A Qualitative Multiple Case Study of the Transition Experiences of Parents and Service Providers of Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (Idd) in a Postsecondary Educational Program

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A QUALITATIVE MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES
OF PARENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH
INTELLECTUAL/DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (IDD) IN A
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.

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A Qualitative Multiple Case Study of the Transition Experiences of Parents and Service Providers of Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in a Postsecondary Educational Program

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the transition experiences of parents of young adults with IDD who are currently enrolled in a postsecondary educational program in the Southwest part of the United States. This qualitative multiple-case study used Schlossberg’s transition theory to frame the cases for this report. Schlossberg’s transition theory examines the way in which adults move through various transitions in their lives and what strategies they use to cope with the transitions. The theory identifies three different types of transitions: anticipated transitions, unanticipated transitions, and nonevent transitions. In addition, the theory identifies four coping resources: situation, self, support, and strategies, which adults use to assist them with managing during the transition. Parents participated in six one-on-one, semi structured interviews with open-ended questions based on Schlossberg’s transition theory. Program staff, interns and volunteers participated in a focus group. Each interview and the focus group ranged from 60-90 minutes in length. The data collected from the interviews and the focus group were transcribed, coded, and organized around themes linked to the key constructs of Schlossberg’s transition theory and additional themes that emerged from the data. Findings revealed nine key themes which add to the research body of knowledge by highlighting the role that parents play in the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work environment. Additionally, findings from this study provide valuable information to parents of individuals with IDD who are preparing their child for transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work environment.
Acknowledgments

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This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Keith, for your unconditional love and support throughout this program; to my children Tamia, Christion and Landon for the continuous encouragement through the laughs and smiles at the end of each day!
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) have an extensive history of challenges that prevent them from having a smooth transition into a higher education and or work setting after finishing high school (Bouck & Chamberlain, 2017; Chen, Leader, Sung, & Leahy, 2015; Cimera, Burgess, & Bedesem, 2014; Miller-Warren, 2016). A person with IDD, according to the American Community Survey (ACS), is an individual that has difficulty with concentration and remembering or making decisions due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition (Kraus, 2017). Extensive research has been conducted on factors that can assist individuals with IDD during the transition from school to work (Carter et al., 2015; Grigal, Hart, & Migliore, 2011; Harber, Mazzotti, & Mustian, 2016; Shogren & Plotner, 2012). Factors proven to be directly related to post school outcomes for individuals with IDD include: employment training, work experiences in high school, and expectations that parents hold for their child (Wehman et al., 2015). One key factor at the forefront of ensuring success for individuals with IDD transitioning into a postsecondary environment is the support of their parents (Bluestein, Carter, & McMillian, 2016; Doren, Gau, & Lindstrom, 2012; Householder & Jansen, 1999; Sosnowy, Silverman, & Shattuck, 2017; Wehman et al., 2015).

Parents of young adults with IDD often experience great anxiety as the high school years begin to come to an end (Cheak-Zamora, Teti, & First, 2015). Concerns about the next steps and fear of the unknown tend to haunt parents as they look to the school teachers and staff to assist them in the next steps for their child (Bluestein et al., 2016). Progress has been made to ensure that parents and those that work with young adults with IDD have a better understanding of the services and support available to them to help with a smooth transition from high school to a
In 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which resulted in a federal law designed to assist individuals with disabilities prepare for entering the workforce (Hossain, 2015). According to this law, out-of-school youth include those individuals between the ages of 16-24 who face specific barriers such as homelessness or a disability, and are provided with training and services to enhance their likelihood of becoming gainfully employed (Hossain, 2015). The WIOA also has provisions for individuals with disabilities which enable access to educational pathways designed to lead the individuals toward gaining the information and skills needed to be successful in a career track (Hossain, 2015).

Young adults with IDD have a history in the workforce of being unwelcomed and excluded and to this day, the unemployment rate for such individuals remains unsettling (Butterworth et al., 2013; Davies & Beamish, 2009; Grigal, Hart et al., 2011; Hernandez et al., 2008). In the 2017 Disability Statistics Annual Report (Kraus, Lauer, Coleman, & Houtenville, 2018), individuals with IDD comprised 4.5% of the overall U.S. population for individuals between the ages of 18-64. As individuals reach age 65 or older, the percentage increases to 8.9% (Kraus et al., 2018). In 2016, the national unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities (10.6%) was nearly double of those without a disability (4.6%; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Comparatively, the national employment rates for individuals with IDD are 25.5% compared to 51.0% for those with a hearing disability and 41.8% for those with a vision impairment (Kraus, 2017). In addition, their earnings are only slightly above minimum wage in entry-level jobs, and it’s highly unlikely of getting a raise or promotion (Chen et al., 2015;
Historically, Nevada ranks above average when comparing employment rates of individuals with disabilities to other states. However, recent trends identified by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017) indicate a decline in Nevada’s employment rate for individuals with disabilities. In 2016, Nevada unemployment rates for individuals with disabilities ages 16 to 64 years of age was 11.5%, and for individuals with no disability the unemployment rate was 4.7% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Employment status for individuals with a disability in 2016 was 4,356 and for those without a disability for the same year was 138,164 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). In 2015, the mean annual earnings from work for individuals with no disability in Nevada were $41,000 compared to $27,000 for those individuals with IDD (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Based on this data, creating employment access for individuals with disabilities is not only important, but should be viewed as a priority (Cimera et al., 2014).

Many of the studies on individuals with IDD have focused on the individual’s role for increasing postsecondary educational or employment outlooks; however, fewer studies have focused on the role of the parents on these individuals’ employability (Cook, Hayden, Wilczenski, & Poynton, 2015; McKenzie, Ouellette-Kuntz, Blinkhorn, & Demore, 2016). Several researchers have confirmed that many parents of individuals with IDD report concerns with high levels of unemployment and limited access to activities in the community (Cook et al., 2015; McKenzie et al., 2016).

The support of the family can play a vital role in the overall employment success of young adults with IDD (Beyer, Meek, & Davies, 2016; Brotherson, Berdine, & Sartini, 1993; Doren et al., 2012; Miller-Warren, 2016). Throughout the years, legislative actions have been
implemented to emphasize the important role parents play in the lives of individuals with disabilities while in school and also once they age out or graduate (Butterworth et al., 2013; Papay, 2011; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). One identifiable way to help with raising the employment rate of young adults with IDD is to ensure families are receiving the support needed from trained professionals such as job developers and employment specialists (Butterworth, Migliore, Nord, & Gelb, 2012).

Progress has been made to improve the policies and practices that facilitate seamless entry into competitive employment (Blick, Litz, Thornhill, & Goreczny, 2016; Bush & Tassé, 2017; McDaniels, 2016). Many researchers have affirmed that employment status is one of the most important and frequently studied variables due to the vital role it plays in the overall quality of life (Bouck & Joshi, 2016; Oswald, 2016; Sima, Wehman, Chan, West, & Leucking, 2015). The Americans with Disabilities Act (1996) is one of the important pieces of enacted legislation that illustrates the significant progress made towards the integration of young adults with disabilities into the workforce. This act was instrumental in ensuring that individuals with disabilities are treated fairly and have at least the same equal employment rights as the general population. While the improvement of policies and practices for individuals with IDD remains important, other factors, such as the benefits gained by employment, warrant attention as well (Wei et al., 2015).

Employment can bring a variety of benefits for young adults with IDD. Researchers have documented several benefits including, but not limited to: financial gain and positive effects on their psychological health (Ellenkamp, Brouwers, Embregts, Joosen, & van Weeghel, 2015; Petner-Arrey, Howell-Moneta, & Lysaght, 2016); learning new skills, developing valued social relationships, and making a contribution to an organization or business (Carter & Lunsford,
When provided with the appropriate supports while in high school and during the transition, young adults with IDD can make substantial contributions to the workforce (Novak, 2015). Young adults with IDD, and those without, often lean on the support of their parents while attending school and making decisions about their future. When it comes to employment, however, young adults with IDD may need more and different types of support than those without IDD. Much of that support for young adults with an intellectual/developmental disability not only comes from the parents but also from friends, coworkers, and other individuals the parents may know (Ellenkamp et al., 2015).

**Statement of the Problem**

McKenzie et al. (2016) noted that young adults with IDD need intensive support from family, educational institutions, and community agencies in order to transition successfully into fulfilling jobs as adults. Services in Las Vegas are disjointed and parents of young adults with intellectual and other IDD often encounter multiple barriers related to entering postsecondary education (Wei et al., 2015) as well as obtaining and maintaining employment (Sundar et al., 2018). Employers are often reluctant to hire young adults with disabilities, and this reluctance can have a drastic, adverse effect on the unemployment rate for this population (Gewurtz, Langan, & Shand, 2016). There are other factors that interfere with the ability of young adults with IDD to enter postsecondary education and obtain and maintain employment. Such factors noted by Lindsay, Cagliostro, Albarico, Mortaji, and Karon (2018) include motivation or level of disability. Furthermore, Canha, Simões, Owens, and de Matos (2016) noted that young adults
with disabilities may experience multiple rejections in their job search, which could decrease their level of confidence and motivation in their job search process.

Once young adults with IDD have secured an offer of employment, they may have to contend with additional stressors. The importance of workplace culture and the impact that culture has on these individuals’ ability to maintain a job once secured is very important (Akkerman, Kef, & Meininger, 2017). For young adults with IDD, finding and securing a job is one aspect of their journey, but once they have been hired, the level at which they feel included can impact their success at maintaining their job (Scott, Falkmer, Girdler, & Falkmer, 2015). Accordingly, parents play a critical role in helping young adults with IDD transition into adult life, including managing the stressors associated with employment (Wehman et al., 2015). Thus, it was important to understand the experience of parents, the barriers they face, and how they overcome the myriad challenges faced by their children as they transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to understand the (a) experiences of parents of young adults with IDD related to the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting in the Southwestern part of the United States; (b) parents’ perceptions of barriers and challenges during the transition into a postsecondary educational and or work setting; and (c) how parents utilized their access to resources to overcome those barriers and or challenges. Through the use of a case study approach, this study’s findings identified support systems relative to the transition experience perceived to be the most beneficial to parents of young adults participating in a postsecondary educational program located in the Southwestern part of the United States.
Research Questions

The research questions and sub-questions used to guide this study include:

**RQ1:** What were experiences of parents of young adults currently involved in a postsecondary educational program for individuals with IDD located in the Southwestern part of the United States during the transition from high school into the program and or a work setting?

a. What barriers were encountered by parents during the transition?

b. What resources were most beneficial to parents during transition?

c. To what extent were the resources utilized to support with the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting?

**RQ2:** In what ways did the postsecondary educational program assist families with the overall transition into the program and or work setting?

Significance of the Study

This study was focused on the transition experiences of families with young adults with IDD in a city in the Southwestern part of the United States. The results of this multiple case study provide insight from parents’ experiences related to the transition period from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting. In addition, the researcher examined the effectiveness of a postsecondary program that provides services and support to individuals with IDD in assisting individuals and families with the transitional period. Moreover, findings provide strategies for vocational rehabilitation specialists and special educators to identify areas in which to assist families during this critical period.
Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory was introduced in 1981 as a way to describe the “human adaptation to transition” (p. 2). Schlossberg described transition as “any event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 111). Schlossberg believed that individuals have a variety of forces that determine their means to be able to manage their transition, and that resources and assets are available to influence how the transition occurs (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 1995).

Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory was developed through the use of other existing theories with the hope of developing a framework that could assist with understanding adults in transition, as well as providing tools for these individuals to better cope with being in that state of transition (Evans, et al., 2010). The theory was developed to provide a framework that would allow those who work with adults to understand transition through a more comprehensive lens (Anderson et al., 2012). This framework examines the actual transition process and the factors affecting the individual throughout the process (Schlossberg, 2011).

The Transition Model

Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory affirms three distinct types of transitions: (a) anticipated transitions, (b) unanticipated transitions, and (c) nonevent transitions (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). Schlossberg (2011) stated, “The transition model provides a structure for analyzing any transition” (p. 161). In order to effectively deal with change, an individual must understand each type of transitions and the meaning they hold for the individual (Schlossberg, 2011).
**Anticipated transitions.** Anticipated transitions are described as any major life event that is expected to occur (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984, 2011). Specific examples of this type of transition include events such as graduating from high school, getting married or having a child. Anticipated transitions are expected to occur for most individuals and are seen as normal events of passage (Schlossberg, 2011).

**Unanticipated transitions.** Unanticipated transitions include events that are unexpected or outside of the normal trajectory (Schlossberg, 1984). Once this type of transition happens, the individual must adjust to manage the event and move forward. Common examples of unanticipated transitions include being laid off from work, being diagnosed with a serious illness, or the unexpected news of needing to have surgery (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984, 2011).

**Nonevent transitions.** Nonevent transitions are events that are expected to take place but for one reason or another, never happen (Schlossberg, 2011). The nonevent transition may cause a sense of disappointment and or doubt within the individual (Schlossberg, 1984). Specific examples of nonevent transitions include going through life and never getting married or expecting to get a raise that never materializes (Schlossberg, 2011).

**Coping Resources: The 4S System**

Schlossberg (2011) noted that managing transitions involves coping with change; the individual must access internal and external resources to successfully negotiate the transition. Schlossberg outlined four primary resources that must be identified for coping and labeled them the 4S system. The 4S system includes: (a) situation, (b) self, (c) supports and (d) strategies. Each resource is beneficial in determining how the individual will be able to manage the transition they are experiencing (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984).
**Situation.** The situation of the transition simply refers to what is going on in that individual’s life at the time of the transition that might have some type of effect on the individual’s ability to cope with the transition (Schlossberg, 1984, 2011). Additionally, Schlossberg (2011) outlined that if any other issue in the individual’s life is a source of stress and is present, it can have an effect on the individual’s ability to deal with the transition at that time. The situation includes having to deal with issues that cause the individual to ponder how to handle different stresses in order to ensure that the transition is smooth (Schlossberg, 2011).

**Self.** The concept of self-addresses the manner in which the individual views the situation (Schlossberg, 2011). This would include the way in which the individual is, “able to deal with ambiguity” (Schlossberg, 2011, p.160). When individuals are able to be optimistic when faced with multiple transitions, they will likely be able to cope with those transitions as they experience them (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011).

**Support.** Schlossberg (2011) included the support as what the individual can depend or rely on while going through various transitions. Supports not only help the individual to manage the transition but are “critical to one’s sense of well-being” (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160). The supports are any external resources that an individual can rely on during their time of transition. These supports can include their family and or members of their community (Montgomery, 2017; Schlossberg et al., 1995).

**Strategies.** Strategies are the specific coping mechanisms that an individual relies on to manage the transition process (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). The individual who has the ability to be more flexible in situations tends to have an array of strategies to use when managing transitions (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011). Strategies are often
described as the methods the individual uses to control what is happening during the transition (Montgomery, 2017; Schlossberg et al., 1995).

The final piece of the transition framework occurs when the individual can identify exactly what is happening in their life and what resources they have available to assist them throughout the transition. Schlossberg (2011) conceptualized this stage as the individual either moving into the transition, moving through the transition, or moving out of the transition. Knowing this information is important because it can help individuals establish which of their coping strategies will be the most effective and when to use them (Schlossberg, 1984, 2011).

Assumptions

The researcher identified several assumptions related to this study of parental perspectives on the transition from school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting for young adults with an intellectual/developmental disability.

1. Parents of the young adults with IDD are the ones to serve as advocates for their son or daughter.

2. Parents of the young adults with IDD will be honest and open about what they experienced or are currently experiencing related to their young adult transitioning into a postsecondary educational and or the work environment.

3. The majority of parents of young adults with IDD desire positive transitions from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work environment.

4. The majority of the parents have access to a network of people, resources, and organizations they may use throughout the transition process.
Delimitations

The following delimitations were imposed in the design of this study to obtain an in-depth understanding of parental perspectives as they relate to the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work environment for young adults with IDD.

1. The study was conducted with parents of young adults currently enrolled in a postsecondary educational program in the Southwestern part of the United States.

2. Interviews were limited to parents of young adults:
   a. with intellectual disabilities, Down syndrome, or autism;
   b. between the ages of 18-26;
   c. who attended a high school within the city located in the Southwestern part of the United States; and
   d. who currently participate in a campus-based educational program and or in a (paid or non-paid) work setting.

Definition of Terms

The following terms used throughout the dissertation are defined here and identify a common understanding of the scope of the study. Intellectual/developmental disability (IDD) and intellectual disability is used interchangeably throughout the study.

**Autism.** Autism spectrum disorder and autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as repetitive behaviors (“Autism,” 2018).

**Cognitive/developmental disability.** A cognitive/developmental disability is a cognitive, emotional, or physical impairment, especially one related to abnormal sensory or motor
development, which appears in infancy or childhood and involves a failure or delay in progressing through the normal developmental stages of childhood (“Cognitive/Developmental,” 2009).

**Competitive employment.** Competitive employment includes work in the labor market that is performed on a full- or part-time basis. This is an integrated setting for which the individual is compensated at or above minimum wage, but not less than the customary and usual wage paid by an employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled (Butterworth et al., 2013).

**Customized employment.** Customized employment was first conceived in 2001 with the overall goal of supporting individuals with disabilities so they may obtain all of the services that they need to help them become employed while in one location (Riesen, Morgan, & Griffin, 2015).

**Intellectual disability.** And intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. It has also been referred to as intellectual/developmental disability or mental retardation (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2013).)

**Full employment.** Full employment is defined as all eligible individuals who would like to work are able to find employment at prevailing wages (“Full Employment,” n.d.)

