creative fields as being a poor career choice was revealed through this study. This indicated the need for additional and enhanced focus on eliminating the starving arts persona for those pursuing creative careers. This lingering myth stigmatized the arts as not being a viable career path and discouraged those interested in the arts from pursuing creative interests and careers.

Re-examining non-profit education as a public good. A review of IADT history revealed that it and other for-profit institutions had established campuses in major cities across the United States, seemingly to mirror the shifting population demographic from rural to urban areas. Findings from this study suggested that participants were seeking a school in close proximity to family or were attracted to the urban setting of Chicago. Likewise, this study reported that there were no not-for-profit institutions in the Chicagoland area offering a bachelor's degree in interior design. The convergence of those realities left participants seeking to study interior design with only two options, to enroll at a for-profit institution or to seek enrollment options away from their desired geographic location.

Characteristically, for-profit institutions charged more for enrollment and were transient in their existence (Mettler, 2014). As this study revealed, students made enrollment decisions based on long-term promises made by IADT and yet the institutions no longer exist to deliver on those promises. If not-for-profit institutions exist as a public

good to offer access to diverse educational opportunities in an affordable manner, it is important to recognize where students exist, to understand their educational desires, and to provide programming in response to student and market demand.

For-profit institutions existed in the Chicagoland area for more than three decades serving the educational needs and desires of the students they enrolled. While it is not possible to know if students would have chosen a not-for-profit institution, had one existed, the findings of this study signaled the need for policy review and further study by states and not-for-profit institutions related to the degree programs offerings and where the demand for those programs exist. For example, an interior design degree offering on the campus of the University of Illinois-Chicago might have garnered considerable attention from prospective students and could have found enrollment significant enough to justify the addition of a Chicago-based program offering. If we are to appreciate not-for-profit institutions as supporting the public good, there must be alignment between where educational demand exists and institutions in those locations to respond to those demands.

Long-term attitudes about the role and value of higher education. This analysis was partially informed by the 2014 Public Agenda report, *Profiting Higher Education? What Students, Alumni and Employers Think about For-Profit Colleges*. This report found that students, parents of students, and employers were largely unaware of the differences between for-profit and not-for-profit higher education. The two models were casually lumped together into a generalized category of post-secondary education and yet, the two models are administered very differently and motived by uniquely

different goals. While poor decisions and administration could and do happen across the spectrum of higher education, the questionable actions of for-profits specific to recruiting practices, false reporting of employment rates, and financial aid fraud, along with other ethically questionable actions had been heavily documented in lawsuits filed by and on behalf of students. Touted as nimble institutions quick to change in response to market demands (Coleman & Vedder, 2008), Deming, Goldin, and Katz (2015) reported on the predatory realities of such nimbleness. The findings of this study supported that notion of predation in IADT's marketing of benefits such as continuous education and again, put at risk the general reputation of higher education when students are misled and do not distinguish between different institutional types. Of the fifteen participants interviewed, nearly all noted the continuous education benefit as a key factor in their decision-making regarding matriculation at IADT. Equally, participants expressed regret over the closure of IADT and the inability to take advantage of the continuous education benefit they had been promised. While not directly related to continuous education, the Gainful Employment rules of 2011 and 2014 were attempts on the part of the Department of Education to regulate the for-profit segment of higher education. While some argued that the rules were arbitrary and capricious (Blumenstyk, 2014), the first reporting as required by the 2014 rule found that over 800 programs, 98% of which were for-profit, failed the initial Gainful Employment review with an additional 1,239 receiving a zone rating, an indication of potential failure if standards did not improve (Zamudio-Suarez, 2017). Gainful Employment was significant in that it functioned as a gauge by which students could evaluate educational options. The Gainful Employment findings, above, illustrated

the need for such regulation given the quantity of programs failing or potentially failing. Unfortunately, more recent actions by the Department of Education have rolled back such regulations, seemingly removing student protections and required reporting aimed at safeguarding students from predatory for-profit education (Thomason, 2018). The combined realities of bad behavior on the part of actors and the lack of understanding by the general public about for-profit education, puts the entire community of higher education at risk of a black eye. This study seemed to offer support for a return to some increased level of regulation on behalf of the education consumer and the taxpayer alike.

