Making Sense of Employment Research - “Critical Elements of Using Virtual Reality Job Interviewing in IPS Supported Employment” with Shannon Blajeski, PhD, MSW

This call is being recorded.

Jane Burke-Miller:

At the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University, and I'll be the moderator for today's making Sense of Employment Research webinar. The webinar is funded by the National Institute on Disability Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research. The webinar content does not represent the views or policies of the funding agency, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government. The territory on which Boston University stands is that of the Wampanoag and Massachusetts people, and we honor and respect the history and current efforts of native indigenous communities. This webinar is being recorded so you can access it later. Also, closed captioning has been turned on, and you can access this by clicking the button at the bottom of your screen. In case this is your first webinar with us, I'm going to introduce our speaker. They will share their research with you, and then we'll have a question-and-answer session at the end. If you have a question during the presentation, please post your question in the q and a box or in the chat, and I'll pose them in the order we receive them. At the end, if you have a technical question, please send a chat directly to me using the chat feature. Also, would very much like your feedback about this webinar. So, at the end of the webinar, um, we'll be posting a survey, a very brief one. So today I would like to welcome Dr. Shannon Blajeski, who will be presenting her research paper critical elements of using Virtual Reality Job interviewing in IPS supported employment. This presentation describes the results of interviews with individual placement and support or IPS staff across several Illinois communities who had used virtual reality job interview training in their work and clients receiving IPS. Dr. Blajeski is a mental health intervention researcher who is interested in improving career and income pathways for young adults with early psychosis to prevent the often-intractable poverty associated with long-term dependence on disability benefits. Her research is situated at the crux of her lengthy clinical social work experiences in behavioral health settings and her scholarly training in social welfare, and she brings an additional 10 years of experience with the implantation of the assertive community treatment model to her work. Dr. B is currently an assistant professor in the school of Social Work at Portland State University and a collaborator with our center at the Boston University, the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. Additionally, she has active research partnerships with Michigan Navigate and the Oregon Early Assessment and Support Alliance Center for Excellence. Dr. B, welcome. We are excited to hear from you.

Shannon Blajeski:

Thank you, Jane. Um, here we go. Hi, everybody. Uh, good morning if you are on the West Coast and good lunchtime for those of you on the East Coast and others from other places. Um, I am Dr. Shannon Blajeski, and I am currently in the state of Oregon at Portland State University. Um, in the School of Social Work, uh, our school of social work handles the MSW and undergrad training for social workers in pretty much the entire state of Oregon. So, we have a very, very large, uh, social work training program, and we also have, um, mental health researchers, um, and services research for youth and TR youth, youth and Transition and adults, um, going. So, it's a, it's a great place to be, uh, having some excitement around this type of work. So, I'll talk a little bit, uh, about myself and, um, beyond what Jane said. So, thank you, Jane. I love that overview because, um, I don't have to repeat some of it. So, I primarily, um, my work is primarily currently with young adults who receive services from early psychosis programs and, um, I'm doing some intervention work right now on earlier adaptation to the C or support and employment education model, which is typically the IPS version for young adults. There's also IPSY and a lot of other versions of that model, um, to kind of look at adding on to the existing intervention or enhancing it. And what I'm going to talk to you about today with this paper was an enhancement or an adjunctive add-on to the IPS model. So, I just wanted to kind of clarify that going in. Um, and I guess without further ado, let's get going. So, this paper was titled Critical Elements, so using Virtual Reality Job Interviewing, um, which I will also refer to as VR JIT. So, if you see that acronym referred to in these slides, I'm, that's the virtual Reality Job interviewing training program, um, in IPS supported employment. And, um, this was a project with many people. So, first, I want to, um, thank Dr. Matthew Smith, who is, um, the dean for research at, uh, the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Um, this was his, uh, project for a very long time, and it has V-V-V-R-J-I-T has been used not only in community mental health settings with adults with serious mental illness, but um, with youth with autism and, um, returning citizens in the Michigan prison system. Um, I worked with Dr. Smith as a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Michigan where I went, um, after my PhD, um, as well as Megan and Jeff, who were our research assistants at the time. Um, and then Eugene Vy with the state of Illinois, Kim Muer and Susan McGirk, who many of you are familiar with, with BU Center for Psych Rehab. And finally, but, uh, Lisa Rosano, who was at the time at Thresholds and um, is a professor at University of Illinois Chicago, though I believe, um, there's other things going on in her career right now. So, um, sorry about this line here. This, this is the only slide that would not agree to hide its background graphics <laugh>. So, I try to everything to remove that distracting line, but here we go. Okay. So, as I mentioned this, uh, work was primarily based at the University of Michigan School of Social Work, which is where V-V-R-G-I-T is still based currently for any of you who are interested, um, after this presentation. And it was a collaboration between multiple partners. So, there's a couple of pictures here. Um, this is a picture of an area a North central Chicago, where Thresholds mental health agency is based, thresholds is the largest mental health agency in the urban Chicago area. They serve an extremely diverse number of clients. Um, and this is where the randomized controlled trial of V-V-R-J-I-T within IPS took place, and I'll be talking about that in a second. And then I also have this gorgeous Italian like photo of Springfield, Illinois. Um, because the other area that where our data came from for this paper was, um, kind of scattered community, community mental health center sites where people were doing IPS, um, and using VR GIT, which we'll talk about in a second. Um, I just thought that was kind of interesting. I've never seen a picture of Springfield, Illinois that's looking like Italy, but here, there we go. Shout out to, to the folks in Springfield. Um, so just really briefly, my agenda today in this making sense of employment research webinar is to talk a little bit about the background of this paper, you know, why we decided to look at the data in this way, what our methods were, what the results were, and what are the implications that this of these results for employment services. I say employment services vaguely because it could be implications for IPS or also implications just for thinking about vocational work with individuals with serious mental health issues. So just briefly, um, and some of you may be very familiar with this background, and for some of you, this may not be your main area. So, um, please hang with me if this seems brief, like repetitive. So, one of the things that we know is that there seems to be this persistently high unemployment rate among adults with serious mental illnesses. So that's, you know, schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, um, psychosis, and, um, you know, sometimes bipolar one, depending on the situation. There's like divergent research in that area right now. Um, those diagnoses used to be kind of all grouped together underneath the SMI umbrella. So sometimes we use that acronym to refer to those diagnoses, but not always. And the research is always being updated in that area. Um, the, i, the individual placement and support, or IPS model is the primary evidence-based treatment to increase rates of competitive IE net sheltered employment. So, shelters sheltered employment, it used to be individuals who, who were under the SMI umbrella for diagnoses were sort of just