**Supported employment.** Supported employment is the system of support for people with disabilities in regard to ongoing employment in integrated settings. Supported employment provide needed assistance such as job coaches, job development, job retention, transportation, assistive technology, specialized job training, and individually tailored supervision (Wehman, Chan, Ditchman, & Kang, 2014).
Transition. Transitions are the life changes, adjustments, and cumulative experiences that occur in the lives of young adults as they move from the high school environment to independent living and work environments (Brotherson et al., 1993).

Summary

Chapter 1 provided a brief background on the transition of young adults with IDD from school to a work setting. The rationale for this study was based on the limited research available on the parental perspective as it relates to this critical transition period. Additionally, this chapter outlined the significance of the problem, the theoretical framework used for the study, the research questions to be examined, the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the key terms and definitions of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature relevant to the study of parental perspectives on the transition from school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting for young adults with an intellectual/developmental disability. Included in the literature review is research on Schlossberg’s (2011) transition framework, which was used to frame the study, key legislation related to individuals with disabilities preparing for and entering the workforce, transition services as they relate to young adults with disabilities preparing for and entering the workforce, employment options for young adults with IDD, literature on the inclusion of young adults with IDD into postsecondary education and the importance of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, which was instrumental in ensuring that young adults with IDD could have access to postsecondary educational opportunities.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the case study methodology and research design, research questions, selection of the case and participants, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, design quality considerations, and ethical considerations.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Young adults with IDD tend to have difficulty making a smooth transition from high school to areas of adult life compared to their peers who have other disabilities (Sosnowy et al., 2017). As with young adults who graduate from high school who do not have a disability, the desires of a young adult with a disability are to live independently, attend college, and obtain a job to secure a nice life (Sosnowy et al., 2017). There is a significant lack of research centered on outcomes such as independent living, post-secondary education, and employment outcomes related to young adults with IDD and their families (Sosnowy et al., 2017). Based on this lack of research, Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory guided the exploration of the perceptions and experiences of parents of young adults with IDD who transitioned into a different setting beyond high school.

The research questions, based on Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory, guided this study:

**RQ1:** What were experiences of parents of students with an intellectual/developmental disability currently involved in a program at a University in the Southwest during the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting?

a. What barriers were encountered by parents during the transition?

b. What resources were most beneficial to parents during transition?

c. To what extent were the resources utilized to support the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting?
RQ2: In what ways did the postsecondary educational program assist families with the overall transition into the program and/or work setting?

Based on the overall research goal, as well as the research questions developed to guide the study, the following topic areas are examined in this chapter to help provide context for the overall study. The topic areas include: (a) background information on transition related services, (b) Schlossberg’s transition theory, (c) historical overview, (d) parental involvement, (e) transition outcomes, (f) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, (g) employment options, and (h) gaps in the literature. The chapter concludes with a summary.

**Background**

Individuals with IDD have the same wants and desires as their non-disabled peers (Sosnowy et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2015). A young adult with IDD can achieve similar goals of going to college and becoming gainfully employed as long as they have a support system in place to help them achieve those goals (Wei et al., 2015). Parents and or guardians are the anchor of the support system for their young adult, as they have a similar goal to those parents whose young adult does not have a disability: to enhance the quality of life for their young adult (Cheak-Zamora et al., 2015).

Quality of life is important and several factors can help with its overall improvement (Biggs & Carter, 2016). Factors such as education and employment can help improve overall personal satisfaction (Simplican et al., 2015). Families with individuals with IDD want to ensure that their quality of life is as close to normal as possible (Biggs & Carter, 2016; Nicholas, Attridge, Zwaigenbaum, & Clarke, 2015; Simplican et al., 2015). Young adults with a disability who have the opportunity to attend a postsecondary educational institution can such as acquire socialization skills and hands on experience that enhance their quality of life (Simplican et al.,
Sheppard-Jones, Kleinert, Druckemiller, and Ray (2015) confirmed that young adults with IDD who attend a postsecondary educational institution gain valuable social skills through interaction with their typical peers and increase their chances of being successful in an employment setting.

Employment may be one avenue for young adults with IDD to increase their social participation in the community (Lysaght, Petner-Arrey, Howell-Moneta, & Cobigo, 2017; Simplican et al., 2015). Social inclusion by means of employment and other community involvement could be beneficial for persons with IDD and the greater community (Lysaght et al., 2017; Simplican et al., 2015). Parents of young adults with IDD often hold high expectations for their child (Petner-Arrey et al., 2016). One such expectation is for their young adult to gain employment experience. Parents often use their networks to assist their young adult in finding employment opportunities that can be successfully obtained (Petner-Arrey et al., 2016).

Employment for young adults with IDD is not only good for overall society, but helps individuals develop additional skills they may not have developed while in high school (Chen et al., 2015; Lindsay et al., 2018). For example, social skills can be enhanced by having daily contact with individuals without disabilities and with co-workers (Carter et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2015). These relationships may play a significant role in individuals’ overall development with the potential to last a lifetime.

Timmons et al. (2011) identified factors that influence the employment-related decision-making of young adults with IDD. The sample included adults with IDD. Key findings suggested that families, school-based staff, and the community play a significant role in the employment-related decisions for young adults with intellectual disabilities (Timmons et al., 2011). Additionally, many of the young adults with a disability identified key personal reasons for
wanting to maintain employment, which included increased earnings, productivity, the admiration of others and the quality of social relationships (Hirano & Rowe, 2016). Similarly, Henry, Petkauskos, Stanislawzyk, and Vogt (2014) found that employers who hired individuals with intellectual disabilities identified the challenge of not knowing the actual abilities the individual possessed. Furthermore, the benefits included an increase in the overall diversity of their organization and having an opportunity to expand the talent pool within the organization (Henry et al., 2014).

Grigal, Hart et al. (2011) noted a 20% difference in the type of employment opportunity between these groups related to those that successfully landed a paid employment opportunity after high school. Additionally, a high percentage of individuals with IDD were not working or working for less than minimum wage (Grigal, Hart et al., 2011). These findings highlight the continued and distinct difference in outcomes for those individuals who have transition planning in high school and those who do not have access to this vital resource.

A high percentage of individuals with disabilities other than IDD are able to find employment post high school (Bouck, 2014). A comparison between those individuals with IDD with a job and those with other disabilities who have a secured job revealed at least a $2.00 difference in hourly wage (Bouck, 2014). An increasing number of companies are working to improve their diversity strategies (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2016). Employment agencies that work with school systems should take advantage of this openness to help companies expand their diversity outlook and assist with the improvement of employment rates for individuals with disabilities (Henry et al., 2014).
Theoretical Framework: Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory was introduced in 1981 as a way to be able to describe the “human adaptation to transition” (Schlossberg, 2011 p. 2). Schlossberg described transition as “any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 111). Schlossberg believed that individuals have a variety of forces that determine their means to be able to manage their transition as well as resources and assets that influence how the transition occurs (Anderson et al., 2012; Goodman et al., 2006).

Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory examines the actual transition process and the factors that affect an individual throughout that process. The theory was developed to help adult individuals and those who assist them understand transitions through a comprehensive lens that includes the experience of the transition and the coping mechanisms individuals use to manage the transition (Evans et al., 2010). The theory is useful to describe the experiences of individuals with intellectual disabilities as they transition from high school into the adult environment.

The Transition Model

Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory identifies three distinct types of transitions: (a) anticipated transitions, (b) unanticipated transitions, and (c) nonevent transitions (Schlossberg, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Schlossberg (2011) affirmed, “The transition model provides a structure for analyzing any transition” (p. 161). Individuals who desire to successfully manage change must understand the type of transition they are experiencing at any given time (Schlossberg, 2011).

Anticipated transitions. Anticipated transitions are described as any major life event that is expected to occur (Schlossberg 1981, 1984, 2011). Specific examples of this type of transition
include events such as graduating from high school, getting married or having a child. These types of transitions are expected to occur for most individuals (Schlossberg, 2011).

**Unanticipated transitions.** Unanticipated transitions include those events that are not expected to happen (Schlossberg, 1984). Common examples of unanticipated transitions include being laid off from work, being diagnosed with a serious illness or the unexpected news of needing to have surgery (Schlossberg 1981, 1984, 2011). Once this type of transition happens, an individual must adjust to get through the event and move forward.

**The nonevent transitions.** Nonevent transitions are events that expected to take place but for one reason or another, the events never happen (Schlossberg, 2011). The nonevent transition could cause a sense of disappointment and or doubt within the person (Schlossberg, 1984). Specific examples of nonevent transitions include going through life and never getting married or an anticipated job raise that does not materialize (Schlossberg, 2011).

**Coping Resources: The 4S System**

Schlossberg (2011) noted the key to dealing with any transition involves the way in which the individual copes with change. Schlossberg outlined a four-step system to identify the coping aspect of transitions. The 4S system is a way of identifying the resources that an individual has to be able to cope with the transition they are experiencing. The 4S system includes: (a) situation, (b) self, (c) supports, and (d) strategies. A careful examination of each component of the system is beneficial in determining how an individual will be able to manage the transition they are experiencing (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984).

**Situation.** The situation of the transition simply refers to what is going on in the individual’s life at the time of the transition that could have some type of effect on the person’s ability to cope with the transition (Schlossberg 1984, 2011). Additionally, Schlossberg (2011)
outlined that if any other issue in the individual’s life that is a source of stress is present, it can have an effect on the individual’s ability to deal with the transition at that time. The situation includes having to deal with issues that cause the individual to ponder how to handle different stresses in order to ensure that the transition is smooth (Schlossberg, 2011).

**Self.** The self-component of transition assessment addresses the manner in which the individual views the situation. This includes the way in which the individual is, “able to deal with ambiguity” (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160). When individuals are able to be optimistic when faced with the various transitions faced, this typically determines how well they will be deal with the transition as they are going through it (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011).

**Support.** Schlossberg (2011) include support as what the individual can depend or rely on while going through the various transitions. Supports are any external resources that an individual can rely on during their time of transition. These supports can include their family and/or members of their community (Montgomery, 2017, Schlossberg et al., 1995). When transitioning individuals have supports in place, it not only helps them through the transition, but is, “critical to one’s sense of well-being” (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160).

**Strategies.** Strategies are the coping mechanisms that an individual relies on to manage the transition process (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). The individual who has the ability to be more flexible in situations tends to be to be one who has an array of strategies to use when managing transitions (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011). Strategies are often described as the methods individuals use to control what is happening during the transition (Montgomery, 2017; Schlossberg et al., 1995).
Moving Through Transition

The final piece of the transition framework identifies exactly what the individual has going on in their life and what they have available to them to help assist them throughout the transition (Schlossberg, 2011). This stage occurs as the individual is either moving into the transition, moving through the transition, or moving out of the transition (Schlossberg, 2011). This information is important to identify because it can help individuals establish which of their coping strategies will be the most effective during that stage of transition (Schlossberg, 1984, 2011).

Historical Overview

Transition Services

Since the beginning of the 19th century, educational opportunities (specifically public education) for the disabled have been a topic of discussion (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). Jaeger and Bowman (2002) asserted that the disabled population had to survive the 19th century movements of segregation and legislation before they would even get the chance to participate in public education. While there were certain private schools geared toward a specific disability, they were few in number.

Over the years, specific legislation has continued to focus on the rights of individuals with a disability took many forms. The primary focus of the legislation for individuals with disabilities is to ensure fair treatment and equal rights for these individuals (Kirby, 2017). Several of the various pieces of legislation related to individuals with intellectual disabilities is provided below to help provide an understanding on the focus of each piece of legislation.
Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

The landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) introduced the concept that equal opportunity was applicable to those with or without disabilities. Additionally, *Brown v. Board of Education* defined the slim likelihood of a child being able to succeed in life if he or she is denied the opportunity of an education, and that education of all should be equal (Jaeger & Bowman, 2002). While much of the legal proceeding dealt with racial segregation in the public-school system, several policies were developed that could be applied to individuals with a disability. Straus and Lemieux (2016) described it best, “when colorblind individualism becomes a policy goal, it discourages pro-integration, pro-community policies” (p. 58).

The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504

The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504 (1973), was passed by Congress to protect the rights of the disabled from outdated and biased perceptions and laws to which the disabled were subject and to educate a populace that was unfamiliar with and insensitive to the obstacles confronting individuals with disabilities (Jaeger & Bowman, 2002). This act was designed to protect individuals with a disability from discrimination by any organization that received federal assistance, which would include all public-school systems (Pasachoff, 2014). While this act was passed by Congress, some have argued that state demographics vary, further impacting the access to equal treatment for individuals with disabilities. This variation includes differences in white students being overly represented and Hispanic students being underrepresented (Samuels, 2015). Samuels (2015) confirmed that in New Hampshire, the students covered under this section of the rehabilitation act were “overwhelmingly white, disproportionately male” (p. 5). In addition, Samuels noted those same statistics in New Mexico and Wisconsin come in almost half of the statistics reported in New Hampshire. This is one example of the variation across states.
While this section of the Rehabilitation Act was designed specifically to protect all individuals “who have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities” (Samuels, 2015, p. 5), the statistics noted do not reflect that this is always the case.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act**

The Americans with Disabilities Act, which was signed into law in 1996 by President George Bush, mandates protection for persons with disabilities against discrimination in a wide range of activities in both the private and public sector (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008). The Act (Title 42, Section 126) discusses equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This title and section define areas in which individuals with physical and or mental disabilities have been subjected to discrimination (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008). The forms of discrimination include the isolation and or segregation of individuals with disabilities and the discrimination that takes place in various settings such as employment, housing and education. In addition, individuals with disabilities continually encounter various forms of discrimination, including outright intentional exclusion, the discriminatory effects of architectural, transportation, and communication barriers, overprotective rules and policies, failure and practices, exclusionary programs, activities, benefits, jobs or other opportunities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008).

Considerable research is available on transition services, which includes information on the overall transition process, curriculum as it related to transition services, as well as instruction related to transition. However, a lack of research is present on the combination of the three, how to improve transition services overall, and how transition services are being provided (Collet-Klingerberg, 1998; Mellard & Hazel, 1992; Taylor & Seltzer, 2010). Carter, Owens, Trainor, Sun, and Swedeen (2009) conducted a study in which transition-related strengths and needs of
160 students diagnosed with emotional and or behavioral disorders were examined. A key finding of their study was the importance of transition assessment and the alignment of the assessment of needs, strengths, interests and aspirations of these individuals with IDD and their families (Carter et al., 2009).

**The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992**

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 outline specific transition activities. These transition related activities are linked to the support and services offered through the rehabilitation system. Individuals with disabilities and their families begin working with the rehabilitation system while still in high school in preparation to exit school programs (Wehman & Walsh, 1999). The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 defined transition as “the process of planning for movement from high school to the world of work” (Wehman & Walsh, 1999, p. 11). The specific definitions of transition services of The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 are a set of activities for individuals with a disability that prepares these individuals to be able to move from high school to “post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation” (Wehman & Walsh, 1999, pp. 11, 14).

Additionally, Wehman and Walsh (1999) noted that the activities that are designed for the individuals with a disability should be focused on the specific needs of each individual and include their wants, requests, and desires as it relates to their future.

**The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA)**

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 aims to allow individuals with disabilities to obtain services related to employment that increase the likelihood of retaining employment and limiting their need to depend on cash benefit programs such as
social security (O’Day & Revell, 2007). Individuals with a disability who are eligible and receive social security benefits can obtain a job without the fear that they will lose the money they receive through social security (Golden, O’Mara, Ferrell, & Sheldon, 2000). Additionally, individuals who decide to join the workforce can also continue to receive Medicaid and Medicare if they qualify (Golden et al., 2000). Lastly, the Ticket to Work portion of the act implemented an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to work with their local vocational rehabilitation organizations to receive employment services (Golden et al., 2000).

The Individuals with Disabilities Act

Congress first enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004) in 1975 as P.L. 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Since its inception, it has been revised on numerous occasions. Turnbull, Huerta, and Stowe (2006) confirmed that the Individual with Disabilities Act, better known at the IDEA, has a focus on six primary areas. These areas include: (a) that children with a disability will receive a quality education at no cost, (b) parents and or teachers at the assigned school are able to have an evaluation done if they suspect that a child has a disability, (c) all students who have a disability are entitled to an individualized program that is catered to their specific needs, (d) all students who have a disability will be in the same educational setting as their peers that do not have a disability, (e) parents and school site staff have access to a due process procedure if they feel that the needs of the individual with the disability are not being appropriately addressed and, (f) the participation of parents is highly encouraged to ensure that all the needs of their son or daughter are being addressed.

Transition services include a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that are designed to focus on the student’s academic and functional achievement in order to facilitate the movement from school to postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated
employment, or continuing adult education (Turnbull et al., 2006). Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell (1997) elaborated on how IDEA (1990) focused on ensuring individuals diagnosed with a disability receive a coordinated education that is designed to transition into employment, further education, training, and independent living.

All of the aforementioned legislation has a direct effect on the overall post school outcomes for individuals with disabilities and more specifically, individuals with an intellectual disability. Educators must continue to strive to provide the best quality transition services to allow individuals with intellectual disabilities to have the best quality of life possible (Cannella-Malone & Schaefer, 2017). One way to ensure this is for educators to continue to work to improve the transition services for these individuals (Cannella-Malone & Schaefer, 2017).