Future Research

While this study concluded with answers to the initial research questions, the parameters of this study also revealed limitations to the data collection and the overall direction of the study. Those parameters could be reimagined in a redesign of the study to expand upon our understanding of and knowledge about the student experience at for-profit institutions.

The implications of marketing institutional benefits. A finding from this study was that ten of the fifteen participants, had been influenced in their construction of careers by the continuous education benefit marketed by IADT. As a supersystem, this benefit was likely a system-wide benefit. In an effort to better understand the implications of such a policy, a similar study could be undertaken with graduates of other campus locations and other programs.

Non-graduates and career choice and career construction. As noted earlier, the sample for this study was representative of graduates of the interior design program at

IADT-Schaumburg and IADT-Chicago. In an effort to further the understanding of the student experience and because of low persistence rates characteristic of for-profit institutions, a future study could focus on the experience of students who did not persist to graduation. Such a study could investigate the implications of marketing on those students who did not graduate. More specifically, a study could take a deeper dive into the dynamics of institutional marketing and its influence on career choice and career construction. Such a study could help create better understanding of the population of non-graduates, their experiences, and why those individuals did not persist to graduation.

Participant sample and diversity. As noted earlier, the sample for this study did not represent the typical diversity often reported for for-profit institutions. Based on circumstantial evidence, I and other faculty who taught in the same program would attest to the fact that more diversity existed in the 1st and 2nd year student populations at IADT-Chicago than was evident as a result of this sample. A study which focused on diversity in the earlier stages of the curriculum and not necessarily excluding for graduation, could reveal greater understanding about interior design as a career choice and how that choice evolved over time.

Institutional choice. For participants of this study, traditional colleges and universities were noted as less appealing because participants felt they did not fit in, because of their geographic location, and because participants sought more focus on job attainment and a shortened timeline to graduation and ultimately employment. A future study could explore these ideas further to help institutions better understand the evolving

needs and desires of students and the implications of the career pressures on student decision-making about careers and institutional choice.

Summary

Through this study, I intended to develop a better understanding of how students had been influenced by the marketing of for-profit higher education. Likewise, I sought to establish an understanding of how the post-graduation experiences of participants compared to their anticipation about careers at the time of enrollment at for-profit institutions. As a result of this study, I have revealed new understanding on those two points.

Kinser (2006a) found that for-profit institutions were some of the biggest corporate spenders in the area of marketing and advertising yet this study found that participants had largely been unaffected by those traditional forms of advertising. Rather, this study seemed to indicate that participants had made career choices prior to learning about institutions. Participants of this study had been self-motivated in their search for educational opportunities through which to construct a career, in this case, a career in interior design. Adding support to Savickas' (2002, 2005) career construction theory, this study found that family and friends had been influential in career decisions made by participants by both encouraging them toward career choices as well as serving as the establishment which participants were seeking to escape. Additionally, while in many cases the enrollment expectations about careers did not align with career realities after graduation, the findings from the participant interviews suggested that they were largely happy with career outcomes at the time of this reporting.

The findings of this study are significant in the understanding of the student experience at for-profit institutions in that the participants of this study did not represent the characteristic demographics of for-profit students. The participants of this study, primarily Caucasian females without children, did not face the types of challenges which historically have put for-profit students' educational attainment at risk (Iloh, 2016 and Kinser, 2006a). As a result, this study revealed perhaps as much about those who participated in it as it did about those who did not. Largely absent from this study are the students of color, students with multiple jobs, and students with children. We know those students existed just not in the ranks of the students who graduated from IADT-Schaumburg or IADT-Chicago, a qualifier for this study. Those students either did not persist to graduation or, for those that did, were not connect through social networks to other graduates. The concern then was that the students who might benefit the most from higher education are not best served by the for-profit form of it, the form that has most recruited and enrolled them. Often framed as a last-chance opportunity for individuals who have been transient in the higher education landscape, the contemporary for-profit has stereotypically attracted disadvantaged and minority populations and prayed on their desires for the types of opportunities that higher education has historically been known to reveal. The findings of this study suggest that those individuals are not then represented in the post-graduation population.