had kind of ongoing vocational training, but they didn't necessarily go out and get jobs. They didn't interview, they didn't go out and get jobs in quote unquote, the real world. They often worked in things called sheltered workshops, which are still common in the developmental disability, intellectual disability community, where people are doing sort of piecemeal work for under, under minimum wage. Um, and so the IPS model came out and said, you know, we don't really have any strong data that that sort of vocational rehabilitation has outcomes in the real world in terms of people being employed. So, let's change what we're doing and focus really on placing people in real jobs. Um, however, even though IPS has been successful in placing people in real jobs, they have a, they have kind of a mixed rate of, um, of people who get, uh, get jobs after they participate in supported employment or IPS supported employment. So about 45% of people who participate in IPS are not obtaining employment. And some more recent studies have emerged demonstrating, um, that clients who stay in IPS longer without Eng without really getting into employment right away are having that successful job placement may benefit from add-on services or what we call adjunct services. And that was, um, Susan McGee's study, uh, referenced in that last piece. So, we have this kind of high chronic poverty rate, and we want to have people potentially be earning money or at least doing something that is meaningful to them and earning some money. And yet we have individuals maybe who've been unemployed longer who aren't necessarily finding that job, um, through IPS by itself. So, um, I I told you already a little bit about the IPS history, um, but what they do for those who aren't familiar is they focus on this kind of five areas. So rapid job placement. So, an individual indicates what their work history is, what kind of job they want, and the support and employment specialist kind of goes out and tries to create a job for them, or at least does a lot of, um, hands-on work to try to place them in a job. They can, they provide ongoing support such as, um, job coaching on the job, um, and it's based that this is driven by what the client is interested in. And they also provide benefit counseling, meaning that, like there's this, as you all know, when you have social security disability, um, there's an algorithm for how much you can earn before your disability benefits are adjusted. And so sometimes that's a barrier to people going back to work. And benefits counseling is a spot where, um, IPS can really help like, uh, demystify that for people. And so that's not no longer a barrier and they can kind of understand, okay, if I work this many hours, I'll still have this much of a benefit coming in. Um, and I already mentioned about the research. So, we had limited research on traditional vow rehab programs showing, uh, efficacy and competitive employment. And so, because of that, um, IPS as it as it is now, doesn't allow for a lot of like what we call job readiness, um, training or things like that. Oops, I went too far. Sorry about that. Um, so then just to kind of flip over to what VR JIT is, as I mentioned, it's virtual reality job interview training. It's an internet-based job interview simulator that facilitates repeated practice of job interviews with a virtual hiring manager named Molly Porter. So, there are, there are additional, um, names and people who are, um, sort of aimed at different target populations, but Molly Porter was the, the hiring manager that was used in both studies. We oftentimes at, at Michigan had referred to, um, this project just as Molly, because everybody kind of got used to that. So, what happens is that trainees who use this simulated, uh, virtual reality software, not software, internet-based internet, the inter the internet-based program, they practice job interviews. They, they practice their own responses with Molly, and then they receive four levels of automated feedback. Um, so let's go back forward to the picture. So, this is a picture of what Molly looks like. This isn't what she always looks like with the, with the, um, large retail establishment behind her there. Um, but, um, I'm going to click over it to some other pictures. It's quickly to show you all what V-R-J-I-T, um, looks like and it's going to make me, uh, must change over what I'm sharing. So, hold on one second. Okay, here we go. So now you should all see, uh, this is, this is, again, as I mentioned, university of Michigan School, social work, the Level Up lab. There'll be links later in the, um, presentation to access this information. So, here's some of the pictures where you, you learn about what an interview is, what you do, there's some general tips here on the right-hand side in green, um, being upbeat and positive, asking questions, um, how you talk about a disability handling legal questions. So, people basically do kind of like a job application where they, where they, um, indicate what they mainly want to do. And then, um, what happens is they move into a job interview, simulated job interview that's kind of based at that level that they indicated. Um, and they do get an overview, as I said, of these tips beforehand. And then basically the Molly program has a, a bank of thousand types of interview questions. And, um, so people can type in their responses, and they get real time feedback, you know, that was great, or that, that wasn't so great, um, from, from working with Molly. And so, this here is kind of what the interface looks like. This person here in the pink shirt, uh, pops up and gives them there, uh, gives them real, real-time feedback. So that is just briefly, um, what it looks like. And again, I have this link for you all, um, for later, see if we're seamless. Do we all see the, the slideshow again?