Parental Involvement

The involvement of parents in the transition process while their child is still in high school is only the beginning of the journey to transition. Post-school outcomes for young adults with IDD are strongly associated with parent expectations (Papay & Bambara, 2014; Young, Morgan, Callow-Heusser, & Lindstrom, 2016). This involvement has a strong correlation to young adults with an intellectual disability transitioning from high school into a postsecondary education and or work setting (Papay, 2011). Additionally, Kirby (2016) noted that in some instances, there are a variety of family related variables that can predict the outcome for young adults with the specific Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) developmental disability. Kirby (2016) affirmed, “Through inconsistent, family background variables, race, parent education, and household income have been identified to predict outcomes of adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities” (p. 1645).
The Role of the Family

Young et al. (2016) identified that the family of the individual with the disability plays a vital role in the individual’s career development path (i.e., going to college or obtaining a job). These researchers identified specific themes concerning the family influence including (a) family vision for the future, (b) family guidance and planning activities, and (c) family status. Boehm, Carter, and Taylor (2015) noted the need for disability research to focus more on working to improve family related outcomes. Hirano and Rowe (2016) stated that family economic pressures tend to set the context for early career decision-making for individuals with disabilities. Moreover, their research suggests that family process variables and patterns of interaction were key components in determining post-school employment patterns (Hirano & Rowe, 2016). Ideally, finding the bridge to linking the parents to the information and services is a primary factor in the transition planning process (Young et al., 2016).

Researchers noted that, in theory, parents are often portrayed as the prime advocates for young adults with disabilities transitioning out of high school. However, when it comes to actual practice of advocacy, happening gap exists (Dyke, Bourke, Llewellyn, & Leonard, 2013; Gilson et al., 2017; Halstead, Griffith, & Hastings, 2017). Kraemer and Blacher (2001) examined the transition for young adults with severe mental retardation, as it related to school preparation, parent expectations, and family involvement. The researchers surveyed parents who had young adults who recently exited the school system or would be exiting in the near future. The authors examined the extent to which the transition services were executed, how parents were involved in the transition process, and the aspirations that parents had for their young adult post high school. Of the 52 families studied, some key findings included a variety of transition activities taking place in the schools, parents having unrealistic post-school goals, and the majority of the
parents were actively involved in the transition planning. Additionally, 63.5% of the parents surveyed wanted their young adult to work in some type of setting when they transitioned out of the school system, 11.5% were unsure if they wanted their young adult to work, and 25% did not want their young adult to work. Of the 63.5% of parents that wanted their young adult to work, many of them had ideas about the type of environment in which they envisioned them working (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001).

Based on reports from parents, Leonard et al. (2016) and McKenzie et al., (2016) found that overall, family participation in transition planning was low. Many parents noted specific issues centered on high levels of unemployment, limited participation in community activities, and lack of moving from the family home to an alternate living arrangement (Leonard et al., 2016; McKenzie et al., 2016).

**Services and Support**

Curtis, Rabren, and Reilly (2009) found that parents of young adults with disabilities frequently reported that the services and supports offered through agencies such as vocational rehabilitation were highly instrumental in the transition planning process. Furthermore, it was noted that the same services and supports assisted these young adults in their ability to obtain a job once out of high school. In most states, vocational rehabilitation services are offered. The issue is not typically with the services being offered but is more about the parents knowing these services exist and how to access those services (Curtis et al., 2009). Additionally, Carter et al. (2013) noted that, once high school services cease, the one consistency for these young adults moving forward is their parents.

Young et al. (2016) conducted a study on a variety of different trainings for parents that were focused on the parent knowledge of the school district in which their young adult was a
student. Additionally, the researchers focused on the parent knowledge of the services available to their young adult once they are old enough to transition from high school. Young et al. was able to confirm parents that received printed material, as well as a chance to interact in small groups, knew more about the school district and were much more aware of transition options for their young adult. It was noted that while the parent response was positive, a negative aspect which arose was the feeling of a push for just employment and limited information about postsecondary education (Young et al., 2016).

Kraemer and Blacher (2001) interviewed parents of individuals 20 to 24 years old who were classified as severely mentally challenged. Based on the findings, the majority of the parents reported feeling that a lack of options was available to them because of their child’s severe mental retardation diagnosis. Additionally, these parents revealed that supported employment options were difficult to attain and sheltered workshops were usually the option given based on their child’s diagnosis (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001).

Blacher (2001) discussed the overall well-being of the family as it relates to the transition period from high school to gaining employment. Blacher developed a conceptual model that identified three key areas that affect transition success: individual factors, environment and culture, and involvement/detachment related to the employment outcome of individuals with mental retardation/intellectual disabilities (Figure 2.1).
In the conceptual model, Blacher (2001) identified one of the indicators of a successful transition is job placement. In addition, one of the key factors that contributed to the transition success was the environmental factor, which included social supports and cohesion within the family (Blacher, 2001).

**Parent Expectations**

Doren et al. (2012) reinforced that young adults with a disability who have parents that have the expectation for them to finish high school and move into a postsecondary educational and or work setting are more likely to achieve one or both outcomes. Hirano and Rowe (2016) confirmed that parents having some knowledge of the transition process can be beneficial. If parents are educated on the transition practices that have proven to be successful, they can become better advocates for their child. In addition, parents have much to manage when it comes to the overall transition of their son or daughter (Hirano & Rowe, 2016). They must explore post-
school and vocational training options, as well as become educated on the community services that assist with independent living or community participation supports (Bluestein et al., 2016; Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Young, et al., 2016).

Parents are juggling a host of other variables while still attempting to balance the day-to-day care for their young adult. Having an effective system and flow of information for parents would be beneficial and could help reduce overall stress when going through the transition process (Young et al., 2016). Additionally, such a system may increase the general percentage of young adults with an intellectual disability entering into a postsecondary and or workforce setting (Young et al., 2016). Neece, Kraemer, Blacher, and Ferguson (2009) examined the parent perspectives of the transition process for 128 young adults with a severe intellectual disability. They found that parents’ satisfaction with the overall transition of their young adult is highly dependent on the overall well-being of their entire family. This study revealed that environmental characteristics related to the family held the highest rank in terms of overall family satisfaction (Neece et al., 2009).

Parents often feel as if the transition process does not properly prepare their young adult to successfully transition into a postsecondary environment (Miller-Warren, 2016). The consensus among many parents is that the transition planning process rarely has goals that are focused on their young adult working towards attending college (Miller-Warren, 2016). One of the links frequently missing to the success of the individual goals that are created during the transition planning process is the inclusion of the parent and the understanding their role in the transition planning process (Miller-Warren, 2016; Tarleton & Ward, 2005).

The influence parents have on the desired post-school outcomes has been examined in studies in the past (Wehman et al., 2015). However, according to Bluestein et al. (2016), “several
aspects of their involvement warrant additional empirical attention (p. 164).” Despite the influence of parental involvement, the inclusion in the formal transition process for parents of young adults with intellectual and or other developmental disabilities has been limited in the transition research (Leonard et al., 2016; McKenzie et al., 2016). There are few studies regarding the perspectives of parents related to the transition process, family experiences, and the effect on the overall quality of life (Leonard et al., 2016; McKenzie et al., 2016).

Transition Outcomes

Postsecondary Education

Numerous researchers focused their investigations on young adults with intellectual or other developmental disabilities and the likelihood of attending college. Shogren and Plotner (2012) found that young adults with IDD or autism are far less likely to have transition goals in high school that are focused on attending college. Additionally, “10% of young adults with intellectual disability and 23% of young adults with autism, compared with 52% of young adults with other disabilities, had goals related to attending college” (Shogren & Plotner, 2012 p. 24).

Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA)

In 2008, Congress passed the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) to make higher education an option for young adults with IDD. Since the passing of this act, 27 institutions have been awarded grants to fund Transition and Postsecondary Education (TPSID) programs. These programs are designed to allow young adults with IDD the opportunity to enroll in courses at a university for either credit or audit, even if they do not meet the standard requirements of the university to be accepted. Since the new provisions and investment in the TPSID programs, there are some states in which the transition process has changed. Based on the research, the changes in the transition have really only begun in states where there is a university
that has become a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). For other states that do not have a university in their city that is participating in the TPSID program, the likelihood for postsecondary education to be listed as a goal in individualized educational plans for young adults with IDD in high school is likely to be slim. Those transition plans are more likely to focus on independent living skills, employability skills or both.

The Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008 (HEOA) provides opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities to enroll in postsecondary education through an institution that is participating in the Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary Program (CTP). In addition, young adults with IDD are able to access financial aid such as Pell grants and federal work-study, as long as they meet the financial means and are actively working towards an educational credential that has been defined in the CTP guidelines for that university.

**Becoming a Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary Program (CTP)**

A university must apply to become a CTP. The university must be a CTP before being allowed to offer financial aid to individuals with intellectual disabilities. In order for a university to become a CTP, they must complete an application and outline how their program will align with the guidelines and provisions in the HEOA. Additionally, the university’s application must include various areas such as the plan for enrolling students with IDD into courses, how these individuals will be integrated into the campus life community, and their specific goals, centered on these individuals being able to move from this postsecondary institution into an employment setting (Boyle, 2012). If the university accurately completes the application and is able to appropriately cover the required areas, they will then be awarded the CTP status, as long as funds permit.
The ability to enter college and be successful continues to be on the forefront for young adults with IDD and their families (Zeedyk, Tipton, & Blacher, 2016). There are other programs across the nation already in place to assist young adults with disabilities to be able to enter into a college setting. Grigal, Hart, and Lewis (2012) reported that even with the changes that have been made, there are still many young adults with IDD that are not afforded the opportunity to attend college. With this new act, young adults with disabilities have access to a variety of supports and services that were not available to them in the past. The support and services that have proven to be key for young adults with disabilities include: being able to enroll in college without having an actual high school diploma, not or having to take the ACT or SAT exam, having the option to audit courses based on their individual needs yet having those courses still count towards the certificate they are working towards, and students with a disability are able to apply and receive financial aid (Grigal et al., 2012).

Transition is often difficult. Individuals may experience myriad emotions before, during, and after the transition takes place. Wehmeyer (2011) shared a story of a young woman with a disability. The young woman identified five goals she wanted to achieve in her lifetime. The goals she listed included (a) obtain a job, (b) have a family and children, (c) live in her own house, (d) have friends, and (e) learn to drive (p. 153). Although college was not included on this list, that does not mean that it would not be included if she knew it was an option for her (Wehmeyer, 2011).

The HEOA (2008) and the investments made in the TPSID programs are one example of making goals of college a reality for individuals with IDD. Grigal, Hart, and Weir (2011) noted that prior to 2008, there were programs (albeit few in number) that supported higher education for individuals with disabilities. Specifically, these authors discussed the two projects funded by
the Department of Education that were geared towards postsecondary education and individuals with IDD. The provisions laid out in the HEOA force transition teams within school districts to change their way of thinking as it relates to this population and the likelihood of college access. Although university options are somewhat scarce, there is hope that the outcomes from those 27 grants will show significant impact. The overarching goal of both the HEOA and the investments in the TPSID is giving individuals with IDD an equal chance. The most important aspect of the passing of the HEOA and the investments in the TPSID is granting access to financial aid for this population.

**Comprehensive Campus Based Programs**

The focus of college campus programs is typically to provide community-based opportunities for individuals with IDD, with the hope that these individuals will be able to obtain employment (Rogan, Updike, Chesterfield, & Savage, 2014). One such program described by Rogan et al. (2014) is the Skills for Independence, Transition and Employment (SITE) program at Indiana University-Purdue University. This program focuses on individuals with IDD that are between the ages of 18-21 and offers them a chance to complete a specialized program on a college campus (Rogan et al., 2014). The staff at the university collaborates with the staff at the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) to assist students during this critical transition period. Rogan et al. noted that the overarching goal is to develop a system between the college administration, adult service organizations, and the public-school systems to ensure that individuals with IDD are able to have a “seamless school to adult life transition to integrate employment and lifestyles” (p. 115).

An example of success from a program that was set up because of HEOA (2008) was at the University of Iowa, the UI REACH program. This program has successfully served students
ages 18-25, who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The UI REACH program developed a model that focused on four key areas: (a) Inclusive students’ life, (b) person-centered planning and academic enrichment, (c) career development and inclusive internships, and (d) post-program support. The belief is that these four areas are significant based on a strong collaboration between the individuals, their family, and the community (Henderickson, et al., 2013). This is just one of the programs developed based on HEOA (2008). Henderickson et al. (2013) noted that there is still much research and additional program development to be conducted in this area. The need for these programs is there. There is a need to continue to examine post-school data to truly identify the additional programming and supports needed for these programs to survive and be successful (Henderickson et al., 2013).

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 is a reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1988 (WIA) which was developed to “help workers with disabilities access employment, education, job-driven training, and support services that give them the chance to advance their careers and secure good jobs in the future” (Hoff, 2014, p. 1). This act was established to ensure that individuals who need access to support services receive them (Hossain, 2015). The support and services offered through WIOA were made possible through an increased allotment of funds being targeted for these specific services to benefit a target population (Hossain, 2015).

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 includes five titles: (a) workforce development activities, (b) adult education and literacy, (c) amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act, (d) amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and (e) general provisions (Bradley, 2015). In addition, one of the main highlights of WIOA was the creation of
the one-stop shop systems whose main goal is for individuals who qualify for these services to be able to get the education and training they need to make them more job ready (Bradley, 2015). The one stop shop systems require certain organizations to collaborate to minimize the need for the client/individual to go to multiple locations to get the resources needed to help them become job ready (Bradley, 2015). One of the key organizations related to individuals with a disability that is included under the one stop shop concept is the vocational rehabilitation state agencies. This allows individuals to have easy access to other organizations that can possibly assist them in their future goals of education and/or employment (Bradley, 2015).

**Employment Options**

Individuals with IDD who are offered the opportunity to attend a postsecondary institution are likely to be in a better position to secure employment once finished (Bradley, 2015). According to Martorell, Gutierrez-Recacha, Pereda, and Ayuso-Mateos (2008), access to employment for individuals with IDD continues to be a social priority. Visier (1998) confirmed that in a soft labor market, (a market where employers are looking for soft skills such as analytical thinking and interpersonal communication), individuals with a disability are a vulnerable group and tend to have a difficult time finding a job. Householder and Jansen (1999) stated that employment and employment preparation for individuals with IDD have been affected by legislation for vocational rehabilitation; special education and vocational education are responsible for the development of the transition concept.

The employment outcomes for individuals with IDD post high school are proven to be significantly lower than those of individuals with other disabilities (Beyer et al., 2016; Ellenkamp et al., 2015; Grigal et al., 2011). Kocman, Fischer, and Weber (2017) reported that individuals with IDD work with rehabilitation and supported employment professionals that have
procedures in place to properly access the job preferences, skills, tasks, and family support needed for appropriate job placement. These services, along with the support that are obtained in school, should be helping the individual’s overall transition outcome once they move from a school setting to a post school setting (Kocman et al., 2017). Additionally, McDaniels (2016) noted that based on the research, employment outcomes for individuals with an intellectual diagnosis are not favorable. McDaniels confirmed that opportunities for individuals with IDD are “clustered in a narrowly limited range of positions that are characterized by low pay, low educational and skill requirements, and limited opportunity for career development or advancement” (p. 19).

It is important for individuals with IDD to interact and work with non-disabled co-workers. Additionally, socialization is an important outcome for individuals with IDD (Beyer et al., 2016; Lindsay et al., 2018). Individuals with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities often have difficulties in areas such as attention, motivation, social skills, and behavior, which could be an obstacle to obtaining and retaining employment (Beyer et al., 2016; Ellenkamp et al., 2015; Lindsay et al., 2018). Furthermore, Henry et al. (2014) affirmed that it is critical for employers to hire individuals with disabilities to help promote inclusion and diversity of their workforce. When employers hire individuals with IDD, they are exposing the individuals to opportunities to be amongst other persons who do not have a disability, thus allowing them to gain valuable socialization skills. In addition, organizations help improve their diversity profile overall by hiring individuals with IDD (Henry et al., 2014).

School systems should ensure that postsecondary goals for individuals with IDD reflect the expectation of integrated paid employment (Grigal et al. 2011). In addition, Grigal et al. (2011) strongly recommended that schools rethink the goals that funnel students with IDD into
segregated adult day services, which are typically non-work or sheltered workshops. Individuals with IDD are placed in paid employment settings and teachers need to move to the expectation that these students can be successful, regardless of the documented disability (Grigal et al. 2011). Employment offers individuals with IDD the opportunity to interact with employees who are non-disabled; this has shown to be a critical measure for the quality of competitive employment (Beyer et al., 2016; Ellenkamp et al., 2015; Lindsay et al., 2018).

**Competitive Employment**

Competitive employment is often described as situations in which individuals with disabilities work in the community without receiving supports (Lindsay et al., 2018). In addition, Lindsay et al. (2018) noted that the rate for competitive employment remains low for individuals with disabilities. If these individuals are competitively employed, it is typically in jobs that do not require considerable effort. Cimera et al. (2014) posited, “many people with disabilities want to work competitively within their communities. Unfortunately, a significant proportion of them are unable to obtain and maintain employment” (p. 53).

**Integrated Employment**

Integrated employment, as described by Migliore et al. (2007), is an employment setting in which the majority of the workers do not have a disability and the wages are at or above minimum wage. White and Weiner (2004) described integrated employment as placement in a paid, community-based job, with non-disabled peers, with follow-up support by an adult agency that provides supported employment services. In 2010, the State of Nevada served 1,919 individuals in a sheltered workshop environment. Of that 1,919, only 20% were integrated into a competitive or supported environment (National Disability Rights Network, 2011).
Martorell et al. (2008) found that although some research has been done to show that the IQ of an individual with IDD can sometimes predict if they can perform on a job or not, it should not be the sole determining factor. This is because it was found that personal and social efforts could help an individual overcome their low intellectual functioning. In conjunction with this notion, McDaniels (2016) noted that when individuals with IDD are being considered for different occupational positions, these workers are often put in jobs that require very little skill because it is often assumed that they have limited job ability. McDaniels (2016) confirmed that because of this trend, “people with [intellectual disabilities] (ID) remain essentially where they were at the beginning of the century in terms of employment rates, range of vocational placements, and pay” (McDaniels, 2016, p. 21).