With the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965, the people of the United States formalized their appreciation of higher education as a public good. Since that time, opposing views about higher education as a public good have developed with debate over

how it is organized, who should deliver it, who has access to it, and how that access is gained or granted. The 1972 amendments to the original 1965 Act allowed federal financial aid funds to be used toward educational opportunities at for-profit institutions, in essence, funding the corporations selling higher education (Pusser & Harlow, 2002). Profiting from higher education is not a new model. As Coulson's 1999 historiography of for-profit education revealed, Ancient Greece birthed perhaps the earliest model of for-profit education with itinerate teachers selling educational opportunities to those who could afford to invest in it. The contemporary model of for-profits, the supersystem, leveraged this business model of higher education to grow for-profit higher education in both the number of students enrolled and the diversity of programs offered. As a result of these actions, institutions like the University of Phoenix grew to become some of the largest institutions of higher education in the United States and yet lawsuits befell with accusations of misdeeds on the part of for-profit owners and administrators.

As the 2014 Public Agenda study revealed, the line between public and for-profit higher education was blurry at best and for most students, parents, and employers, was non-existent. Given the long-standing trust in public higher education, the nimbleness of for-profits glorified by some (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2015) has left participants of this study wondering about their enrollment decisions at a for-profit. Making enrollment decisions based on future educational opportunities, participants then found they were unable to take advantage of those opportunities because schools had closed. Participants were left to speculate about the long-standing implications of a degree from a defunct for-profit and how such realities might jeopardize their future career construction.

Ultimately, you do not know what you do not know. For-profit institutions have borrowed the good reputation of not-for-profit institutions in offering access to higher education. In doing so, for-profits had taken advantage of the public's trust in higher education and paired that long-held appreciation of the rewards of higher education with less than desirable qualities of instability, expense, and deceit. While this study shed new light on the experience of students at for-profit institutions, it also revealed how much more is still left to be learned about this population. Further study is needed to support continued understanding about career choice, career construction, and the experience of for-profit students at these institutions, both near and long-term.

References

Anctil, E. J. (2008). *Selling higher education: Marketing and advertising America's colleges and universities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Auster, C. L. (2011, Spring). Promising a better future but delivering debt: Understanding the financial and social impact of for-profit college and the effect of the new program integrity rules. *The Scholar: St. Mary's Law Review on Minority Issues, 13*, 631-673.

Bennett, D. L., Lucchesi, A. R., & Vedder, R. K. (2010). *For-profit higher education: Growth, innovation and regulation* (Center for College Affordability and Productivity). Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED536282

Blau, P. M., & Duncan O. D. (1967). *The American occupational structure*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Blumenstyk, G. (2016, Jan 15). How for-profit education is now embedded in traditional colleges. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A13.

Blumenstyk, G. (2014, March 14). 5 things to know about the proposed gainful-employment rule. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-Things-to-Know-About-the/145327

Breneman, D. W., Pusser, B., & Turner, S. E. (2006). *Earnings from learning: The rise of the for-profit universities*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bronner, S. J. (2012). *Campus traditions: Folklore from the old-time college to the modern mega-university.* Jackson, MS: The University Press of Mississippi.

Coleman, J. & Vedder, R. (2008). *For-Profit Education in the United States: A Primer* (Center for College Affordability and Productivity). Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED536281

College, inc. The sales and marketing story. (2010, April 4). [Television series episode]. In M. Smith, C. Durrance, and J. Maggio (producers), *Frontline*. Boston, MA: PBS.