Jane Burke-Miller:

We could see it.

Shannon Blajeski:

Okay, great. Thank you. All right. So now talking a little bit more about the study. So, our aim with this study, um, was to explore the processes and perceived benefits of using B-R-G-I-T by IPS employment specialists who implemented the tool as well as, um, from their clients when that data was available. Um, and what we did is we had data from two separate studies. So, first, I'm going to talk about both these studies briefly. Um, first, there was a randomized control trial of IPS plus V-R-G-I-T versus IPS as usual. So, in that case, you know, we had a, a division between IPSA test group where they, they added V-R-G-I-T into their support and appointment services with their clients. And then we compared that group against people that were just receiving IPS services as usual. And as I mentioned, that was at Thresholds Community Mental Health Center in Chicago. And here is, uh, Dr. Smith's, um, RO one number. Um, and we also had done a qualitative study with IPS employment specialist across Illinois who received that V-V-R-J-I-T training on their own, and they just kind of introduced it to their IPS participants and had them use VR V-R-J-I-T to do job interviewing practice. So, a little bit more about the, the data sources. So, um, here's the divide. So, we had 54 people in the test group who got IPS, and they are GIT at Threshold in Chicago and 36 who were just an IPS as usual, a total out of 90. I bolded some of the inclusion criteria just so you all could understand, you know, who we are, who we were serving. So, they had to be actively engaged with IPS when they enrolled in the study, meaning they hadn't seen their employment specialist at least once in the last month. Um, their diagnoses had to be schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, major depressive disorder of any type or bipolar disorder, any type. Um, and then other, other things were English fluency, at least a fourth grade reading level. So that was related to, um, the making sure that they had the, the reading level to be able to work, understand Molly. Um, and importantly, they had to be currently unemployed or under unemployed and, planning to interview for a job within the next four weeks. And that's important because, you know, we intentionally didn't have, uh, or they intentionally didn't look at people who maybe like hadn't decided yet if they were serious about trying to get a job before they enrolled. So, there was some level of interest, um, before people started working with Molly. Um, and the exclusion criteria were, um, cognitive issues, um, some, uh, any, uh, we vision and hearing problems. And this is all related to where the tool wasn't development at the time. Um, and other kind of things about contact information and suicidality, both very typical RCT inclusion exclusion criteria. So how it went was, um, focus groups. So, people, obviously, they used V-R-G-I-T while they were at thresholds and, um, we collected quantitative data. They took their surveys, there's an additional paper about that, but the outcomes, but what this paper is interested in is, um, what people thought about it and how it went. So, um, there were focus groups and interviews to learn more about the implementation of Molly, um, how feasible it was, how acceptable it was, and how usable it was for clients. Um, and that was, again, at thresholds in the RCT, the focus groups included employment specialists who had been trained to implement it. So that ended up being 11 that participated across three focus groups of staff or ESS employment specialists. And then participants had to have had completed at least one session, and that ended up being 13 and of clients or participants across three focus groups. Um, we also did additional semi-structured interviews with employment specialists and participants, um, when we had started to learn a little bit more about implementation of the project, and we wanted to know a little bit more about that. So we really were able to access a lot of focus group and interview data, uh, all about using VR V-R-J-I-T within the context of ips, both from ESS as well as, uh, by that I mean employment specialist as well as, you know, these individuals who were receiving mental health services at Thresholds and used it. Um, so then we had, as I mentioned, the community based IPS sites throughout Illinois. And what we did there was we conducted semi-structured interviews, um, over Zoom with eight IPS employment specialists. And, um, we unfortunately could not interview clients. We didn't do a full-scale IRB for that study. We just were really at the time wanting to know how did, how did it go for the IPS, um, that workers who were, who were using this kind of on their own, and what, what did they learn? Um, for those of you who are vis very visual learners as I am as well, this is a, a, a figure kind of showing the lay of the land differently. So above here we have the RCT participants and the various focus groups, and then the second level here, we have the interviews. And then, um, on the bottom half we had the community IPS participants that we, that we interviewed. So that is all the sources of our data. And here is an interesting slide about the demographic. So, you could see here that, um, we we're comparing staff in one column and the clients in the other, you could see that staff overall were a little bit younger than our participants. So, clients had a mean age of 49.6, and, um, why staff were 34.3. So, it's interesting you have like younger employment specialists helping individuals who are more senior than they are. Um, there's also a race breakdown. Um, there was slightly higher amount of, um, white staff as compared to the clients. Um, and then the other thing that I bolded here on the right hand side is that, um, 77% of the IPS clients who participated in the focus groups, so the ones who were part of the R-I-R-C-T at thresholds were unemployed for more than two years at the time of this study. So yes, they were, you know, working with IPS, they were somewhat engaged that they had seen them at least once in the last 30 days, and they had said that they planned to interview for a job soon. Um, but more than two years of unemployment is quite a long time and, and allows in individual to get, you know, quite rusty if you think about job implications and job interviews at that time. So, um, after we, I'm going to talk a little bit now about data analysis. Basically, how we analyze all these types of data. So again, we had interview, I'm sorry, we had focus groups, and we had semi-structured interviews. We used the Deduce software, which is a qualitative coding software. And, um, a team of three of us coded the data, and this is how we did it. So, we used a modified grounded theory approach, and that's because we were really interested in like, what is this process like, is there a process that happens when people are using JIT, and what does that look like for employment specialists? You know, how does it impact their work and how does it impact participants when they're using it? So, we kind of were looking at the data in two levels, um, in our qualitative analysis. So first we used the constant comparative approach and then later theoretical coding. So, the first technique was that we used open coding, which is where your kind of just read the transcripts for understanding and then really like code everything that's interesting or that stands out to you. Um, three, three different people do that. And then you meet to compare what did you find, what did the codes indicate, and is there any discrepancy, um, between like, one person thinks something is this and one person thinks maybe it's this instead. Um, an example of that would be like confidence versus motivation. That's another hot topic in my own work right now. Um, and uh, so that's how we come up with a agreement on themes. And then, um, after we, we, um, resolve our discrepancies, uh, the lead analyst, which at the time was me, diagrammed a model of these processes to figure out, you know, what is happening here, um, for both IPS clients and, um, employment specialist. And then after we, and I'll, I'll be showing you that in in a little bit after we go through some of the themes. Um, and then finally at the end, you know, before we kind of settled on our final list of themes and our final diagram or which became our theoretical model, we, um, we kind of thought, well, where have we seen this before? You know, where is previous theoretical research around these mechanisms that are kind of underlying what's happening when people are using RJIT? You know, like, what are the change agents and what do we already know about those if they are the same ones that we think we're seeing? So next I'm going to walk you through the themes and just give a, a few quotes to kind of illustrate what we, what we saw. So, the first theme, and we only have three themes, and we feel like they were kind of operating separately, but also in an overlapping way. So, the first theme was, um, that JIT, it's a mouthful. When you even get to the end of a, the middle of a talk, um, that something about exposure in a safe environment was important to both, uh, clients who use this as well as like the IPS employment specialist who could kind of see what was happening. Um, so again, this is a simulated job interview, but it's not a mock interview. It's not like with your case manager who might have their own preconceived re uh, relationship stuff with you as that client provider, um, relationship. But this is, you know, a real, a real time human that's virtual who's giving you feedback immediately. But it's also not a real job interview where you have anxiety and you're, you know, just worried about everything and saying the wrong thing. Um, and again, feeling kind of out of practice or very rusty. So, uh, I'll stop talking and reading these to you. So, if the, the red is highlighting kind of these words that seem to be, or phrases that seem to be important for, um, employment specialists. So, the first person said, what I like the most is something I talk about earlier, just provides a very safe situation for someone to answer these more fundamental high frequency questions. Again, interview questions so they can have some comfort in what they're doing. So, there we see these words, safe and comfort. Um, and then another employment specialist said also, if they use the word comfort, um, it's good to have a comforting space to get your first exposure to what an interview might be like and practicing some of the more difficult questions, having a shot at it with nothing on the line. We thought that was great. So, safety. Um, and, um, uh, is there a hand raised? Do we want to take a question, Jane?