**Sheltered Employment**

Sheltered employment allows individuals with disabilities the opportunity to obtain and achieve work related goals. This form of vocational development is based on the notion that any individual, regardless of disability, is able to work (Blick et al., 2016). Sheltered employment, often referred to as, “sheltered workshops,” is typically designed for individuals who are unable to participate in the general labor market. These workshops are designed to enable disabled individuals to develop and enhance their skills and abilities to earn competitive wages (Blick et al., 2016). Individuals who work in sheltered workshops are trained in the fixed, known standards and norms of a specific workplace. The idea is that individuals who work in these workshops are only required to learn a small range of simple manual tasks (Blick, et al., 2016).

Individuals with IDD who are placed in a sheltered workshop may have a goal of being in that type of environment on a temporary basis to prepare them for outside employment (Migliore et al., 2007). Frequently, sheltered workshops do not fall in line with regulations of the *Olmstead*
v. L.C. and E.W. Supreme Court case 1999, which states that individuals with disabilities need to be served in the most integrated setting possible (Migliore et al., 2007).

Some researchers have questioned the agenda of the sheltered workshop setting. For example, Visier (1998) had specific questions with regard to the overall purpose of sheltered workshops in relation to individuals with disabilities who are placed in this environment. Those questions ranged from the work places as environment to gain experience, the work places as environments to alienate individuals, or the work places as environments where individuals may build self-fulfillment (Visier, 1998). Other researchers, such as Butterworth et al. (2013), identified the negative effects that sheltered employment can have on individuals with disabilities, such as not offering opportunities to make meaningful job selections, and that many of the options within a sheltered workshop environment are unskilled, low-wage jobs. This environment, with its limited employment options, has a direct impact on the overall potential for an individual with a disability to live a productive quality of life (Butterworth et al., 2013).

Parental perspectives specifically related to sheltered employment was explored in the literature. Davies and Beamish (2009) found that of the 218 parents that participated in their study, over 44% of their children were placed in sheltered employment once they graduated high school. Some of the specific concerns of these parents included lack of employment opportunities and payment for work being insufficient for their son or daughter.

**Supported Employment**

Supported employment took on a new meaning with the introduction of WIOA. The new definition confirms that supported employment is considered as “integrated competitive employment or an individual working on a short-term basis in an integrated employment setting towards integrated competitive employment” (Hoff, 2014, p. 2). The purpose of supported
employment is to help facilitate and promote the participation and integration of the intellectually disabled population into mainstream society. This type of employment involves individuals being placed in a particular work setting with a job coach or other supports to ensure their success (Cramm, Finkenflugel, Kuijsten, & van Exel, 2009; Retish & Reiter, 1999). Many researchers have emphasized that rehabilitation and supported employment professionals have developed procedures to assess job preferences, skills, job tasks and family support when it comes to successfully integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce (Morgan & Alexander, 2005).

**Job Coach**

Supported employment makes extensive use of job coaches (Neubert & Moon, 2006). The main focus of the job coach is to work closely with the individual with IDD and their families to determine the specific types of work, the impact of having a job on the overall financial situation of the individual with IDD, as well as the expectation of the individual with IDD (Neubert & Moon, 2006). The job coach is the number one resource for these individuals and their families and has often proven to be a key factor in the success of these individuals in this type of environment (Neubert & Moon, 2016). MacDonald-Wilson, Rogers, Massaro, Lyass, and Crean (2002) found that many individuals with disabilities who are placed at a worksite with supported employment services are typically found in low-paying jobs and tend to be placed in the retail or service industries. Additionally, it was noted that over the six-month period in which the research study was being conducted, job tenure for the individuals with disabilities was inconsistent and over half of the individuals did not stay on the job for more than the six-month period (MacDonald-Wilson et al., 2002).
A study on the parental perspectives of the transition from school for young adults with IDD revealed some interesting findings on young adults participating in work settings (Davies & Beamish, 2009). Davies and Beamish (2009) documented that of the population included in their study ($n = 53$), 25% of the young adults were participating in some type of paid employment setting. One key benefit to supported employment is job site training which provides these individuals with direct training to help them meet the overall performance standards of the employee (Neubert & Moon, 2017). In addition, assistance is provided to individuals on effective ways to adapt to the social culture of the work environment, which includes interactions with their coworkers (Retish & Reiter, 1999).

**Gaps in the Literature**

Within recent years, the progress in transition services has improved but there is still much to be done (Chan, 2016). In “What is Next for the Transition and Employment Supports Movement?” Wehmeyer (2011) noted how he struggled with what to write because he could not say he believed the money invested in these programs must be examined in greater depth. Research has shown that one of the primary options for individuals with IDD tends to be a sheltered work environment, compared to other paid options that are available (Wehmeyer, 2011). Wehmeyer confirmed that “unemployment remains depressingly high for people with disabilities” (p 154).

Carter (2009) wrote an article assessing the transition related strengths and needs of adolescents with high-incidence disabilities. The authors affirmed that “attainment of postsecondary goals related to further education, employment, independent living, community participation, civic involvement and other areas influencing quality of life remain elusive for substantial numbers of youth with high-incidence disabilities” (Carter et al., 2009, p. 74). These
researchers focused on the assessment aspect of the transition process and confirmed that even though the assessment aspect is a pivotal piece of the overall transition process to identify the specific wants and needs of this population, it is often not given the attention or time required.

As mentioned above, Wehmeyer (2011) had specific concerns related to transition. Hughes and Carter (2011) touched on some of Wehmeyer’s concerns by proposing a transition supports model. This model has two main components: “(1) developing support to increase participation and (2) teaching skills that promote success, can be used to identify teacher-identified and validated support strategies” (Hughes & Carter, 2011, p 178). The ultimate goal of this model is to help secondary school staff, families, and stakeholders be able to move the transition supports to the next level and ultimately increase the number of students that are moving on to meaningful life opportunities (Hughes & Carter, 2011).

Literature is lacking that examines the parent perspective related to transition services for individuals with IDD. Martinez, Conroy, and Cerreto (2012) stressed the importance of parental involvement in the transition process in order for their loved one with the disability to successfully navigate into a post high school setting. Moreover, the individuals that tend to have the strongest influence when it comes to post-school outcomes are the parents (Bluestein et al., 2016; Doren et al., 2012; Papay & Bambara, 2014; Simonsen & Neubert, 2012). Petner-Arrey et al. (2016) expressed the importance of focusing on the family needs and experiences related to transition-age individuals with disabilities and how this particular focus can help extend the knowledge in this area moving forward.

Overall, research dealing with transition related outcomes such as employment, independent living skills, and social or recreational activities for individuals with IDD is available. Based on this research and observing the need in this area, the goal is for researchers
to continue to work on identifying the gaps in what is currently available and what still needs more attention. The more research that becomes available which specifically deals with these key areas of focus for this population, the greater chance there is for additional funding to be targeted for this population. The need is there; it is up to researchers, educators, parents, and communities to bring attention to the need.

**Summary**

Transition planning is the foundation for successful post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Harber et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2015; Wehman et al., 2015). Individuals with disabilities have similar desires to their non-disabled peers in terms of wanting to attend college and to be considered for employment opportunities (Carter, Brock, & Trainor, 2014). It is important for parents to be involved in the transition planning to ensure that their needs, and the needs of their child, are considered for their future as an adult (Carter et al., 2014; Neece et al., 2009; Powers, Geenen, & Powers, 2009). The use of one’s personal network can be beneficial when trying to accomplish individual goals. Parents of children with IDD demonstrate that this is one avenue that has helped them with meeting the transition goals of their son or daughter (Martinez et al., 2012).

Public school systems are mandated to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive proper transition services to ensure future success (Wei et al., 2015). More work is needed to make transition services available (Martinez et al., 2012). One focus of transition services is the inclusion of parents (Petner-Arrey et al., 2016). Several researchers (Bluestein et al., 2016; Miller-Warren, 2016; Papay & Bambara, 2014) concluded that post school outcomes for individuals with disabilities yield a higher success rate when parents are involved not only in the transition planning but in the overall future career planning for their child.
There is a significant gap in literature related to the parent perspective on transition for individuals with an intellectual/developmental disability (Boehm et al., 2015; McKenzie et al., 2016). The current research predominantly addressed the parent perspective related to their direct involvement with the individualized education plan while their son or daughter was in school. Much of the empirical work that has been conducted does not focus on how this critical transition, as well as other transitions for the individuals with IDD, can affect the family well-being long term (Boehm et al., 2015).

The significance of this study was to add an additional parent perspective to the overall body of knowledge. When conducting a search of the current literature, there was no current literature that examined the affect that transition has on the parents of the individual with the IDD while going through the transition, and what coping strategies they used during the transition. There are very few qualitative studies focused on the parental perspectives in dealing with transition and even fewer related to postsecondary education or employment.

Chapter 2 presented an examination of pertinent literature associated with the transition process for individuals with IDD and their parents. These pertinent areas included providing a background on transition services, an overview of Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory, and a historical overview which included several legislative acts that have had some direct influence on the transition services for individuals with disabilities. Next, important literature related to parental involvement in the transition planning process and post-school outcomes was examined as well as literature pertaining to the common transition outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The chapter concluded with identification of specific gaps related to the transition planning, post-school outcomes and parental perspectives on post-school outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methodology used to answer the research questions outlined in this study. Chapter 4 presents the individual case narratives of the six family participants. Chapter 5 presents the findings of the data collection from the parents of individuals with IDD. Chapter 6 provides the summary, implications and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the (a) experiences of parents of individuals with IDD with the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting, (b) parents’ perceptions of any barriers and challenges during the transition to entry into a postsecondary educational and or work setting or challenges they encountered during the transition, and (c) how parents utilized their access to resources to overcome those barriers and or challenges. Through the use of a case study approach, the researcher identified support systems relative to the transition experience perceived to be the most beneficial to parents of students participating in the postsecondary educational program. This chapter outlines the methodology utilized for this study. The key areas discussed in this chapter include the research design and rationale, the methods and procedures, data collection and analyses, the design quality procedures, and limitations. Figure 3.1 provides a visual representation of the research process.

Research Questions

The research questions and sub-questions that were used to guide this study are:

RQ1: What were experiences of parents of students with an intellectual/developmental disability currently involved in a program at a University in the Southwest during the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting?

a. What barriers were encountered by parents during the transition?

b. What resources were most beneficial to parents during transition?
c. To what extent were the resources utilized to support the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting?

**RQ2:** In what ways did the postsecondary educational program assist families with the overall transition into the program and/or work setting?
Figure 3.1. Flow Chart of the Research Process

Selection of Research Topic
- Identified problem to investigate and gap in the literature
- Literature review including study theoretical framework
- Developed research questions

Research Design
- Qualitative Case Study
- Assumptions
- Determine research scope (delimitations) and limitations

Selection of Participants
- N = 6
- Parent of Individual with Intellectual/Developmental Disability living in Las Vegas
- Son or daughter with Cognitive Disability Needs to be between the ages of 18 - 25
- Son or daughter who transitioned from Clark County High School
- Son or daughter is currently participating in a campus based

Data Collection
- Develop interview and focus group protocol
- IRB, human subject approval
- Site visit and document review
- Recruit participants per research protocol
- Interviews with participants

Data Analysis
- Thematic Analysis of interview and focus group data & CARMA Matrix
- Multiple readings of interview transcripts
- Code themes
- Cross-Case Analysis

Design Quality
- Credibility
- Dependability
- Conformability
- Transferability
- Triangulation
- Member checking
- Peer debriefing
- Audit Trail
- Reflectivity
- Audit Trail
- Reflectivity
- Thick descriptions

Results

Discussion

Recommendation for future research
Approval of Research Protocol

The proposed plan for this research study was submitted to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Office for Protection of Research Subject (OPRS)/Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval prior to the collection of data. Included in the plan were the informed consents, recruitment letters, interview and focus group protocol, and the document review protocol. The study was approved as an exempt study on August 8, 2018.

Rationale for Methodology

This study used a qualitative research methodology in a multiple case-study design. The case study design allows researchers to explore or understand a complex social phenomenon, focusing on individuals, organizations, or processes (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) defined case study as, “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p.16). Seawright and Gerring (2008) described the case-study design as “the intensive analysis of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), where the researcher’s goal is to understand a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)” (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 296). A multiple case study, which consists of two or more cases, (Cassell & Symon, 2004), allowed the researcher to understand the transition experiences of parents of individuals with IDD during the transition from high school to postsecondary educational and or work settings in the Southwestern part of the United States. The perspectives of the parents are important to understand the resources and the navigational strategies needed to support this critical transition period.
Role of the Researcher

Qualitative researchers have a great amount of influence on the data collection process (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). The personal characteristics the researcher brings to the data collection process is important to discuss (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) since the instrumentation in qualitative research comes from the actual researcher (Merriam, 1998). Reflectivity, through the use of field notes, is one approach that can be used to help mitigate bias throughout the data collection phase (Creswell, 2014). Reflectivity is the process of self-reflection used by the researcher to be open and honest about how “their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background and experiences” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

Interest in this area of study stemmed from the researcher’s personal experiences with her intellectually disabled child’s transition related issues as she was currently aging out of the school district. The researcher was interested in understanding other parents’ experiences with the transition process with the hope of informing and improving the transition experiences of other families. The researcher acknowledged her biases throughout the process and, as a result, utilized field notes throughout the data collection phase to mitigate her biases.

Methods and Procedures

Data Collection

The data collection for this study included the selection of cases, the focus group participants, and the review of the postsecondary educational program documents. The case selection included parents of the young adults who are currently enrolled in the postsecondary educational program. Additionally, the focus group included program staff, interns and volunteers. The document review included materials pertinent to the program and the families involved in the program. Table 3.1 demonstrates how the research questions aligned with the
data collection and the participants. The focus group data and information gathered from the document review were used for triangulation purposes.

### Table 3.1. Research Questions, Data Collection Method and Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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| What were the experiences of parents of young adults with an intellectual/developmental disability currently enrolled in a postsecondary educational program at a University in the Southwest during the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting? | • Interviews  
• Field Notes                                         | Parents of young adults currently enrolled in the Postsecondary educational program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas |
| In what ways did the postsecondary educational program at a University in the Southwest assist families with the overall transition experience into a postsecondary educational and/or work setting? | • Document Review  
• Field Notes  
• Focus Group  
• CARMA                                              | Postsecondary educational program staff, interns and volunteers |

### Selection of the Cases

Seawright and Gerring (2008) noted that case selection for a case study research is one of the most important aspects of the entire study. Researchers should consider two key objectives when selecting cases for case-study research: (a) the cases selected should serve as a representative sample, and (b) the cases selected should provide “useful variation on the dimensions of theoretical interest” (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 296). When conducting a multiple case study, 6-10 cases is ideal to provide the appropriate data for this type of design.
It is common to select 3-4 cases in which the outcome is expected to be similar and an additional 3-4 cases in which the outcome is expected to be somewhat different. The overall goal is seeking “convergent evidence” amongst each individual case and then the evidence is compared across all cases (Yin, 2009, p. 56).

The researcher selected a sample from parents of participants in the program at a University in the Southwestern part of the United States as cases for this research study. The program is a two-year program housed on the University campus. The postsecondary educational program was established during the Fall 2014 semester with one student; more than 16 students participated in the Fall 2017 semester (J. Baker, personal communication, December 12, 2017), and 25 students enrolled for the Fall 2018 semester (R. Winnerland, personal communication, August 18, 2018).

There were six individual cases selected for this study. Two cases were selected based on their high school experience at a private school, while the other four cases were selected based on the number of years they have been involved in the program. Additional criteria used in the purposeful selection process were whether the son or daughter of the parent being interviewed had received or was currently receiving work experience as a part of the program and the parents’ availability to participate in the 60-90 minute interview, willingness to review the interview transcript, and provide feedback.

According to the program website, the purpose of program is to provide an inclusive, accessible, and productive career education program for college aged students with IDD that promotes self-determination, community engagement and partnerships, job readiness, and transitions to adulthood through person-centered planning, inclusive teaching, evidence-based research, and positive behavior support ("Project F.O.C.U.S.,” 2018). The program is a
recognized and approved comprehensive transition program by the U.S. Department of Education, offers programs of study and person-centered planning, assistance and support for careers and competitive employment, mentors and tutors to assist with the adjustment to campus life and the encouragement of inclusive participation in extracurricular activities, and a certificate at the completion of the 42-credit program” (“Focus at a Glance,” 2018). The goal is to align the study and experiences with the independent and career goals of the participants to help prepare them to be as independent as they can possibly be in their communities (“About the Program,” 2018).

**Recruitment of the Cases**

The researcher partnered with the postsecondary educational program staff to recruit potential participants. The director of the program supported the study and once IRB approval was obtained, a meeting was scheduled with the director to facilitate an introduction of the researcher to the Assistant Director of the program. Once the Director facilitated the initial introduction, he had no further involvement with the study. To comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), no student information was accessed and all initial communication to the postsecondary educational program parents was through the program assistant director or program staff. The researcher was invited by the assistant director to the parent meeting on August 30, 2018, to share information about the research study. The researcher provided an overview of the research study, reviewed the informed consent, and answered any questions the parents had about the research study. Parents who agreed to participate filled out the informed consent and selected a date and time for their interview on the sign-up sheet provided by the researcher. The researcher sent an email to each of the parents who signed up for an interview to confirm their selected time and to provide information on where the
interview would be held. The researcher asked for each parent to confirm the interview time by replying to the email.