Conway, T., Mackay, S., & Yorke, D. (1994). Strategic planning in higher education: Who are the customers?". *The International Journal of Educational Management, 8*(6), 29-36.

Cottom, T. M. (2017) *LowerEd. The troubling rise of for-profit colleges in the new economy*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Coulson, A. J. (1999). *Market education: The unknown history*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions Publishers.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Deming, D. J., Goldin, C., & Katz, L. F. (2015). The for-profit postsecondary school sector: Nimble critters or agile predators?. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 26*(1), 139-164.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Elder, G. H., Jr., & O'Rand, A. M. (1995). Adult lives in a changing society. In K. S. Cook, G. A. Fine, & J. S. House (Eds.), *Sociological perspectives on social psychology* (pp. 452-475). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gaston-Gayles, J. L., & Hu, S. (2009). The influence of student engagement and sport participation on college outcomes among Division I student athletes. *Journal of Higher Education, 80*, 315-333.

Hauser, R. M. (1971). *Socioeconomic background and educational performance.* Washington, DC: Rose Monograph Series, American Sociological Association.

Heckhausen, J. (1999). *Developmental regulation in adulthood: Age normative and sociocultural constraints as adaptive challenges.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hentschke, G. C., Lechuga, V. M., & Tierney, W. G. (2010) *For-profit colleges and universities in a knowledge economy*. In Hentschke, G. C., Lechuga, V. M., & Tierney, W. G. (Eds.) *For-profit colleges and universities. Their markets, regulation, performance, and place in higher education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Horn, L. J., & Carroll, C. D. (1996). *Nontraditional undergraduates: Trends in enrollment from 1986 to 1992 and persistence and attainment among 1989-90 beginning postsecondary students.* (Report No. NCES 97-578). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=97578

Iloh, C. (2016). Exploring the for-profit experience: An ethnography of a for-profit college. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(3), 427-455.

Iloh, C., & Tierney, W. G. (2014). Understanding for-profit college and community college choice through rational choice. *Teachers College Record, 116*, 1-34.

Johnson, N. R. (2011). Phoenix rising: Default rates at proprietary institutions of higher education and what can be done to reduce them. *Journal of Law & Education, 40*, 225-235.

Johnson, M. K., & Mortimer, J. T. (2002) *Career choice and development from a sociological perspective*. In Brown, D. (Ed.), *Career choice and development, 4th ed.* (pp. 37-81). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kelly, K. F. (2001). *Meeting the needs and making profits: The rise of the for-profit degree-granting institutions*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Kerckhoff, A. C. (1995). Social stratification and mobility processes: Interaction between individuals and social structures. In K. S. Cook, G. A. Fine, & J. S. House (Eds.), *Sociological perspectives on social psychology* (pp. 467-496). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Kinser, K. (2006a). *From Main Street to Wall Street: The transformation of for-profit higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kinser, K. (2006b). What phoenix doesn't teach us about for-profit higher education. *Change*, (4), 24.

Kinser, K. (2009). Access in U.S. higher education: What does the for-profit sector contribute?. *PROPHE Working Paper Series*. Retrieved from: www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe.

Krachenberg, A. R. (1972). Bringing the concept of marketing to higher education. *Journal of Higher Education, 42*, 369-380.

Kutz, G. D. (2010). *For-profit colleges. Undercover testing finds colleges encouraged fraud and engaged in deceptive and questionable marketing practices. Testimony before the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate*. (Report No. GAO-10-948T). Retrieved from http://purl.fdlp.gov/GPO/gpo9373

Lawrence, J. (2012, Oct 23). Sun could be setting on for-profit colleges, universities. *Education News*. Retrieved from: www.educationnews.org.