Jane Burke-Miller:

Um, yeah, I see a hand raised. Um, do you have a question, or could we save it till the end? If you want to.

Shannon Blajeski:

Put it in the chat? Yeah, let's, let's try to save it till the end if we can. Yeah, I just didn't, the hand raise was different in the chat, so thank you. Thank you.

Shannon Blajeski:

Um, okay, so that, again, this was exposure in kind of that safe environment. The second theme that we saw was practice that practicing. So, kind of a little bit implied that you're practicing when you're doing job interview training, uh, virtually, but practicing and receiving that job, interviewing feedback kind of again was, was this kind of repetition was helpful for people. So, here's a client, um, because I just gave, uh, only ess um, so in the blue something that we thought was was great that the client said. So, she's talking about a lot of the questions about that Molly asked being helpful, you know, how to work with, sorry, I'm moving my zoom around with a team. If you see somebody doing something wrong, do you report it to your boss or how you felt as far as your confidence in getting the job? And they said, I never really have been on an actual interview like that because when I went to work at their last job, I got the job and I was doing the Molly interview at the same time, and it made me more confident. Um, and so they kind of alluded to the next thing. They didn't end up keeping that job, but that the confidence really improved after asking a lot of the questions, just getting used to it. So, we kind of see that maybe, um, fear and anxiety going down along with the practicing and repetition going up. Um, and another, and then here we have an employment specialist perspective on the job practicing. So, they were talking about, um, reflecting on their work and how it improved with clients after the clients were using VR, GIT. So, it did help with me being able to kind of reiterate things that I was already telling my clients that are good interviews or appropriate interviews, things you want to share in interviews that helps them to reiterate the good things and frown on the bad things. So here we're seeing like the es saying, hey, you know, this was like an added a value-added aspect to my work, um, and something that I could then pick up and use in my conversation with people. Um, and then the third theme was seeing improved confidence and motivation and job seeking. And this is huge because we know that this is something that's kind of been underlying this long time, um, unemployment situations for people. Um, so this first client said a big part of what it was for me was it pushed me to understand, you know, I really have to work harder and I really can get a job, you know, it's really possible because I'm not just seeing a job as like a far off thing, but this thing that's closer than you think. And, and then that the practicing and the exposure we think really led to this. Um, and everybody kind of likes this next one, this next quote from our client. So, so it's like, wake up, turn out, turn the light bulb on, get on your Ps and Qs. cause this lady Molly is trying to help, you know, you're trying to get a job. And this lady, she's not playing with you, she's asking you questions that are essential to going back to work. I haven't worked in 21 years. And so, this was just a big step for me, and it helped me get my confidence back again and stuff. So just a lovely quote from, from somebody who struggled with very, very long i long term unemployment. And then our last example of a quote is from an es. Um, again, talking about in this case, making the meetings more productive, um, members what, uh, the thresholds use to describe their clients. Um, at the time, um, they were able to feel more comfortable with communicating with me around job goals. So that's a huge thing and helping them to be even more motivated to want to find work. And then it's like they became excited because they wanted to utilize the tools that they gained from Molly. Like, I've been practicing, so I'm ready. I'm like, okay, well let's go out and job search. Let's go get this job. Lots of cool stuff. I lied. There's one left <laugh>. Um, I'll let you all read this one. I highlighted Molly really helped them to again, break out of their shell. And I saw a difference in their level of confidence is the big takeaway here. So, you know, here across all of these interviews and focus groups, we heard all positive things when, when it was, when it came to like seeing clients show up back with their one-to-one IPS appointments, um, with more confidence or being more ready to talk about work, um, and maybe even showing some excitement about forward motion around employment. So, this is our theoretical model, as I mentioned earlier. And what we're seeing here is really that this improved confidence and motivation and job seeking was the last, was, was the kind of the end game here. So, they have the exposure, it was a safe environment so they could keep doing it. Um, and the keep doing it part is the practicing and receiving job, interviewing feedback. So that whole, like we call it, I I'm going to refer to it as behavioral rehearsal. The next slide is about implications. We did call it behavioral rehearsal here, but behavioral rehearsal is essentially like this whole, the more, the more time you do something, the more your confidence starts to go up as you feel like you understand it and grasp it more. Um, and so that's sort of what we are seeing here. Um, and again, individuals did receive jobs. Um, not everybody who went through the study did, but, but individuals did. And, um, so this was, we think some of the, the underlying things that were going on, which is what qualitative research can sometimes do to help us understand. Um, so moving into implications. Um, so I think that the biggest takeaway here, kind of thinking like high level and not so much about the, the specific themes is that individuals who have been disconnected from the labor market or employment