Criteria for Participation

To qualify for participation in this study, parents had to meet the following criteria: have a student who (a) was currently enrolled in the postsecondary educational program, (b) diagnosed with an intellectual/developmental disability, (c) graduated from high school in the city located in the Southwestern part of the United States, and (d) be 18-26 years of age. The researcher reviewed the inclusion criteria in the presentation conducted with the postsecondary educational program parents on August 30, 2018. Purposeful sampling techniques were employed to identify and select participants. Phelps and Maxwell (1997) noted that employing purposeful sampling in qualitative studies allows the researcher to deliberately identify persons based on the important information they can provide. The researcher hoped to maximize variation by selecting both families whose children attend the program and work and families whose children only attend the program. The assistant director and staff of the program assisted with this process to avoid violating FERPA regulations.

Methods and Procedures

The research methods utilized for this research study included multiple site visits, document review, interviews with parents, and a focus group with program staff and volunteers. The interviews with the parents were the main source of data collection. The document review and the focus group with program staff were a means to gather additional information about the program; data from the focus group and the field notes were used to triangulate the multiple sources of data collected in this study.
Field Notes

The use of field notes in qualitative research is a way to document important contextual information and is considered an essential component of the qualitative research process (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). There are many identified functions for field notes in qualitative research. For the purpose of this research study, the researcher utilized the collection of field notes to “encourage researcher reflection and identification of bias, increase rigor and trustworthiness, and provide essential context to inform data analysis” (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018, p. 382). Field notes were taken during the review of the documents, the interviews with the families, and the focus group with the program staff/volunteers. The researcher used a journal to collect the field notes with each group and typed up the notes after each session. The typed field notes were housed in an electronic folder created by the researcher and stored on an external hard drive that was locked in a file cabinet when not being used by the researcher.

Document Review

Prior to conducting interviews with the parents and the focus group with the program staff, the researcher conducted a review of program related and curricular information as well as public information available on the website. The goal of the document review was to allow the researcher to familiarize herself with the program goals and objectives. In addition, the researcher reviewed internal records, excluding client records, produced or kept by the organization regarding the structure, approaches, and or strategies utilized within the program. The researcher utilized the document review protocol (Appendix F) while reviewing key program documents. In addition, the researcher took field notes while conducting the review.

Document review procedure. Once the study was approved for human subjects, the researcher worked with the program assistant director and staff to identify available times to
conduct the document review. This review took place at the program office where access to documents was facilitated. The researcher utilized the document review protocol (Appendix F), the CARMA Matrix (Appendix G) and journaling when reviewing documents to ensure consistency.

**Interviews**

Interviews for this research study were conducted between September 7 and September 20, 2018. The interviews were conducted on the university campus. The researcher recorded each interview and took field notes throughout the interview.

The researcher employed qualitative interviewing using in-depth semi-structured interviews with parents to better understand their experiences with the transition process and with the program. Rubin and Rubin (1995) affirmed that qualitative interviewing is a way to learn about participants in a research study to gain understanding about how they think and feel. Additionally, qualitative interviews provide a way for researchers to recreate experiences through the conversation with people they are interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Three important characteristics of qualitative interviews include:

- Qualitative interviews are modifications or extensions of ordinary conversations, but with important distinctions;
- Qualitative interviewers are more interested in understanding knowledge, and insights of the interviewees than in categorizing people or events in terms of academic theories;
- The content of the interview, as well as the flow and choice of topics, changes to match what each interviewee knows and feels (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 28.)
The in-depth semi structured interview, as described by Yin (2009), is a qualitative technique that allows the researcher to collect intense inquiry about facts or opinions on particular events. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) affirmed that semi structured interviews are best used when conducting case studies. Semi structured interviews allow the researcher to ask predetermined questions as well as follow up questions to probe and dig deeper into the interest or issues of the participant being interviewed (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The researcher used the interview protocol (Appendix C) as a guide used to ensure the same set of questions were asked to each participant and the questions were asked in the same order (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The interview protocol was developed based on the theoretical framework used to guide the study. The interview was recorded and the audio file was sent to a transcriber upon completion of the interview to be transcribed.

**Interview procedures.** The researcher followed a list of procedures for the interview process: (a) created the interview protocol; (b) met with the program assistant director to discuss the recruitment plan for identifying the parents that qualified to participate in the study; (c) presented to the parents at the parent meeting on Thursday, August 30, 2018; (d) provided the program assistant director interview dates and times for conducting interviews for parents to sign up after the presentation on August 30, 2018; (e) interested parents signed up for the date and time that they were available to participate in the interview; (f) the researcher worked with the program staff to review the list of parents that signed up to ensure variation in those that would be interviewed and, (g) the researcher sent a follow up email to those parents that were selected for an interview to confirm date, time and location; (h) the researcher conducted interviews; (i) the researcher reviewed and typed up the field notes within one day of completing the interview; (j) the interview data (audio file) was sent to transcriber; (k) once the transcribed data were returned
to the researcher, a follow up email was sent to the parents with the transcribed data attached and the parents had one week to respond to the email providing their approval of the transcribed interview data along with any corrections they wanted made to the data.

**Focus Group with Program Staff, Interns and Volunteers**

A focus group with seven program staff, interns, and volunteers was conducted on Friday, September 21, 2018, using the focus group interview protocol (Appendix E). The goal of the focus group was to allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of the F.O.C.U.S. program, implementation procedures, interactions with families, and successes and failures. Selection of the focus group participants was jointly coordinated between the researcher and the program assistant director.

**Focus group procedure.** The procedure for the focus group included the following: (a) created the focus group protocol; (b) collaborated with the program assistant director to identify list of staff and volunteers; (c) researcher provided the assistant director with date and time options for the focus group to be conducted; (d) the assistant director coordinated with the staff and volunteers to set the date and time for the focus group and then communicated with the researcher the selected date; (e) and, researcher conducted the focus group.

**Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis is ongoing throughout several stages of the research process (Creswell, 2014). Thematic analysis was conducted after each interview and the focus group. Atlas.ti a qualitative computer program, was used throughout the analysis phase to identify codes and themes that emerged from data collected during the interviews and focus group. Atlas.ti helped the researcher organize, sort, and categorize the text data into themes. Predetermined themes or study propositions should be examined within the scope of the study
(Yin, 2009). The predetermined themes or study propositions were developed based on the Schlossberg’s (2011) transition model. These codes and themes were used to assist the researcher with the development of the individual cases and the cross-case analysis for the study.

**Individual Cases and Focus Group**

Six individual cases were developed from the parent interviews and field notes which were used to answer the first research question. In addition to the criteria previously listed, variation in the cases resulted from parents of students who *do* and *do not* have a work component as part of the person-centered plan. The analysis for each individual case was conducted in the following manner: (a) transcribed parent interview; (b) sent transcribed parent interview data to participants for member checking; (c) participants had one week to make corrections to transcribed data and communicate those corrections to the researcher; (d) corrections were made to the transcripts; (e) analyzed data from each case using Atlas.ti to develop initial code list and thematic analysis to identify themes based on Schlossberg’s transition model; (f) wrote up case; (g) sent cases, codes, and themes to a faculty expert for peer review; and (h) met with faculty expert and conducted researcher triangulation.

Data collected from the focus group, the focus group field notes, the CARMA analysis, and the document review were utilized to answer the second research question. The following procedures were used to conduct the analysis from data collected from the focus group: (a) transcribed focus group data, including the field notes taken while conducting the focus group; (b) sent transcripts to focus group participants to confirm accuracy; (c) participants had one week to make corrections to the transcript and communicate those corrections to the researcher; (d) made corrections to transcript; (e) used CARMA matrix to evaluate program information gleaned from the program staff; (f) focus group analysis and CARMA worksheets
were included with individual cases for the peer review and (g) met with faculty expert and conducted researcher triangulation.

**Thematic analysis.** Thematic analysis consists of “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes [a] data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Schlossberg’s (2011) transition model was used to provide predetermined themes to which the data were compared (Yin, 1993); however, the results of the thematic analysis also resulted in new themes. Figure 3.2 describes in detail the steps followed while conducting the thematic analyses.
Figure 3.2. Six Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase 1
Familiarize yourself with data
- Narrative Preparation - transcribe data
- (Re) reading the data and noting own initial ideas

Phase 2
Generating initial codes
- Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across entire dataset
- Collating data relevant to each code

Phase 3
Searching for themes
- Collating codes into potential themes
- Gathering all data relevant to each potential theme

Phase 4
• Reviewing themes
  - Checking if themes work in relation to the coded information
  - Checking if themes work in relation to the entire data set
  - Reviewing data to search for additional themes
  - Generating a thematic "map" of the analysis

Phase 5
• Defining and naming themes
  • On-going analysis to refine the specific of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells
  - Generating clear definitions and names for each theme

Phase 6
• Producing the report
  - Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples
  - Final analysis of selected extracts
  - Relating the analysis back to the research question, objectives and previous literature reviewed.

Adapted from “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3, pp. 77-101. Copyright 2006 by Taylor & Francis Online.
Complementary Analysis Research Matrix Application (CARMA)

The Complementary Analysis Research Matrix Application (CARMA) is a tool that was developed to be used by researchers to assist with critical evaluation (Putney, Wink, & Perkins, 2006). CARMA helps the researcher distinguish between what is being accomplished in the setting and how participants are utilizing the resources (Putney et al., 2006). CARMA, (Appendix G), was used to compare and contrast the expected results of the postsecondary educational program with the evident results based on the themes that have evolved. Graphs, charts, and matrices utilizing Atlas ti computer software facilitated the comparison of similar patterns or themes derived from each of the individual cases. The last and final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, is a means to refine the first two steps to draw the conclusion (Cruzes, Dyba, Runeson, & Host, 2014).

Cross-Case Analysis

The researcher conducted a cross case analysis after the development of the individual cases and the analysis of the focus group data. Cross case analysis involves the exploration of the results of all the cases to determine identical patterns and themes across cases (Yin, 2014). The findings from a cross case analysis provides more robust information than only looking at single cases (Yin, 2014). Case comparison approach is a method that involves coding single factors from data and seeing what patterns emerge across the cases (Yin, 1981). The researcher utilized the case comparison approach, the CARMA matrix, and componential analysis to identify the themes across all cases (see Figure 3.3).
Design Quality

Maintaining research quality is critical to qualitative research as it is “supposed to represent a logical set of statements you also can judge the quality of any given design according to certain logical tests” (Yin, 2009, p. 40). The specific concepts that relate specifically to these logical tests include trustworthiness, credibility, conformability and data dependability (Yin, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four criteria or approaches that should be used to establish the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Descriptions for each approach as well as the strategies that were employed by the researcher are highlighted in Table 3.2.

Credibility

Credibility means “confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 p. 301). It is the value and thebelievability related to the study (Polit & Tatano Beck, 2006). The
The researcher applied triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing (review) to ensure credibility for this study.

Triangulation is the process of using multiple sources of data and is used to enhance credibility (Denzin, 1978; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Yin, 2009). The researcher used parent interviews, focus group with program staff and volunteers, document and website review to validate the outcomes of the cross-case analysis.

Table 3.2. Strategies Used to Ensure Trustworthiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches for Establishing Trustworthiness</th>
<th>Strategies Employed by Researcher</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Credibility: “confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings” (p. 301) | • Triangulation  
  • Member checking  
  • Peer debriefing |
| Dependability: “showing the findings are consistent and could be repeated” (p. 317) | • Audit trail  
  • Reflexivity |
| Confirmability: ensure the data are accurate | • Audit trail  
  • Reflexivity |
| Transferability: “showing the findings have applicability in other contexts” (p. 316) | • Thick descriptions |

*Note. Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985).*

Member checking is a process that allows the participants of a study to read the transcribed interview data to ensure accuracy (Houghton et al., 2013). For this study, the parent interviews and focus group data were transcribed and sent to the participants. Participants had one week to review and provide corrections to the researcher. Corrections to the transcribed document were made prior to the analysis.

Peer debriefing is the process in which the researcher works with an “external colleague or expert” to confirm consensus on coding labels for the study (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 14). For
this study, two peer debriefings were conducted. The first peer debriefing occurred after all of the cases and the focus group data had analyzed and the cases written. The second peer debriefing occurred after the cross-case analysis was completed and triangulated. The researcher shared the coding labels and results with a faculty member with expertise in qualitative analysis.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability and confirmability are closely linked to each other and are often established in the same manner (Houghton et al., 2013). Dependability is described as “showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 317). Dependability refers to the stability of the data and is the qualitative term for reliability (Houghton et al., 2013; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability is being able to ensure that the data are accurate (Houghton et al., 2013).

The researcher used an audit trail and reflectivity to establish dependability and confirmability. An audit trail is a set of comprehensive notes the researcher keeps while conducting the study and includes an outline of decisions made throughout the process and specific judgements and perceptions of the researcher (Houghton et al., 2013). The audit trail consisted of the field notes and the journal. Reflectivity is a core characteristic of good qualitative research and is described as the process for the researcher to self-reflect on their own bias they bring to the study (Creswell, 2014). An audit trail was kept throughout the data collection and data analysis for this study. In addition, the researcher practiced reflectivity throughout the data collection and data analysis process and kept notes in the researcher’s reflective journal.
Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as “showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts” (p. 316). A specific technique used to ensure the study has transferability is providing “thick” description (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 26). However, transferability is subjective, depending on the case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While preparing the case study report, the researcher ensured that thick descriptions were provided. The researcher provided specific quotes from the interview data to ensure the description for each case study was thick and painted a full picture of the parent perspective on transition.

Limitations

This research study was based on parents’ perceptions of the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting for children with IDD and therefore, may not be generalizable to the perceptions of parents with children with physical or other disabilities. In addition, since this study was specific to the transition from school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting, it may not be generalizable to other transition periods that parents of individuals with IDD experience. One final limitation is this study consisted of interviews with two parent families; therefore, this study may not be generalizable to single parent families of individuals with IDD.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 provided the rationale for the use of a multiple case study approach to examine the transition experiences of parents of individuals in the postsecondary educational program. The goal was to explore the perceptions of parents who have a child with IDD who has transitioned from high school to a postsecondary educational program. This chapter provided an overview of several elements of the study, including the multiple case-study research design, the
methods for the study, and procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. Lastly, the chapter provided the suggested limitations for the study.
Chapter 4: Case Narratives

Purpose

This chapter provides a narrative from each of the individual cases. The purpose of the chapter is to provide brief background information for each family and their views of the overall transition experience in this city in the Southwestern part of the United States. The families presented here now have a young adult that is a participant in a postsecondary educational program at a University in the Southwestern part of the United States, is currently between the ages of 18-26, and graduated from high school. A total of six families were interviewed for this study. The information presented in this chapter is based on the answers to questions that the parents shared during the in-depth interviews. Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

Case Narratives

Andrew Family

The Andrew family structure consists of husband, wife and four children. The youngest child, Andy is 22 years old and was born with Down syndrome. Andy is the only child in the family who has a disability and the only one still living at home. Alice described Andy as fun, loving, full of life and he is very close to his siblings. The family made it a point to keep Andy involved in everything that the family had going on throughout his entire school and now college career. Alice emphasized that Andy loves sports and has always enjoyed being a part of various sport teams growing up.

The Andrew family has a very strong support system. The backbone of the family structure and support is their strong faith. Alice shared that both the immediate family and the extended family have always been supportive to the needs of Andy. The family has maintained
continuous involvement in several organizations and even took it a step further and became members of various boards to help implement and effect change in policy and legislation related to individuals with disabilities. Through the support and connections that the family made throughout Andy’s life, it opened several doors for him to be a pioneer for the start of new programs and services in their community. Alice shared that “it was important to seek things out and think outside of the box. You can’t be afraid to try something that hasn’t been tested….I had to do what I knew was in my heart right for Andy.”

Andy attended elementary school at a public school in a city located in the Southwestern part of the United States. During that time, he did have an individualized educational plan (IEP) and the family was pleased with their overall experience at that level. For middle and high school, the Andrew family wanted to find something more inclusive for Andy. The goal was for Andy to be able to be in regular classes with his typical peers and not in self-contained classes. Since all three of their other children had attended private school for all of their schooling, the Andrew family was interested in Andy being able to attend the same private school as their other children. The family decided to approach the administration at the school to see what options they may have for Andy at that school. At the time, the school did not have a program designed for students with disabilities. The Andrew family was persistent and was able to convince the school to start a program at the school as a pilot program and Andy was able to be the first participant in the program.

The program has since grown and is now a popular program at that school. As part of the program, Andy was able to attend all of his classes with his typical peers and the school adopted the policy that students in the program would not be required to have an IEP. Alice shared that Andy was able to participate in any activity that he showed an interest in during these years at
this school. The family found that to be very motivating for Andy and shared that the overall experience was different compared to the experience they had while Andy was in the public school. Andy completed all of his middle and high school years at the private school.

The Andrew family was concerned as Andy approached the time for him to graduate from high school. The goal for Andy long term was for him to be able to live independently, work a job and being a contributing member of his community. Alice acknowledged that his senior year the family overall felt a sense of uncertainty because they were not sure what it would be like since their experience throughout his middle and high school years was such a positive experience. Transition related resources were not shared with the family, so Alice would often lean on her support system to explore the next steps for Andy.

Through personal connections, Alice learned about a “next step” type program that was offered through the school district. Alice decided to give the program a try with the hope that Andy would gain life skills and work training to prepare him to be able to work and live independently. The Andrew family was not impressed with the overall set-up of the program and often felt that because of politics and strict limitations, the program is not able to cater to the individual needs of the students. After one semester in the program, the Andrew family decided that it was not a good fit for Andy.