Lechuga, V. M. (2006). *The changing landscape of the academic profession. The culture of faculty at for-profit colleges and universities.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Longden, B., & Belanger, C. (2013). Universities: Public good or private profit. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 35*(5), 501-522.

McFarland, J., Hussar, B., Wang, X., Zang, J., Wang, K., Rathbun, A., Barmer, A., Forrest Cataldi, E., & Bullock Mann, F. (2018, May 23). *The condition of education 2018*. (Report No. NCES 2018144). Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018144

Mettler, S. (2014). *Degrees of inequality. How the politics of higher education sabotaged the American dream*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Miller, J. T. (2013). Program integrity and the implications of the corporate identity in higher education. *Brooklyn Journal of Corporate, Financial & Commercial Law, 7*(2), 509-535.

Navarro, K. M. (2014). A conceptual model of Division I student-athletes' career construction processes. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *32*(1), 219-235.

Navarro, K. M. (2015). An examination of the alignment of student-athletes' undergraduate major choices and career field aspirations in life after sports. *Journal of College Student Development,* 56 (4), 364-379.

NCIDQ. (n.d.). *Definition of Interior Design*. Retrieved May 5, 2017 from NCIDQ Examination: ncidqexam.org.

Oplatka, I., & Hemsley-Brown, J. (2004). The research on school marketing: Current issues, future directions. *Journal of Educational Administration, 42*(3), 375-400.

Parsons, F. (1909). *Choosing a vocation*. New York, NY: Agathon Press.

Pusser, B., & Harlow, W. N. (2002). For-profit higher education. In Forest J. J. F., & Kinser, K. (Eds.), Higher education in the United States: An encyclopedia (pp. 23). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Reigner, C. G. (1959). *Beginnings of the business school*. Baltimore, MD: H. M. Rowe.

Ruch, R. S. (2001). *Higher ed, inc.: The rise of the for-profit university*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Savickas, M. L. (2002). Career construction: A developmental theory of vocational behavior. In D. Brown & Associates (Eds.), *Career Choice and Development* (4th ed., pp. 149-205). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work* (pp. 42-70). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Savickas, M. L., Nota, L., Rossier, J., Dauwalder, J. P., Duarte, M. E., Guichard, J., Salvatore, S., Van Esbroeck, R., & van Vianen, A. E. (2009). Life designing: A paradigm for career construction in the 21st century. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 75*, 239-250.

Schade, S. A. (2014). Reining in the predatory nature of for-profit colleges [notes]. *Arizona Law Review*, (1), 317-340.

Sewell, W. H., & Hauser, R.M. (1976). Causes and consequences of higher education: Models of the status attainment process. In W. H. Sewell, R.M. Hauser, & D. Featherman (Eds.), *Schooling and achievement in American society* (pp. 9-27). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Shanahan, M. J. (2000). Pathways to adulthood in changing societies: Variability and mechanisms in life course perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology, 26*, 667-692.

Super, D. E. (1953). A theory of vocational development. *American Psychologist, 8*, 185-190.

Super, D. E. (1954). Career patterns as a basis for vocational counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1*, 12-20.

Super, D. E. (1984). Career and life development. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), Career choice and development (pp. 192-234). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Svoboda, P, Voracek, J, & Novak, M. (2012). Online marketing in higher education. *Proceedings of the European Conference on Knowledge Management, 2*, 1145-1152.

Tarasova, E. E., & Shein, E. A. (2014). Improvement of methodical approaches to higher schools' marketing activity assessment on the basis of Internet technologies application. *Webology, 11*(1), 1-10.

Thomason, A. (2018, July 27). DeVos plans to ax gainful-employment rule, which targeted for-profit colleges. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: https://www.chronicle.com/article/DeVos-Plans-to-Ax/244063

Tierney, W. G., & Hentschke, G. C. (2007). *New players, different game. Understanding the rise of for-profit colleges and universities*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ullrich, L. D., & Pratt, E. K. (2014). For-profit education and financial aid: Are differences driven by schools or students?. *Journal of Social Research & Policy, 5* (1), 53-65.