have a wide gap to cross. I mean, 77% of the Chicago space sample unemployed for more than two years. Um, that data by the way had a lot of like very, very, very, like long-term either unemployment or extreme levels of underemployment among their, um, all of the, the people who were in both arms of the study, you know, and it's important I think for service providers to understand that what those barriers really are to employment. Um, and, um, also understand like how someone's confidence is almost non-existent about getting a job when it's been that long where you haven't interacted any with the labor market or with an employer in the real world. Um, I think that our, that's not, that's not like a, a hit or anything on mental health providers because that's not where the training originally was. You know, we're sort of trained to find out what someone's work history is and what they're interested in and just kind of like do some job applications and help them do job placement. But what we find is that that isn't quite the best fit for people who have a kind of a wider gap to cross to get there. And so potentially the RJIT could be one tool to add to IPS work to help people, um, get there with job interviewing training. Um, secondly, um, this exposure to job interview practice could be a low-risk way to improve job interview skills for these adults with longer unemployment. You know, so they're not, you know, there's, it's not like a job that they failed at, as I mentioned earlier. They're also not kind of having to do that job interview process in a mock interview format with their case manager. Um, you know, some case managers and, uh, supported employment specialists are awesome at mock interviewing and some of you don't like it at all. And that's kind of what we know based on the research that it's, and it's also a lengthy thing to have to do. Um, so this is kind of what, why this, why VR V-R-J-I-T is adjunctive for people. Um, as I mentioned, the behavioral rehearsal risk, improved job-related social skills and job interview self-confidence. And then lastly, um, V-R-J-I-T is separate from everyday IPS tasks. So, this is, was not part of our paper in the results, but so that in that way it provides value added job interview training for clients that's not completed by the es. So, you know, you have your tasks, you have your job development, you have all your fidelity items that you need to meet when you're an IPS worker. And in this case, um, for people who really need that connection, they can go and practice their job interviewing on the side and then come back and see you and talk to you about it. And as these ESS told us, where there's a lot of things that people learned, um, about that. Um, I will say that in my current work with young adults with early psychosis, I'm focused on a population of young adults who we sort of refer to as not in education, employment, or training. So people who either started having illness when they're in high school and dropped out of high school, or they just never worked ever in their life and they're young and we're finding really similar things, which is that, uh, in our research, which is that they aren't, um, they don't have the confidence and for young people, they don't even know like what to do for a job or what that would look like. We had people say when, when the employment specialist came to me and said, a job, I thought they meant a job meant 40 hours a week, and I was just in survival mode, and I didn't know what to do. And so, we kept hearing over and over again. I wasn't confident, I wasn't confident, I didn't have confidence. And when we interviewed, um, SEA staff, we found that very few of them understood that it wasn't confidence. They thought they weren't interested, they weren't motivated, it was anxiety, um, and that it was just really, difficult. So, um, I think like the, one of the takeaways from this qualitative paper is not only that this, this extra virtual interview job interviewing helps IPS workers with their job and it helps people become more comfortable, but that, um, people have gaps that we don't understand very well unless we talk to them about it. So, um, that I think is a, um, part to end on that part. And we did have some limitations to this study. So, um, some of you might have noticed that we didn't interview clients, so that was obviously one of our limitations. We didn't interview clients in the community study, so we didn't have that balance to hear from those clients. Um, because we analyzed the secondary data that was previously collected as part of different studies, we were unable to sample until we found a negative case. So, you know, if we had just been doing the study intentionally to learn about this, we might keep interviewing or recruiting for ESS who used B-R-J-I-T until we heard somebody that said, you know, it didn't really work for me, or, um, this client had this terrible experience and put the program or something. Um, you know, we did have clients in the RCT that, um, struggled with V-R-G-I-T just with like transportation. Because they weren't at the time delivering it at their home. It, this was just pre-COVID and it ended kind of right at the beginning and middle of the first year of COVID. Um, so, uh, I believe now there is like what we call mobile molly, where Molly can be go out with people in the field. Um, you'll have to verify that though with the, the Level Up lab folks, um, currently. Um, but so that's one limitation of, of using secondary data as we can only talk about what we saw. Um, again, we couldn’t interview community study clients and due to a small sample size and a qualitative method, this study is not generalizable to, to everybody. Um, this is some of the references of just things I talked about here, and we can make these slides available. Um, I do have further resources about V-R-J-I-T for you all on the last slide, but first I thought it was a good time to maybe stop for questions. Jane, are you monitoring the chat or would you like me to go through?