Prior to Andy leaving the program offered by the school, Alice learned about a program at the local university that was in the infancy stages but was looking for students to serve in a pilot program. A friend referred Alice to the professor that worked at the university that was heading up the program and Alice was able to get Andy into the pilot program. Andy was able to enroll and attend his first college courses at the university. Since then, the program has continued to grow and Andy has grown a lot as well because of the program.
The Andrew family still has the same goals and expectations for Andy and now since being in the program they are more confident in his ability to be able to accomplish those goals. The current postsecondary educational program has afforded Andy to be able to gain some valuable work experience in at least two different areas and he has mastered many skills associated with moving him closer to the eventual goal of him being able to live on his own. Andy will be finishing up the program within the next year and will complete the program with a four-year certificate. The Andrew family is extremely impressed with the level of attentiveness the program staff provides to all of the participants and growth that they have been able to witness since Andy has been a part of the program. With extended family support, a home has been purchased for Andy and the family is looking forward to him being able to utilize the skills that he has gained in the program to be able to live on his own in his house or with a roommate.

Drew Family

The Drew family is not native to the local community but has been living there for many years. They have three children and only one has a disability, Drake. Drake is 19 years old and he is the middle child in the Drew family. Drake has an older brother that is 20 years old and is currently in college and a younger sister who is 16. Drake is autistic and attended public schools since the age of three. Damon and Diana described their son as a very social person, “he loves just being a part of something other than himself.”

The Drew family described their main support as other families that also have a child that has been diagnosed with autism. Once they learned that Drake was autistic, at the age of three, the goal was to find as many resources that they could find which lead them to connect with several organizations. As for immediate family, they are supportive but do not live in area. Additionally, the family invested in private services for Drake which also led to a group of
additional supporters. The Drew family is very pleased with their experience but they share that “we just had an easy time because our child is easy.” In addition, they shared, “you get someone who has a lower functioning child, and they will probably have all kinds of problems. But, I don’t you know, what all of those problems are because we didn’t have to experience it.”

Drake attended school within the local school district for elementary, middle and high school. Drake had an IEP from the time that he turned 5 and the family never attended an IEP without the presence of an advocate. The family shared that their overall experience throughout his school years was positive and the communication between the family and school personnel was good. Towards the middle part of his senior year in high school, Damon and Diana shared that they begin to wonder what would be next for Drake. They felt the school did not really provide information specifically related to the next steps for Drake once he was finished with high school. They felt some of the teachers and the transition specialists were on the same page as them regarding the expectations for Drake and some were way off, so most of the time they would simply do things on their own.

The Drew family became aware of the postsecondary educational program toward the end of Drake’s senior year from a family friend. They described the process of getting into the program as very smooth and stated that the program staff do a good job of communicating with them and keeping them updated on what is going on with Drake and activities and events that are happening within the program. One thing that they do feel is a slight drawback for the program is that it does not offer any type of financial assistance. Additionally, the Drews would love for the program to continue to grow.

When the Drew family discussed significant events around the time of transition, they both agreed that Drake graduating from high school was a significant event and that it was
important for him to shift his thinking from being child to now being an adult. They felt it was important for him to know that he would be responsible for his own actions. The specific strategies that the family used not only during the time that he was transitioning from high school to Postsecondary educational program but just in general with situations that come up regarding Drake, is to deal with things as they come up. The family shared it is hard to have strategies for situations that are typically unpredictable. They did feel that their constant involvement in outside organizations was very beneficial to helping Drake prepare for his involvement in the postsecondary educational program.

The Drew family shared many areas in which they feel Drake has shown vast improvement in since being a part of the program. They feel he has become much more independent and he is able to schedule and ride the bus on his own. Their ultimate goal for Drake is to get a full-time job. The program staff is working on moving him from being an intern to him becoming a paid employee. The family does not envision him living on his own and shares that they are comfortable with him staying at home. Overall, the family is happy with their transition experience and happy with the place Drake is at right now.

While talking about the overall transition, the Drew family suggested that families should always utilize an advocate when dealing with the IEP process within the local school district. They feel that their process was fairly smooth because they always had an advocate present and that the school personnel respond differently to the family and decisions when an advocate is present. Additionally, the family recommended that families consider getting the assistance that they need as soon as possible. If they are made aware of an issue close to the age of three, the families should always get help through early intervention services. Furthermore, if families are able to seek assistance from outside organizations, they should consider doing that as well.
Patrick Family

The Patrick family consists of Dad (Preston), Mom (Patty) and Daughter (Patra) who currently live in the home. Patra does have an older brother who is 31 and currently lives in his own home. Patra is 26 years old and she has Kabuki syndrome and a mild intellectual disability. Due to Kabuki syndrome, Patra sustained several surgeries but is now stable and healthy. Patra is the only one out of the two children who has a disability. Patra has been a part of the postsecondary educational program for three years.

The support system for the Patrick family is rather small but impactful. Patty’s sister has always been a great source of support since Patra was a baby and still continues to be a support to date. The family has been involved with the same church for more than 20 years and the church family has always been very supportive to the Patrick family. In addition, Patra’s coworkers have also been a source of support since her job entails her dealing with parents of individuals with disabilities on a daily basis; she has been able to confide in many of her coworkers with situations that have come up with Patra over the years.

While in high school, Patty shared that she never felt that her and the teachers and/or transition specialists were on the same page in regards to transition planning for Patra. She stated that she just figured that many of the teachers and transition specialists were often overwhelmed. She shared “really see they are kind of looking at… just kids with learning disabilities kind of thing, and not really recognizing. One of the goals that I always had is that there is not just one path to, like, a sheltered workshop. We really need to keep competitive and integrated employment out on the table, and every opportunity for Patra to do that.” With this being the goal that the family had for Patra, she shared that the teachers and transition specialists would
always find a way to bring it back to the sheltered workshop discussion and they as a family never felt that was the next step for Patra.

When thinking back to the time that the family was preparing for Patra to transition out of the high school setting, Patty shared that when Patra was finishing up high school, she was not yet prepared to leave the high school setting. With that in mind, Patty and her husband decided that it would be better for Patra to stay in the school district to gain additional “transition-type” skills prior to leaving. Patra stayed in the local school district setting until she was 21 years old, and was one of the first students who was a part of the JEEP program through the local school district. Once the time was nearing for Patra to have to exit the school district system, Patty described the overall goal as “creating a framework for her that she can participate and feel valued and a party of something.” Patty stated they worked directly with vocational rehabilitation in order for them to complete a community-based assessment. However, Patty shared that vocational rehabilitation wanted to complete the community-based assessment and then place Patra at Goodwill. Patty shared, “quite frequently when individuals go to vocational rehabilitation, they’re often told that they will complete the community-based assessment and then they will send them to Goodwill.” Patty knew the Goodwill setting was not the appropriate setting for Patra and was determined for her to be placed in an area in which she had shown interest.

Patty continued to advocate for Patra and through outside connections, she was able to set up some volunteering opportunities for Patra. She was finally able to get the workers at Vocational Rehabilitation on board and then Patra was placed in a preschool setting and gained some very valuable skills. Once in this setting, Patty shared their goal for Patra was to get her to see herself as an employee and that she could not view her boss the same way she viewed her
teacher. Patty shared that Patra would often still act in the same manner and she would have to explain to her, “your teacher might tell you three or four times to do something but your boss is not going to do that.”

When talking about the overall transition, Patty shared one of the key strategies that she feels is very important for families to consider while their son or daughter is still in high school is to ensure they get involved with the Vocational Rehabilitation system by the age of 16. In addition, she shared felt that the school district “changed a lot how to graduate kids, so now you have lots and lots of kids that are at home with no plan.” These students were able to obtain a standard diploma but once they obtained that diploma the free and reduced education stopped. Patty felt that every family is different but that families must be careful about that because if they decide to go the standard diploma route and the services with the school district stop, then what?

The Patrick family first became aware of the local postsecondary educational program through the work that Patty does with her organization. Patty met the director of the program before the program was even established and shared with him early on that she felt that the local university needed a program similar to the one that was being run at the other university in the state. After that conversation, she said the director “really took it from there.” While Patra was not involved in the program initially because she was still in the school district, Patty knew that she would be interested in that type of program for Patra eventually but was unsure if it would be something that would be a good fit for Patra and the family.

One of the challenges that Patty sees with the program is the cost, which she feels is a barrier for many families. With that in mind, Patty continues to strongly advocate with the Director of the program as well as with other organizations such as Vocational Rehabilitation and Desert Regional Center to get them on board and to buy in to the program that the university
offers to create more opportunity for more families. Patty feels the current set up of the program is only available to those families who can afford it.

The Patrick family feels their experience thus far with the program is great. Patty shared that the “person-centered planning has just been phenomenal that the program director has done.” The enrollment process initially was a bit of a challenge for the Patrick family until they had a good understanding of the various programs that they had to learn. In addition, Patty described the communication between the program staff and her family as being very strong and that she feels they do a wonderful job on keeping her family informed and updated on everything that is going on with Patra.

Since being in the program, Patty feels that Patra has definitely become more independent. Patty described this independence as “following routines, taking more responsibility for herself, making sure that she is organized and that she has all of her stuff ready.” Everything she has learned, Patty feels is preparing Patra to possibly live independently one day. The family goal for Patra is that she may share an apartment or some kind of residence with another adult with a disability. Patty shared her concerns over the idea of Patra living by herself, “I’m afraid I’d be concerned she’s a little too vulnerable, and that she wouldn’t necessarily always make really good judgements.”

Once done with the program, the Patrick family would like to see Patra continue her employment at the local preschool. The program accomplished a large task to work out the details for Patra to get paid for the work that she does at the preschool and the family’s hope is that she can continue as a paid employee. If not, Patty did share they would simply reach out to the previous connections that they had made and set it up so that Patra can go back to volunteering.
Jackson Family

Jack and Jamie have been married for 24 years and have two sons, Jerrod and Justin. Jerrod is 22 years old and does not have a disability and Justin is 20 years old; he was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome at the age of five. Justin was in a special program at school since his diagnosis and always had an IEP. Jamie describes Justin as very social and independent very high functioning in many areas, and very routine oriented. The family always made it a point to keep him active in sports and other activities so that it would help him develop appropriate social skills. This is Justin’s first year as a participant in the postsecondary educational program at the local university.

The support system for the Jackson family is extensive. Jamie comes from a very large family and shared that all the members have always been supportive with the needs of Justin and her family. Jamie stated that all of the family members live very close so Justin is rarely left alone but she does feel that if he needs to be alone for a short period of time that he would do fine. Jamie and her family have started to include Justin in the decisions that involve him; she shared that it is important to her and her family that he is included in the decision-making process.

When talking about the overall transition readiness within the school district and Justin’s last year of high school, Jamie stated that the transition specialists and teachers shared with her the programs that would be available for Justin. Jamie did feel like her family and the teachers and transition specialists were on the same page related to the transition plans for Justin. However, when it came to her overall feelings about the IEP process, Jamie shared:

I feel that we were short-changed here compared to the services and support that we received in California. I feel that if the child’s teacher is not on board with you, and is not looking out for the best interest of your child, um, administration will do whatever, and they will get away with not providing any services. That is why children here in Nevada,
do not get diagnosed until they are six or seven compared to 18 months, two years or three years in California.

As a family, the Jacksons decided on one of the programs offered through the local school district. Jamie shared their experience with that program was not positive at all and that the teacher of the program was intimidated by Justin and that Justin became bored with the program very quickly. Jamie stated, “the program wasn’t challenging enough for him and I often thought, my kid has more talent, and he’s smarter…he’s too smart to be cleaning toilets and mopping.”

The Jackson family started working with the Vocational Rehabilitation to have Justin assessed while in the district program. Jamie described her experience with this organization, “I felt dismissed and I felt that my kid was dismissed. There was no interest or no help, it was just a line…fill this out and have Justin fill this out.” Once through the initial assessment process, Jamie shared that they sent Justin to Goodwill for three weeks and then came back and told her and her husband that Justin was not ready to make money or to hold a competitive job. She shared that the worker told her “he doesn’t interact with people.” Once she followed up with the organization, she said she was told that they did not have anything for him and that he wasn’t ready.

Approaching the end of high school for Justin, Jamie shared that she “always wanted my children to go to college, and I always…you know, wasn’t sure if college would be an option for Justin. Jamie felt that college was important and that she wanted her kids to have the experiences that she had. The family was unsure if Justin could handle being in college so it left a feeling of uneasiness and not really knowing what would be next for Justin. Jamie shared that Justin knew he wanted to go to college and prior to them learning about the postsecondary educational program offered at the local university, she knew that him being able to attend the university
wouldn’t be an option so she talked to Justin and shared with him that they needed to make sure that he would like going to college so they would start by him taking a class or two at the local community college. Justin started by taking a photography class and did well in that class.

A year or so after Justin finished high school, the Jackson family learned about the postsecondary educational program offered at their local university through his high school teacher that she had kept in contact with. Jamie described the process of getting in as smooth and that the program staff kept her and her family very informed even while they were on the waiting list. The communication between the Jackson family and the program staff was described as smooth and consistent. Jamie shared that they are good with their follow through and that they have a lot of outside activities to ensure that the participants stay involved.

Prior to Justin getting into the program, he was able to participate in a summer program that is offered by the program staff. The program is a week-long program and the participants have the opportunity to stay for a week on campus. Jamie does feel like Justin participating in that week-long program really helped to prepare him for the program by allowing him to get to know the staff and the campus prior to him actually starting the program. Jamie stated that if the cost of the dorms were not so expensive, her and her family would love for Justin to be able to experience that aspect of the program as well but that is not something that they can afford at this time.

The Jackson family feels that Justin has already learned some valuable skills since being involved with the program. Jamie shared that he takes his studying very serious and that he is more serious about ensuring that his chores around the house are done in a timely manner. When asked about the goals that the family has for Justin once he has completed the program, Jamie shared she has not thought that far yet but she is hopeful that he will be able to acquire some
work experience while he is a participant in the program. The family has been pleased with the communication between the program staff and their family and shared that the program does a great job at keeping them informed.

Jamie shared that for parents who are approaching the transition phase in their son or daughter’s high school path for them to explore the options. In addition, she feels that it is important to partner with the teachers and try their best to stay in touch with the teachers once their son or daughter finishes up their high school career. She shares, “having a good relationship with the teachers is invaluable-because they will know about programs, about things that change, about anything coming up; because it will help you when you talk to your child about what to expect as far as the changes.”

Carlson Family

The Carlson family structure consists of Calvin (Husband), Cathy (Wife), Chris (Older Brother) and Cameron (Baby Brother). Cameron just turned 21 in August and was diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder at the age of 32. Throughout middle and high school, Cameron received special education services through the local school district. Calvin and Cathy shared that although Cameron received special education services, their goal was for him to be in the mainstream classes as much as he could. During his seventh grade year, his services stopped and the family described this as a very tough adjustment. Once he got to high school, Cameron got involved with the theater program and that made a world a difference for him and the family.

The support system for the Carlson family was limited but the family is very supportive. There is no local support for the family needs but the family who are still living always makes a point to come to any of Cameron’s big celebrations. The family is very active in their church and
while Cameron was in high school he was very active in the young life ministry where he had a group of peers who were very supportive.

When discussing the IEP process and the transition services provided to Cameron while in high school, the Carlson’s’ shared that their experience with the IEP process was great because they were able to keep the same teacher of record for his last two years of high school so the teacher was very familiar with Cameron and his capabilities. Cathy shared that approaching the time of transition was a very stressful time because they did not have any idea what they were going to do for Cameron. They shared that they spent his entire senior year trying to figure out what the next step would be. The initial thoughts that they had were that the family would look into Cameron going to the local school district because Cameron knew that he wanted to go to college just like his older brother had done.

Calvin and Cathy both shared that they did not feel that all of the teachers and transition specialists were on the same page regarding their expectations and long-term goals for Cameron. While their last two years were great, the two shared that his freshman and sophomore year were really tough because the teacher of record that they had for those two years was “terrible.” The Carlson family shared that they had an advocate that they brought to every IEP meeting so they do feel that made a difference. During Cameron’s senior year, the family did participate in an IEP transition focused meeting and they shared that the teachers did provide them with a chart of the programs that local school district had to offer once he completed his senior year but they did not really feel like any of the programs fit Cameron or the goals that the family had for him. Cathy shared, “the choices were really bad.”

The Carlson family learned about the postsecondary educational program that is offered through the local university through the teacher of record that was assigned to Cameron his
junior and senior year. He shared with the family that he had just learned about this program at the local university and that he through it would be something that they would be interested in for Cameron. Once they contacted the program, they shared that the process for getting him in the program was easy and it consisted of filling out the application and other paperwork and an interview with Cameron and them. They did share that the process of Cameron getting accepted into the program took much longer than they had expected. Once in the program, he was one of six students enrolled in the program. This is Cameron’s third year being in the program.

The communication between the program staff and the Carlson family was described by Calvin and Cathy as great. They shared that the staff are very responsive, have wonderful follow through and that they use multiple methods to ensure that the families receive the communication. One drawback is that they do not get consistent updates on Cameron’s progress which has been something to which they have had to adjust. Calvin shared that the program staff want the participants to take ownership of their process and therefore, they expect for the participants to provide their families with the updates. Cathy shared that one recommendation that she would share with other parents that are looking to get their student involved in the program is “Don’t be afraid to go to the staff and say, ‘I need more. I need to hear from you, or I need this answered, or this isn’t working, what are you going to do about this?’”

The Carlson family would like for Cameron to continue to gain skills that will allow him to become more independent. They do feel that by being in the program that he has expanded on these skills. The family did share that the program really needs to work on developing the work experience portion of the program. Cameron is currently working but the family shared that it was necessarily through the program that he was able to secure the part time job, it was more
because of his theater experience in high school that provided him with the opportunity to secure the job.