Wilson, R. (2010, February 12). For-profit colleges change higher education's landscape. *Chronicle of higher Education*. p. A1.

Wittmer, J., Bostic, D., Phillips, T. D., & Waters, W. (1981). The personal, academic, and career problems of college student athletes: Some possible answers. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 60*, 52-55.

Wright, R. E. (2014, Spring). Student focused marketing: Impact of marketing higher education based on student data and input. *College Student Journal 48*(1), 88-93.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research design and methods*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Zamudio-Suarez, F. (2017, Jan. 9). Over 800 programs fail education department's gainful-employment rule. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/over-800-programs-fail-education-dept-s-gainful-employment-rule/116378

Appendix A: 16 Points of Career Construction Theory

1. A society and its institutions structure an individual's life course through social roles. Balance among roles promotes stability, imbalance promotes strain.
2. Occupations provide a core role and a focus for personality organization for most men and women.
3. An individual's career pattern is determined by the parents' socioeconomic level and the person's education, abilities, personality traits, self-concepts, and career adaptability in transaction with the opportunities presented by society.
4. People differ in vocational characteristics such as ability, personality traits, and self-concepts.
5. Each occupation requires a different pattern of vocational characteristics with some tolerance.
6. People are qualified for a variety of occupations because of their vocational characteristics and occupational requirements.
7. Occupational success depends on the extent to which individuals find in their work roles adequate outlets for their prominent vocational characteristics.
8. The degree of satisfaction people attain from work is proportional to the degree to which they are able to implement their vocational self-concepts.
9. The process of career construction is essentially that of developing and implementing vocational self-concepts in work roles.
10. Self-concepts and vocational preferences do change with time and experience as the situations in which people live and work change.

11. The process of vocational change may be characterized by a maxicycle of career stages characterized as progressing through periods of growth, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement.
12. A minicycle of growth, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement occurs during transition from one career stage to the next as well as each time an individual's career is destabilized by socioeconomic and personal events.
13. Vocational maturity is a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's degree of vocational development along the continuum of career stages from growth through disengagement.
14. Career adaptability is a psychological construct that denotes an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks of vocational development.
15. Career construction is prompted by vocational development tasks and produced by responses to these tasks.
16. Career construction can be fostered by conversations that explain vocational development tasks, exercises that strengthen adaptive fitness, and activities that clarify and validate vocational self-concepts. (Savickas, 2002, pp. 154-157)

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate Narrative

Hello Graduates of the XXXX-XXXXXXX Interior Design program!

I am (contacting you/posting this) on behalf of a former interior design faculty member who would like to interview graduates of the program for a research project.

If you would like to participate, please follow the link below to a brief survey that will determine if you qualify to be part of this study.

By completing the survey, you are entered into a drawing for a $20 Amazon gift card!

XXXX link to survey

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate Survey

My name is Dan Harper and I am conducting research on the topic of careers of students who have graduated from interior design programs.

Contact information you provide will not be shared with anyone other than me, Dan Harper, as the principle investigator for this research project. I will use this information only for the purpose of contacting you to schedule an interview.

Qualtrics Survey Questions*:*

Are you a graduate of the IADT-Schaumburg or IADT-Chicago Interior Design program?

Please identify your gender:

Please identify your race/ethnicity:

Have you ever worked as an interior designer?

Are you currently working as an interior designer?

In the event that you are chosen to take part in this study, please provide your name, email address, and telephone number so that I may contact you to schedule an interview.

Study participants are entered into a drawing for a $20 Amazon gift card!

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interviewee Name:

Date:

Start time:

Interview Narrative

Hello _____. If you don't mind, I would like record the audio of our conversation. This will give me the opportunity to go back over our conversation, later, and make sure I did not miss any information and to confirm my notes.

Do you mind if I record?