Jane Burke-Miller:

I'm sorry, I, yeah, I didn't unmute myself. Um, I could, yes, there's a couple of questions, but I wanted to first, uh, thank you for the presentation and, um, I was wondering if you could say again, how much, um, how much like staff time is required or, I know it's the, the, the Molly and the virtual reality training is done separately, but, um, how much support does somebody need in order to use it or to debrief after it and so on?

Shannon Blajeski:

Um, sorry about that. I was just scrolling for a second. Um, support wise, you mean for, for, uh, employment specialist to Right. Start using it mm-hmm <affirmative>.

Shannon Blajeski:

So, I believe the Illinois individuals who did it just, they went to a training, um, and then they just, they were able to use it. Um, they got like a, a task key from the training and were just able to have clients start using it so very low. Um, the one thing that did come up in our, in our randomized control trial was, or I'm sorry, our implementation. We had an implementation paper where we learned more about implementing it and delivering it. Um, the, the one thing that was a time issue at that time was like, sometimes the laptops would glitch with the program and if you were unlimited WIFI or something like that, and again, this is pre COVID, so some of this may have been ironed out right in a post COVID world as our, as all of our technology has evolved, um, with COVID. But, um, I think that I believe that was the number one issue that people had when it came to like something taking too long or it not working right. But otherwise, it's not something you have to sit next to the person and do. It's something that once you kind of get them logged in and they can start figuring out how to go through the interface, um, it's very simple and it's not something that you need to be there for, so they can do it completely independently of you.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Interesting. Um, so here's a question. I think this one's outside the scope of the talk. Um, I was wondering what about having a US passport to be able to handle employment sponsorship questions on online applications? Um, I don't, I mean, I think that, uh, and also, I guess insurance sales commission and solar sales commission jobs are going to be important. So, I think, you know, employment specialists are, you know, a lot of their job is job development, and so they do pay attention to, um, you know, how the market is, is job market is going in terms of careers and, and work and so on. But, um, I don't think that the, the virtual reality training really relates to that, those areas specifically. Does it?

Shannon Blajeski:

No, it doesn't. Yeah. Specific to that. Yeah.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Yeah. So, here's a question. Did the IPS provide the technology for clients to meet with Molly?

Shannon Blajeski:

Um, it wasn't provided by IPS. It's, it's like a standalone, uh, simulation program that's internet based. So, you just open up a webpage, and the client logs in and they can just start it. So, it's not something that IPS provides by itself. Does that, does that answer the question?

Jane Burke-Miller:

That was Tina. There were a couple questions sort of related, like, is Molly widely available and are there new AI technologies that would expand this training?

Shannon Blajeski:

Um, so this, this is, uh, a paper that I was working on three, four years ago, and I have not kept up with all of the things that have happened since then with V-R-J-I-T. Um, so I can talk about, you know, the qualitative aspect and what we found, but I would go to, I'm going to actually put, um, the level up thing in the chat, and it is also, um, this is the, the page that I showed you earlier, um, that you can click around and look at pictures of Molly and learn more about it. Um, and, um, that is one of the best ways to, to get a sense of how to use it. Mm-hmm

Jane Burke-Miller:

<affirmative>. And I think, um, follow up to the question, one of the earlier questions is where a person doesn't have a laptop. Um, the question about access. So, I think, um, mm-hmm <affirmative>. The access to Molly was through the IPS program, um, just through, through the sense of the technology of the

Shannon Blajeski:

Yes. The IPS workers had it, yeah. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Right?

Jane Burke-Miller:

So, I don't think now, uh, I mean, you, you, you must have a login, so you have to have some kind of, um, au authorization to use it at the moment. Um, yes. I mean, that may be something that changes in the future, but, um, um, I was wondering too about whether, and I don't know if this would've come up in the analysis, whether there's a, um, an age component, like older staff, older clients. I know that on, on the whole, the staff are younger who are probably more used to using online technology, and, but I can imagine that for some people, just hearing virtual reality might be a little intimidating, uh, if you don't know what to expect.

Shannon Blajeski:

Yes. Yeah. Could you repeat that, that part again, Jane? It was just a comment about the virtual reality.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Uh, no, this is like my question, just whether there was like,

Shannon Blajeski:

Oh, yeah.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Older people I’m speaking for myself, <laugh>. Yeah. Right.

Shannon Blajeski:

It sounds, it sounds a little like goggles and, you know, hand stuff <laugh> with big gloves, right? Yeah, yeah. That is the name. I mean, it was, it was a simulation software. Um, in fact, I'm actually going to move to the next slide because we have more resources here. Um, so if anyone's interested in like, how it was developed, uh, this first link is the original paper of how, um, uh, this simulation software company, um, started it with Dr. Smith and his work. Um, and so all the details behind it are there. Um, currently it's still being used, like I said, as virtual reality job interview training. Um, but that's this kind of simulation, um, use is becoming more and more widespread. I'm sure some of you who are on this call have some experience doing like simulated therapy and simulated, um, uh, like training practice in your work. It's becoming more and more common in like graduate schools for a training, um, just because, you know, you used to have to kind of have like the, the fake client kind of thing in the recorded room. And I think, I think again, COVID kind of sped us up. So <laugh>, well, this was virtual reality and simulation, and now I think during COVID it's kind of become more simulation focused. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And, um, yeah.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Yeah. Um, yeah. And then I'm sure more AI technologies will be coming at, I think at the moment it's more often used to enhance search engines. Like I know, I think the, the national Ticket to Work, there's a website, um, and it uses some kind of AI to, um, as sort of a, a virtual, you know, uh, assistant someone to, to answer questions online. So, it's being used in that way. Um, but I'm sure it's going to be expanding to, um, people say, looking forward to using this with IPS. Um, mock interviews are helping, but practitioner and participant relationships, age and employment gaps and timing constraints. Um, yeah, I think you kind of touched on all of those issues.