As for the next steps after Cameron is finished with the program, Calvin and Cathy shared they are not at that point yet: “we do not have a clear plan.” Cameron gained some good experience through the connections that Calvin and Cathy have to other organizations. Currently he is working part-time and making minimum wage so they shared that at this point they would just like for him to continue to gain experience. They do not have any intention of Cameron moving out on his own.

When asked what they would like to recommend to other parents that are approaching the transition period for their son or daughter, Calvin and Cathy both shared the importance of having an advocate to help and support them through the process. In addition, they recommend that families seek out any internship opportunities that they can find for their son or daughter to participate in. Families should seek out information because, based on the family’s experience, the school district does not do a good job with helping families with the “next steps.”

Brown Family

The Brown family consists of a total of six members. The family members include Bobby (Husband), Brenda (Wife), Brian (Older Son), Bridgett (Older Daughter), Betsy (Middle Daughter) and Becky (Younger Daughter). The family members that currently live in the home include, Bobby, Brenda, Betsy, Becky, and the grandmother. Betsy is 18 years old and was diagnosed with Down syndrome prior to birth. She is the only child that has a disability. Betsy just recently became a participant in the postsecondary educational program at the local university.
Betsy attended public school through the end of her fifth grade year. Once she entered sixth grade, Bobby and Brenda decided that they wanted to enroll her in a program at a private school that was created for individuals with disabilities. The Brown family learned about the program through a family friend and once they shared their experience with them, the Brown family thought that it would be a much better fit for Betsy.

The Brown family support system is extensive. Their immediate family has always been supportive and their church family has been equally supportive. In addition, they remain active in various organizations and feel that they have support from those groups as well. They have always made sure to have Betsy involved in whatever activities that she showed interest in, and that has led to other forms of support as well.

During Betsy’s high school year leading up to the time when she would need to transition to another setting, Brenda described that time as “concerning.” She worried about what it would look like for Betsy because she does not know how to self-advocate for herself. Betsy has expressed that she wanted to go to college because she watched her older and brother go to college so she felt that she was should go to college as well. Brenda shared that she was uneasy with making the decision for Betsy to become a participant in the program because she had some behavior incidents during her senior year that made her question if she would be safe on a college campus.

The overall experience that the Brown family had while Betsy was in elementary school was just ok. Brenda shared that often times, she felt very frustrated with the services offered through the public-school system. She felt that the needs of students with disabilities was not always a priority and that in order for her daughter to get what she felt she deserved, she had to be willing to drive her across town to get it. She felt that the district was always trying to place
Betsy in a self-contained classroom and with a majority of kids that were non-verbal. Her main concern was that Betsy was more self-sufficient and because of that she felt like she was left with nothing because the teachers had to focus more on those students that needed more attention.

The IEP process for the Brown family while Betsy was in public school was great. Brenda shared that the teacher that Betsy had for first grade was wonderful and they ended up following her to whatever school she sent to so that Betsy could stay with her. Brenda shared that the IEP process worked out well because the teacher wanted their input and was open to them actually being involved with the entire IEP process. Brenda shared that the teacher “listened to us, she cared about what we wanted for Betsy.” While in high school, Betsy did not have an IEP at the private school that she attended. Brenda shared that it was nice that Betsy was not restricted to just a self-contained classroom and that she really enjoyed being involved in regular classes and she loved being a part of the choir.

Additionally, Brenda shared her frustration with the lack of help that various organizations have been able to provide. She stated that “there was so much let down when we contacted certain places in her elementary years, that I kinda stopped.” This let down came from calling places and not receiving a call back and she shared that it seemed like people just didn’t know what they were doing. She described people as “so clinical and cold and just like you were just…the next one running on through, that I was not impressed.”

The Brown family learned about the program through a mutual friend whose son went to the same private school and then transitioned into the program. Their friends had shared everything about the program and the Brown family was very interested in Betsy attending but still had slight concerns on whether or not she would be ready for that type of environment.
Brenda shared that the process for applying and getting enrolled in the program was easy and that the communication between the program staff and their family has been excellent.

Since Betsy is just getting started with the program, Brenda was not able to share anything on what she feels the program could do better. She stated that her experience to this point has been wonderful and she is surprised at how attentive they are and fast they are with providing feedback. Her hopes that Betsy can continue to grow and move forward. She would love for her to become more independent and get to a point where she can make more of her own decisions and not have to continue to have them make all her decisions for her. The family does not have a goal set for Betsy to live on her own but they would like for her to be able to one day get a part time job.

Brenda shared that if she were to make some recommendations to other families that are approaching the transition time for their son or daughter that she would share with parents to “start checking into things and do not assume that they can’t be a part of a program…you have to start seeking things out.” She stated that she feels that it is concerning the way that some organizations are being run and that there is a lot that is missing. Her experience with various organizations made her just stop dealing with them all together. She shared that she realizes that other families may not have that option to decide not to deal with the organizations because that is the only source of help that they have.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided brief case narratives of the six participants to provide a brief introduction into their lives and their experiences. Their stories are included as a way to tell specific details from their point of view on the transition experience in their local community. The families in this study were eager to share their experiences and how they managed to get
through the transition to successfully enroll their young adult in a postsecondary educational program offered at the local university. There were a total of nine themes that emerged from the data analysis. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of each theme.
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand the transition experiences of parents who have a young adult who graduated from high school and is currently enrolled in a postsecondary educational program at a university in the southwestern part of the United States. Chapter 4 provided a case narrative for each of the families who participated in this research study. The goal of the case narratives was to provide background information on each family and provide a glimpse into their lives. This chapter presents (a) brief overview of the families and the program staff, interns and volunteers, (b) the study research questions, and (c) discussion of the themes discovered through the thematic and cross case analysis.

The focus of this multiple case study was families of young adults with an IDD who are currently enrolled in a postsecondary educational program at a university in the southwestern part of the United States. The study utilized three data sources - interviews with parents of young adults currently enrolled in the program, a focus group with the staff, interns, and volunteers of the program, and a review of program documents which were analyzed to determine common themes and to answer the study research questions. The researcher conducted a thematic analysis on all of the parent interview data, and used the Complimentary Analysis Research Matrix Application (CARMA) to analyze the focus group data. A cross case analysis was performed through the use of CARMA and the development of a qualitative componential analysis to illustrate the themes across the interview and focus group data.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on data from six interviews with parents, one focus group with the program staff, interns and volunteers, and a review of key program documents. The initial open code list across all data included 202 codes which were developed
by following the thematic data analysis steps with a computer software program, Atlas.ti Open coding, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008), allows the researcher to identify specific concepts from raw data. Once the initial open codes were established, the researcher then manually continued with the thematic analysis process by sorting codes into four predetermined themes from Schlossberg’s (1981) transition theory. Five additional themes emerged from the data and the remaining codes which did not fit into Schlossberg’s (1981) transition theory were sorted into those themes that emerged from the data.

**Study Participants**

The interviews for this study were conducted with six families who currently have a young adult enrolled in the program at a university in the Southwest. The young adults enrolled in the program successfully completed their formal schooling at a high school in the local school district and upon completion, received a standard and or adjusted diploma. Four of the six interviews were conducted with the mother of the young adult enrolled in the program, while the other two were conducted with the mother and father. Two of the individuals currently enrolled in the program whose family member was interviewed graduated from a private high school located in the county, while the other four graduated from a public high school. Table 5.1 summarizes the participant information. Each family was assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

The focus group participants \( n = 7 \) included program staff \( n = 4 \), interns \( n = 2 \) and volunteers \( n = 1 \). The program staff members who participated included the Assistant Director, Project Coordinator, Community Outreach Director, and the Educational Coach. The interns are current students at UNLV and are completing their practicum hours with the program. The volunteer started with the program to earn service hours for a class and then decided to stay.
Table 5.1. Family Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Son/Daughter</th>
<th>Age of Young Adult in F.O.C.U.S. Program</th>
<th>Clark County School Attended</th>
<th>Years in Project F.O.C.U.S</th>
<th>Interviewee(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>Jamie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Calvin &amp; Cathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>Brenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Damon</td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Drake</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>Damon &amp; Diana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>Patra</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Patty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 provides some brief demographic information on the focus group participants. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Table 5.2. Focus Group Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role with Postsecondary Educational Program</th>
<th>Years with Postsecondary Educational Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Intern</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chasity</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beckett</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>Intern</td>
<td>9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>10 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Questions

The research questions and sub-questions used to guide this study are:

**RQ1:** What were experiences of parents of students with an intellectual/developmental disability currently involved in a program at a University in the Southwest during the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting?

a. What barriers were encountered by parents during the transition?
b. What resources were most beneficial to parents during transition?

c. To what extent were the resources utilized to support the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting?

**RQ2:** In what ways did the postsecondary educational program assist families with the overall transition into the program and/or work setting?

**Data Analysis**

The goal of this study was to identify aspects of the transition process that held meaning for the families and program staff and volunteers who were participants. The research questions were aimed at identifying the experiences of the families, barriers they encountered, strategies they used to manage those barriers, as well as resources they used to help navigate through the transition period. In addition, the goal was to identify the experience the families had transitioning into the program and how useful the staff were in assisting the families with the transition.

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes for this study. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), it is important to identify specific patterns in the data that relate specifically to the research question or that are interesting or important. Thematic analysis is well known for helping a researcher organize a large data set and useful for summarizing key features in a data set (King, 2004). Additionally, a cross case analysis, using CARMA matrix was conducted to help identify the key themes across the data collected in this study and a componential analysis was developed to illustrate the themes across the interview and focus group data. A number of themes emerged from the data. Figure 5.1 provides a diagram of the themes.
Families shared some key areas based on their experiences during the transition period. Families and program staff, interns, and volunteers shared the common mindset of the areas that still need work as it related to the transition programming in the local area. Many families offered suggestions and recommendations for other families, school district personnel, and service providers, which can assist with improving the transition process for families in the area.

A total of nine key themes emerged from the data resulting from interviews with family members. These themes were confirmed by the data collected from the focus group. Key themes were organized and sorted using a combination of four predetermined themes from Schlossberg’s transition theory as well as five additional themes that emerged from the data.

Table 5.3 shows the themes, coding, and research question addressed. The figure lists the themes and codes associated with each theme. The themes are organized alphabetically in the table. The four predetermined themes were: (a) coping: self, (b) coping: situation, (c) coping: strategies, (d) coping: support, and the five remaining themes were (a) challenges, (b) communication, (c) expectations, (d) experiences, (e) lacking, and (f) resources.
### Table 5.3. Themes, Coding, and Research Question Addressed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Challenges</th>
<th>Theme: Communication</th>
<th>Theme: Coping – Self</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Question 1a</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Questions 1a, 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Question 1a</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constant fight with school district</td>
<td>• Breakdown in communication from agencies</td>
<td>• Feelings of concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No program to fit the needs</td>
<td>• Better communication than public schools</td>
<td>• Being safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School staff did not have same vision</td>
<td>• Communication with school staff was OK</td>
<td>• Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No agency support</td>
<td>• Communication with the postsecondary educational program staff is great</td>
<td>• Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No transition support offered while in HS</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Barriers for families to be involved in the postsecondary educational program</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trust</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Coping – Situation</th>
<th>Theme: Coping – Strategies</th>
<th>Theme: Coping – Support</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Questions 1a, 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Research Questions 1b, 1c, 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Illness</td>
<td>• Connections</td>
<td>• Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helping family members</td>
<td>• Parent advocating</td>
<td>• Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other siblings getting married</td>
<td>• Resourceful</td>
<td>• Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other siblings away at college</td>
<td>• Strategies during transition period</td>
<td>• Other support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sought out opportunities</td>
<td>• Supporting and caring at private school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advocacy</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Expectations</th>
<th>Theme: Lacking</th>
<th>Theme: Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Questions 1a, 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Questions 1a, 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Questions 1b, 1c, 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
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<td>• Alignment of expectations between parents and school</td>
<td>• Agency support for postsecondary educational program families</td>
<td>• Involvement in activities</td>
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<td>• Different expectations</td>
<td>• Lack of resources in the public schools</td>
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<td>• Action toward meeting goals</td>
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### Theme 1: Challenges

Researchers confirmed that often times individuals with disabilities are no longer eligible to receive certain services they once qualified for once they age out of the system (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). This presents a new set of challenges for families which vary depending on the state and services available for young adults with disabilities. Challenges with
the overall transition process was a common theme across all cases including the focus group. These challenges included the following; transition choice options the parents received from the school district; activities which were not meaningful or productive in adequately preparing the young adult for self-sufficiency; and the lack of organizational support within local school district. The challenges related to transition planning were consistent amongst all of the families regardless of whether they attended a public or private school. In addition, the participants within the focus group were also able to share some of the challenges the families faced since many of the staff and volunteers of the program were there to assist these families once they became involved with the program.

When discussing information families received from the school district during the student’s senior year, families shared the many challenges they encountered. Cathy shared the following regarding the transition options offered to her for Cameron:

…**the choices were, were really bad.** They were really bad. Sorry. I can’t remember all the - he went through all the different levels of, you know, out of high school, and staying with the school district, you can go into kind of a work program. There was the PACE program, and then, there was a couple of other levels of programs where they teach them how to do different types of tasks. And, **the tasks were mostly janitorial, and um, the types of opportunities seems to us to be not at what Cameron was really good at.** And, work with other people, and be creative. And so, um, **that was, was not good idea.**

Similarly, Jamie shared:

He was doing PACE. **He did PACE, and he did not like it.** And, I think that the teacher was very sweet, but very soft spoken, and Justin just ate her alive. Justin needs to know that you’re strong and that you’re not afraid or intimidated. He ended up saying, **I don’t want to do this; I don’t want to do that. I think he found it boring; part of that, it was boring for him.** The program wasn’t challenging enough for him. And, I always thought, my kid has more talent, and more, he’s smarter, **he’s too smart to be cleaning toilets and mopping.**

Alice shared her perspective on the PACE Program, as well:

…that initial semester out of high school he did with the school district in the PACE program and it just didn’t feel right having him on a high school campus at that age,
because at that point, he was 18 and he had graduated from high school. The PACE program wasn’t inclusive as we would have liked it to be. They had him picking up cat poop one day as his job and I thought...we are done.”

Patty shared her challenge when she applied for Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Patra:

Quite frequently when individuals go to vocational rehabilitation, they’re often said, ‘Oh, yeah, we’re going to do a community-based assessment, so now you go to Goodwill.’ And Goodwill is not an area of interest for her. And so, we kept saying, ‘No, we want a preschool. If she’s going to really show what her strengths are, she’s gotta have some strong interest area. And putting her in front of a big thing of hangers is not gonna do it. So, let’s really see where we can see her shine.’ And so, that took a lot, but they finally did.

Brenda shared information regarding the experiences she had when Betsy was younger in the school district.

She went to public school up until the fifth grade. And there was a teacher that we followed. Because where we live, the only program that was special ed programs were all autistic. There was no home school, as they call it. I honestly almost sued the school district because there was no program in our area; I had to drive her everywhere.

Damon and Diana shared their feelings regarding the differences between the teachers and transition specialists’ goals compared to their goals when Drake was still in high school.

Most of them had the same goals; you had some that thought they knew everything and they thought they knew your child better than you. So, they wanted to go the wrong way and approach things their way. And working with Drake, with his behaviors for 18 plus years, then we kinda knew better, and it kind of helped when we went to our IEP and we did his behavior plan that we had an advocate with us that knew the ins and out of the laws, of disability and the specifics.

While some of the challenges experienced by each of the families were different, many were very similar. Two of the families who chose to have their young adult complete high school at a private school versus a public school still experienced some similar challenges. However, those challenges seemed to be fewer than the challenges the families experienced within the public schools. Those two families often shared that many of the challenges they experienced occurred because the program at the private school was still getting established. In addition, the
two families had already become resourceful and had lost their confidence in receiving help through various local agencies. That resourcefulness is what led both of the families to the private school.

**Theme 2: Communication**

Previous researchers documented the importance of communication for parents as well as the frustration that parents have shared when it comes to the lack of communication they received when approaching or going through the transition process (Hetherington et al., 2010; Ankeny, Wilkins, & Spain, 2009). The families shared their experiences related to communication with teachers and specialists within the school district, organizations, and the university program staff. The university program staff, interns, and volunteers discussed communication with the families and agencies within the county that provide transition related services.

With regard to the communication from the university program staff, Alice commented how “amazing” the communication has been.

…I can text Robin and she always knows what is going on with Andy and the interns and that kind of stuff. I can’t believe how on top of all these kids that they are…you know, and I always tell the staff that I must be a problem parent because I’m always calling you.

Damon and Diana shared their experience with the communication with Drake’s teachers as well as their communication with the university program staff. They shared the communication with the school personnel, “It was really good.” They described the communication with the university program staff:

It depends, it’s **real good communication**; it’s either through Drake or email, or text. But, we are kept apprised of what’s going on with Drake and how he’s doing, and that there are some issues that we need to be aware of...**it is consistent.**
When discussing the communication with teachers and transition specialists as well as the communication with the university program staff, Jamie acknowledged, “I was in constant communication with the teacher and or transition specialist, either by phone or email.”

In relation to the university program staff providing consistent communication, she shared, “Yes, absolutely, they email me about this or that, and like, the different activities and what’s going on. And the different meetings.”