Start the recording

Intro ice breaker:

So, you graduated from IADT-Schaumburg/Chicago…tell me a bit about what you've been doing since you graduated.

Thanks! It's great to hear about what you've been doing since your time at the Academy.

I'd like to go ahead and begin the official interview now…to ensure that all interviews are conducted in the same basic manner, I'm going to read an introductory statement:

As you know from the initial survey you completed, I'm conducting research on the topic of career construction by students who graduated from a for-profit institution and specifically from an interior design program.

This is a semi-structured interview meaning that I have a script of questions to ask and I want you to feel like you can elaborate for as long and in as much detail as you feel comfortable with doing.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll be asking you. My study aim is to simply better understand your experience.

I may also have some follow-up questions for you in response to your answers to the original questions I pose.

There is no pressure to answer questions so, if you would rather not answer or discuss a topic that I introduce, please tell me and we can move on to the next question.
We can stop the interview at any time.

While I will know what you have shared in response to each question, all responses will remain anonymous in any sharing, reporting, or publications as a result of this interview. There will be no way for anyone other than me to connect your responses to you.

Before we begin, do you have any questions for me?

Question #1: What attracted you to interior design as a field of study?

Question #2: How did you learn about IADT-Schaumburg/Chicago?

FU-A: Tell me about any specific advertisements you remember.

FU-B: Tell me about any specific branding you remember.

FU-C: Tell me about any specific recruiting techniques you remember.

Question #3: Did you know you wanted to study interior design before or after learning about IADT-Schaumburg/Chicago? Tell me more about this scenario.

FU-A: What other schools did you consider before enrolling at IADT-Schaumburg/Chicago?

FU-B: Did you consider any other majors? If so, what?

FU-C: What was the determining factor for enrolling at IADT-Schaumburg/Chicago?

Question #4: When you were considering IADT-Schaumburg/Chicago as an enrollment option, tell me what you remember being told about interior design.

Question #5: As you were studying interior design at IADT-Schaumburg/Chicago, tell me about how you envisioned your future.

Question #6: Tell me about your transition to post-graduation life.

FU-A: Were you interested in working as an interior designer after your degree was complete? Why or Why not?

FU-B: Did you search for an interior design job? If so, how/what kind of positions?

FU-C: Were you employed as an interior designer after graduation?

If so, tell me about that position.

If not, tell me about that scenario.

If participant has worked as an interior designer

Question #7A: Tell me about your experience working as an interior designer.

Question #8A: How did your expectations as a student compare to the realities of being an interior designer?

If participant has not worked as an interior designer:

Question #7B: Tell me about your work history since graduation.

Question #8B: How did your expectations as a student compare to the realities of post-graduation?

Question #9: Tell me about your thoughts for the future as it relates to work/your career.

Question #10: Tell me about the other roles you held while you were a student at IADT-Chicago, for example: wife/husband, parent, caregiver, etc.

Question #11: Tell me about the experience of holding multiple roles and your strategy for playing multiple roles.

That concludes my questions. Thank you for your time!

I appreciate you spending the last *XX* minutes with me, sharing your story.

Do you have any questions for me?

If I have other questions or want to confirm details, would you mind if I contacted you again?

Yes / No

How would you like to be contacted?

Telephone:

Email:

End Time:

Appendix E: Interview Questions Mapped to Theoretical Framework

Interview Questions		
Question Asked:	Theory Behind it:	Why?:
#1: What attracted you to Interior Design as a field of study?	Career Construction Theory	This seeks to build understanding of how students view the career of interior design as a value proposition and career; future visioning
#2: How did you learn about IADT-Chicago? FU-A: Do you remember specific advertisements? FU-B: Do you remember specific branding? FU-C: Do you remember	Career Construction Theory	Student recall of specific marketing techniques might implicate effectiveness in terms of appealing to their career desires and what they were watching for/listening for; what types of messages students most responded