Shannon Blajeski:

Yeah. Yeah, it is. Um, so, so Ian, you're doing mock interviews right now and you see that they help, I don't know if Ian can talk,

Jane Burke-Miller:

Um,

Shannon Blajeski:

Or you could at least he said, thanks <laugh>. Thanks, Ian. That's great. Um, that's why I'm, I'm glad I mentioned that because I, you know, I started my career after my undergrad degree in psychology doing employment case management for a welfare office, um, in the state of Wisconsin. And I had job interest groups with people, and I did mock interviewing. And then it's interesting that my career, uh, through all of the years of working with, you know, the ACT model and, and a little bit with the IPS model within ACT teams and then early psychosis and focus on career development, that I came back in some ways to the early concept of mock interviewing. And I mean, there was a reason that we did it. Um, and it is to really kind of help people bridge that big gap, um, and that simulation as a way that they can, that they can do that without you taking up all of your time. cause all IPS workers know how time is valuable.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Yeah. And I think the, uh, Dr. Smith's outcomes papers have shown that it is effective Yeah. In terms of employment outcomes. And it's really interesting from, from this analysis that you presented, that it's the steps of getting the familiarity, the safety, the experience, and then having that confidence, um, going into interviews is what makes a, a big difference.

Shannon Blajeski:

Yeah.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Okay. Yeah, I think,

Shannon Blajeski:

Well, we are perfectly on time.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Yeah. I think, are we, any other questions right now? Uh, age gaps and egos could be disregarded with a non-person interview coach. Yeah. I think that was something that you found that the having somebody, uh, some an artificial, you know, somebody like Molly who is, doesn't come with, um, preconceived knowledge of the person and ideas, it's more, um, there's a lot to be said for that.

Shannon Blajeski:

Yeah, definitely. And like I said, I believe Rita and Travis were the, the two that were, um, used in the, the, the SD schools in Michigan, and they were found to be, um, a better fit than Molly for the young adult or youth population.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Yeah. Um,

Shannon Blajeski:

Yeah, I actually have to say a, a funny comment about that, about around the age thing. So in our, in the Chicago randomized controlled trial study, um, we had some either clients or ess refer to her as mean, Molly <laugh>.

Jane Burke-Miller:

<laugh>.

Shannon Blajeski:

Not that that, it wasn't always mean Molly, but like there were some responses and that the, um, the even the clients were like, yeah, mean Molly like really showed me things, you know, even though I didn't like the meanness, but I, because that's what you know, and there again, you can't be mean as their employment specialist <laugh>, right? You can be di you know, directive a little bit and supportive, but, um, sometimes it, it is just that real time feedback that's separate that I think is help another really seep a great part about the simulated job interviews. Yeah.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Um, last question. Has there been thought to tailor the questions for specific employers and allow the clients to take their responses and submit the answers they believe did the best? That's a really interesting question. Um, but I think that's more, um, to the people who are developing or

Shannon Blajeski:

Working. Yeah. I don't know. I do think that they, you can save your responses within the system to go back. Um, but I'm not sure if, I can't honestly remember if, if you can video it and like, you know, like record a video of it at the same time and play it back for yourself.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Yeah.

Shannon Blajeski:

But I know that the developers add a, they have added features, and they've added additional features over time, kind of like Zoom. Um, so check with the, check with the, uh, resources that I gave you there.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Yes. Okay. Great. Thank you so much. Um,

Shannon Blajeski:

Yeah. Um, hold on.

Jane Burke-Miller:

We, we'll, um,

Shannon Blajeski:

Yeah,

Jane Burke-Miller:

We'll wrap up here. We'll go

Shannon Blajeski:

Back to my PowerPoint.

Jane Burke-Miller:

So, I think there's no more questions. So, I want to thank everyone for taking time out of your day to participate. I especially want to thank Dr. Eski for your work and presenting today. There will be a video of this presentation posted online at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation website in case you'd like to access it later. In the meantime, when you exit the webinar, you will see a brief survey. Please take just a moment to provide us with feedback before moving on with your day. Finally, we're in the process of scheduling other webinars, so pay attention to your email. Thank you all very much for being here today.

Shannon Blajeski:

Nice. Seeing everyone. Thank you for having me.

Jane Burke-Miller:

Thank you for coming.