specific recruiting techniques?		to; how students saw this for-profit positioned to support career decisions and construction, e.g. "faster time to graduation and employment", "you dream it, we can get you there"; calls into question the methods used by this for-profit student
#3: Did you know you wanted to study interior design before or after learning about IADT-Chicago? Tell me more about the scenario.	Career Construction Theory	Were students relying on schools to help them make decisions about career choices and direction; were students seeking out schools to support their desires; an intentional choice or other
#4: When you were considering IADT-Chicago as an enrollment	Career Construction	How were students and their decisions influenced

option, tell me about what you were told about interior design.	Theory	by school messaging; what were the messages about careers
#5: As you were studying interior design at IADT-Chicago, tell me about how you envisioned your future.	Career Construction Theory	Supports the theory's proposition of "construction" vs. careers simply unfolding
#6: Tell me about your transition to post-graduation life. A: Were you interested in working as an interior designer after you completed your degree? Why/Why Not? B: Did you search or an interior design job? If so, how/what kind of	Career Construction Theory	Seeks to understand the role of education and the school in supporting students in the construction of their careers; Questions if expectations for a career aligned with career outcomes; were students supported in their efforts to construct their careers following their education (was this a part of the promise in the

positions? | If not, why not? C: Were you employed as an interior designer after graduation? If so, in what role? If not, why not?		marketing?); how did education support or change career construction following degree completion
Group A: Participants who have worked as an interior designer.		
#7A: Tell me about your experience working as an interior designer.	Career Construction Theory	Seeks to understand how the vision for a career played out for the student, did the career the student saw in the marketing play out in reality
#8A: How did your expectations as a student to become an interior designer compare to the	Career Construction Theory	May be more relevant for students who have been employed as a designer

realities of being an interior designer?		for a longer period of time: was the career the student anticipated constructing for themselves realized; how has construction continued over time
Group B: Participants who have not worked as an interior designer.		
#7B: Tell me about your work history since graduation.	Career Construction Theory	Seeks to understand how the vision for a career played out for the student; how has construction played out
#8B: How did your expectations as a student to become an interior designer compare to the realities of post-graduation?	Career Construction Theory	May be more relevant for students who have been employed as a designer for a longer period of time: was the career the

		student anticipated constructing for themself realized; how has construction continued over time
#9: Tell me about your thoughts for the future as it relates to work/your career.	Career Construction Theory	Supports the theory's proposition of "construction" vs. careers simply unfolding
#10: Tell me about the other roles you held while you were a student at IADT-Chicago, for example: wife/husband, parent, caregiver, etc.	Career Construction Theory	Aligns with Navarro's (2014, 2015) research on role conflict on how this plays a part in career choice and construction, educational choices, etc.
#11: Tell me about your strategy for playing multiple roles when you were a student, after you were employed as an interior designer	Career Construction Theory	Aligns with Navarro's (2014, 2015) research on role conflict on how this plays a role in career choice and construction;

		how students see education supporting their needs/desires for career decisions and construction

Appendix F: IRB Approval Documentation

Project Number	18-E-152
Project Status	APPROVED
Committee:	Office of Research Compliance
Compliance Contact:	Rochelle Reamy (reamy@ohio.edu)
Primary Investigator:	Daniel Harper
Project Title:	Career Choice and Career Construction of Undergraduate Students at For-Profit Institutions: The Effect of Institutional Marketing on Students
Level of Review:	EXEMPT

The Ohio University Office of Research Compliance reviewed and approved by exempt review the above referenced research. The Office of Research Compliance was able to provide exempt approval under 45 CFR 46.104(d) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for exempt review, as indicated below.

IRB Approval:	03/19/2018 1:20:20 PM
Review Category:	2

Waivers: A waiver of signature on the consent document is granted.

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. In addition, FERPA, PPRA, and other authorizations / agreements must be obtained, if needed. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Any changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the Office of Research Compliance / IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under the Ohio University OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00000095. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Compliance staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Thesis and Dissertation Services