The university program staff, interns, and volunteers shared the communication with the families and students, which is ongoing and consistent. They shared they are able to build the relationships needed to provide the adequate support for the young adults in the program through communication. The staff confirmed they communicate with the families through a variety of ways including phone calls, email, and text messages. Destiny, an intern with postsecondary educational program shared the following on communication:

I think, with the students you’ve communicate every day. I mean, you work with them but you’re also this kind of peer and social model for them. And so, texting with them, calling them—having them call you on the phone, is totally normal. And fun. They’ll email— you know, we really want them to check their email, so we will be emailing them and practice replying. So, really all sorts of communication. And then, when you get to the person-centered portion of that, it’s what communication is most functional for the student.

Jim confirmed the program expectations for the communication between the young adult, the staff and their parents:

We want the individual, the student to be able to show their parents what it is they’ve been working on, and communicate that way. So, to be able to show them Cognitopia, the software that they have goals and homework and things in; to be able to show them their Canvas-webcampus—where their classes are, and things. Show them their Google drive where their assignments are placed. And most, I think some do; some don’t care. Parents, and then some, are really involved and they wanna know more than those things. But, we really encourage the student, because they’re an adult, and then, they can share that with their parents. We have to be careful because some students, you know, their parents still have guardianship and things over them. We still need to have relationship and share some things, but there’s a line there.
One key component to the success of individuals with disabilities successfully transitioning from the school setting to a post school setting is continuous collaboration between service providers and the families. A specific piece of that collaboration is continuous dialogue (Cooney, 2002). The communication between the university program staff and the families strengthens the relationships and allow each party to remain on the same page to ensure that the goals of the student are being met.

**Theme 3: Coping – Self**

This theme is a predetermined theme from Schlossberg’s transition theory. The theme refers to the way in which the individual feels while approaching, going through or coming out of the transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Many of the families shared the feelings they experienced **going through** the period approaching high school completion for their young adult. Some families also shared those feelings **coming out** of that transitional period.

Alice shared that during the period of transition she felt “A little bit of a worry” because we had such a great middle and high school experience for him….just kind of not knowing really what the future held for him. Additionally, she shared:

You know my thoughts during the transition time is that educationally he is delayed but we never stop learning. I felt like the school district automatically stop doing like the reading and stop doing math and stop doing like things and you grow and everybody just learns at a different pace.

Brenda shared her thoughts as she and the family were approaching the transition from high school into the university program:

We had initially planned on the university program, but then, we were concerned because she did a couple of escape route type things on us at the last end of high school. Where she hid from us during, like, a choir concert one time. And so, we weren’t sure whether Postsecondary educational program was gonna be the best fit. We were worried about her taking off on them.

In addition, Brenda added, “When she graduated, we weren’t sure what we were going to do.”
Damon and Diana shared similar thoughts on approaching the end of high school:

**We really didn’t know what the next step for him was.** We were initially trying to find, get him vocational training so that he could get a job after high school. And, when we found out about the university program, that’s something that we seriously considered because he is such a social person, and he just loves being part of something other than himself.

There was a consensus among all the families regarding their uncertainty of what was next for their young adult as they were approaching the completion of high school. All participants shared it made them feel uneasy, worried, concerned, and hopeful. Each family shared their overall goal for their young adult but many of them shared they were worried about how they would be able to get them to that goal. All the families expressed how thankful they were when they found out about the Postsecondary educational program and how it has provided them with renewed hope for the next steps for their young adult.

**Theme 4: Coping – Situation**

The second predetermined theme from Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory is the situation. This refers to what is happening at the time of the transition (Schlossberg, 2011). For many of these families, they had other children who had things going on, assisting family members that needed help in one way or another, or dealing with their own health challenges.

Jamie shared the following,

I think he was anxious in anticipation of his last year, which it was happening. And then I think he had gotten very comfortable with whatever he has to do, there is no rush, no nothing, very laid back. He was just doing ok, but he wanted to do something more. **Unfortunately, at the beginning of this year, I was diagnosed with cancer, so I didn’t know how to tell him. So, everybody knew, and I just told him, I said, Justin, I’m sick.** There’s going to be times when I’m sick and I don’t feel well. And, I just need you to be patient with you, and I need you to be patient with me. But, I could tell that he was very stressed.

Alice noted that during the transition period they had a daughter get married; she shared the following about the experience:
Well in our family, **we had a daughter that was getting married and that was a stressful time in our family** because they hadn’t been dating very long and they wanted to get married right away. So as the parents we were stressed, so maybe that was stressful for Andy as well.

Additionally, Alice shared another example of a situation:

**Another significant event that has affected Andy and maybe not for the positive is that we have had my brother living with us for two years.** My brother is 62 and has had some emotional trouble and he has not had income for those years and so he is trying to find something. We have always tried to help others when we can.

Four of the six families acknowledged that something was taking place in their lives at the time of the transition that added another layer onto the overall transition experience. Each family member described the situation and briefly shared how it affected the decisions made during the transition phase and how they worked through it as a family. While some of the situations described by the families were more serious than others, all of the situations described caused each of the families to prioritize what they had going on in their lives at that time to be able to make the best decisions possible for their families.

**Theme 5: Coping – Strategies**

The third predetermined theme from Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory is coping strategies. This theme refers to the strategies that individuals used to navigate through the transition (Schlossberg, 2011). In this study the strategies used by the families and strategies the university program staff, interns, and volunteers used to assist with the overall transition met the criteria for this theme. Patty shared ways in which she was resourceful while Patra was still in high school to allow her to gain some experience. She shared the following,

**We were fortunate to find a couple of opportunities,** and actually, two different preschools, where she volunteered for a certain number of hours a week for each one, like, alternate days. And that was actually a pretty good situation, where she enjoyed, and she got a little different perspective from different preschools, also different supervisors. And, I think those were good learning opportunities for kids.
Damon and Diana shared that they were resourceful while Drake was in high school, “We kind of were doing things on our own. We forgot to mention we had him involved in Sports Social, which is a program that used ABA therapy through his love for skateboarding.”

Additionally, they shared the following as a strategy that has worked for them as a family:

We’re like firemen. You know, you see a fire and you put it out, and it’s kinda, somebody like Drake, it’s kinda hard to have a strategy for something that’s unpredictable. So, things we can predict, then we can plan accordingly, but things we couldn’t foresee then were like, “Oh well. We’ll just cross that bridge when we get to it.

A key strategy that came up with the majority of the families who had the high school experience in the public-school system was the importance of advocacy. Advocacy was described as either advocating for their young adult and the services that they knew their young adult needed, or seeking out an advocate to assist them in the individualized planning meeting (IEP). The two families who chose to put their young adult in a private setting for high school both shared they were able to do away with the IEP in the private school. Patty shared a unique experience working with the IEP team when Patra was in high school.

Well I think there is a lot of effort to write IEPs for Patra that were better than others I’ve seen. Um, we still like, pushed them a little to write better IEPs, but, sometimes teachers would come to me, knowing that I’m kind of in this business, and say, “This is the best IEP that anybody ever had.” I’d say, it’s a really great start, but I think there’s still some things that we want to, because they just need to be individualized. And, it’s still very hard sometimes, for teacher to say, “Ok. This is what I’m doing for all the kids,” and not keep that individualization present.

Damon and Diana shared:

I know the last year we had some really strong opinions that we were not happy. And, our advocate really reinforced to the school district what we should include in the IEP. Should the school district, but in some cases, I don’t think it was implemented correctly, or…and that’s the…I think the school district has a lot to do with that. They just really don’t have the teachers-qualified teachers- they’re good teachers, but they don’t know how to work with kids with a disability like autism or Asperger’s or whatever.
It is well known that parents must develop a skill to advocate for their child to ensure that the best decisions are being made (Trainor, 2010). These parents confirmed that one key strategy that helped them through the transition was advocacy. Many of them not only learned how to advocate but they also relied on an outside advocate to ensure the district staff were doing what they were supposed to be doing and also to allow the parents to better understand the process.

**Theme 6: Coping – Support**

The families who participated in this study shared that support was a huge help to them while going through the transition process with their young adult. Schlossberg et al. (1995) describes the support as the means of support available while the individuals are dealing with any aspect of the transition. The support aspect came in many different forms from family support to coworkers, church members, and connections made through participation in organizations. The support aspect was a means for families to navigate through the various aspects that they had to get through to ensure that their young adult was getting the best possible services and supports that were available to them.

Brenda shared the following:

*We have a lot of support.* A lot of good friends. We go to church and they are wonderful there. She’s done everything from, you know, Joy Prom, to being involved-she loves choir and singing-so, she is a part of the worship group. *And they just, they’re just so great with her.* But, *we have a lot of family that have always been supportive.*

Jamie shared the following in terms of the support:

*I come from a large family. There’s 10 of us siblings, and I’m number six, so I’m in between you know, the middle of the older and younger siblings. They’re all very supportive; they all know about Justin’s diagnoses. As soon as I, um, you know, when he started school and started having problems, you know, I told my family, “This is what’s going on. This is what’s happening. This is what we’re doing.” Everyone’s always been supportive* and very, um, aware of what’s going on, what services, what I do. Or what we’re doing, what programs we’re doing.

Calvin and Cathy echoed similar sentiments regarding support,
Our family is very close, both his family and my family—we’ve, even though it’s small, we are very, very close. And then, he, we are active members of our church, and Cameron, even though now, he’s not that interested as much, especially since he’s 21 and he can decide….but, he did get, he was raised in the church and he participated in a program for middle school kids and a separate one, for high school, which included retreats. So, he was able to go away. Some of his peers were his inspiration, and they kinda watched out for him, and they knew some of his quirkiness, and some of things that they should be looking out for. So, I think that he’s been really blessed with having a lot of support. But, he’s also the type of kid that you want to support because he is social, he’s very engaging, and he’s kind of a cool, kind person.

Diana shared that their family support came from organizations because they do not have a lot of family in town. She explained the following:

Well, 99% of my friends all have children with autism. And, um, my best friend is the executive director of FEAT, Families for Effective Autism Treatment. As far as family in town, we have no immediate family in town, but I have an aunt and I have some cousins here. So, the support is really the other autism families.

Families can utilize support in a variety of different manners when going through transition. Research has shown that support for these families may be difficult to come by and the family may find it difficult to ask individuals or organizations for the specific support that they need (Kazak & Marvin, 1984; Todd & Shearn, 1996; White & Hastings, 2004). Ultimately, support is definitely beneficial for these families when coping with the demands of transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Theme 7: Expectations

Families and the university program staff, interns, and volunteers shared their thoughts on expectations. Families shared from the point of view of expectations in the household, long-term expectations, and their view of expectations now that the students are involved in the university program. The university program staff, interns, and volunteers talked about the expectations of the participants and working with the families. The expectations and goals families have for their
young adult are critical for a successful transition (Henninger & Taylor, 2014). Brenda shared the following regarding the views of expectations for Betsy in their home:

I’ll be honest with you, **my husband and I have different expectations for her. He doesn’t have a whole lot of expectations for her.** It’s kind of like, if I hadn’t said Betsy’s going to go ahead now and go to the university program, and talked to the program director, this is what we’re going to do, she’d sit at home and play on her computer all day. And, he doesn’t really have a problem with that. That’s a…it’s an issue of contention.

In relation to expectations for Betsy within the school setting, Brenda shared the following:

When Betsy left the fifth grade, she wasn’t reading. **Well, when I sat down with the teacher, one of the first things I said that was the biggest importance to me was that she could read.** Well, by the end of the sixth grade she was reading. And so, I mean, the teacher just said, after working with her a couple times during the summer time, she said, “I’ll have her reading by the end of the sixth grade,” and she was.

Patty shared a similar thought on expectations for Patra:

I think that the expectations were that she would increase in her reading; we knew, just basically, because we knew about the syndrome, that math was always going to be a bit of a struggle. So, the goal for math has always been more functional math. **But, the reading is very important. And we, we don’t take a lot of excuses for the reading, you know.**

Damon and Diana shared their expectations for Drake both while in high school and now that he is enrolled in the Postsecondary educational program:

**Our expectations of him is to just try. Give 100% effort.** Because, you know, he puts a lot of pressure on himself and if we try to compound that by putting additional pressures on him, he’ll just, you know, emotionally, he just can’t handle it. And, he just goes into, he’ll just go into a meltdown, as far as, you know, just shutting things off, and we don’t…we didn’t want him to do that. So, we basically just talked to him and like, “as long as you’re doing your best, that’s all that matters.

Jamie shared the following related to the alignment of expectations between the school and the family:

**Yeah, they were on the same page.** We talked about you know, doing community college. We talked about some different programs. And, his teacher was very supportive…the autism teacher…he had an amazing teacher. He’s always had amazing
teachers-except for one, again - who were always very encouraging and they said, “Justin can do a lot.”; Justin...are you thinking about college for Justin? Absolutely. He would do well.” And so, they were always rather supportive.

Postsecondary educational program staff, interns and volunteers also had input on expectations. Chasity had this to share:

I think with this program, as a parent with a child with autism, collaboration is always key. And so, I would say here at the university program there’s a lot of collaboration with families, staff and volunteers, which is really great. It brings out the best for the student, and for one of my students who was having a very difficult time in art class, and I was asked to you know, accompany him in his class. And, the teacher, he first-I mean, very supportive teacher, very nice teacher, very willing to do whatever it took to help the student. But as I observed, he didn’t think the student was able to finish this art project. And so, what happened is, we broke it down in little sequence of instructions. And, we were able to complete his art project very successfully, and the student received an A! Whereas, the teacher really didn’t think it was possible, that the student wasn’t understanding the project. But, at the end, with simple steps, moderation, and time you know, away from the class, he was able to complete the project with an A. So, that was great.

Expectations for individuals with IDD can go a long way (Blacher, 2010). Additionally, Blacher (2010) confirmed that family involvement both in decisions around aspects related to the overall transition and with service providers has proven to be a key factor in the success of individuals with intellectual disabilities being successful with any transition. The expectations of the parents and the program staff is just one area that needs to be aligned in order for the student of the program to be able to finish the program.

**Theme 8: Lacking**

The theme lacking emerged by parents and information from the focus group and leaned towards things within the transition realm that are still lacking or need improvement. The areas discussed were consistent among several of the families and were confirmed by the university program staff, interns, and volunteers. The majority of the families and the university program staff focused on the transition services provided by the local district as well as the lack of agency
support that is provided to families as they approach the transition period. Calvin and Cathy shared the following to answer the question about anything they feel is still missing,

There’s so much missing. I mean, the parents have to dig and, you know, and I’m thinking, what about all the other parents that just don’t have the wherewithal to do that? What do they do? So, yeah, I think that it should be so many wonderful required, absolutely required, in their senior year to have a um, like a college fair, or a transition fair, with all the services provided by the school district and required that the parents attend.

Brenda noted the following on her thoughts on anything that is missing,

Oh, in Clark County, I think there’s a lot that’s there. I just don’t think it all runs the way that it needs to run….I can’t speak on all of it, though, because I haven’t, in years, reached out to any of it. So maybe if you asked me that in six months from now, because you know the university program director asked me to go and apply to different things.

Jamie added the following:

I think that DVR could do so much better. I think that in my experience, they’re a token program. They’re not a real program. I don’t really know what they offer other than pay somebody to do an assessment that wasn’t that valuable. They did not offer any resources. “Oh, we can only help you if he’s going to look for a job; we cannot help you if he’s going to go to school.” Him getting some sort of education, I’m not saying, pay for everything. I’m not saying pay me money; I’m not saying pay for the school. I thank God, I don’t need it. I’m very blessed. We are very blessed as a family to where, you know, we have a little more than many other families. And we, I, speak two languages. Justin speaks two languages- we are ahead of the game in so many ways. What about the families that don’t? They couldn’t offer me transportation. They couldn’t offer me any help with school. The school isn’t for me; you know that money will clearly be going to him for educational services.

Staff members from the university program shared concerns about the program’s growing pains. Beckett shared the following regarding her wishes on the university and the program:

I would love if the university saw the program as a program to be proud of, for the fact that it can bring students to this, you know, for what it is trying to do. The research is focused on becoming a top tier level 1 university…and I wish that they would view the program not so much as an extension of the College of Education, but as our own part of university culture and campus.
Jim shared the following regarding the lack of communication between agencies and the program:

Services within the school district are defined and not much choice is given to the actual individual. It’s pre-determined, or somebody else determines for the individual on where they’re at. So, it’s not where you want to go, it’s, “you’re going to go here.” And that’s the way it’s set up. There is very little communication between inter-agencies, Vocational Rehabilitation, Desert Regional Center and the school district, when we start talking about transition, because all three, when we look at the law, should be working together in this process of transition, which starts at 14 years old in this state. And no one knows, as a teacher, I wasn’t instructed on these things. I had to search it out myself and say, “Ok. Voc. Rehab is supposed to be, here at the IEP.” And, I tried to get those people there, And, I think that’s more common than not in those situations. There is a lack of communication. But, the other one is funding as well. You look at the state, we’re dead last in fiscal efforts towards transition, specifically. That kind of leads toward all these trends. No wonder we’re not good at it.

Theme 9: Resources

Many of the families shared the importance of involvement as a main resource throughout the transition period. This involvement typically meant they felt it was very important for their young adult to be involved in as many activities that they were able to be involved in to ensure that they were getting that typical peer interaction and building their social skills. Murray (2003) confirmed that involvement in organizations within the community has proven to be important to individuals with IDD and can lead to many long-term opportunities. Families felt this aspect was important because it would help the young adults be better prepared when they transitioned out of the high school and into the “real world.” In addition, involvement also included the family being involved with agencies and activities that would assist them in being connected; to help them find out about opportunities for their son or daughter either at that time or later down the line. Alice shared the following regarding the importance of keeping Andy involved:

If the other kids were doing soccer, he was in soccer and we would always do it with whatever group they were in. so he was very blessed in that our community really
embraced and included him. He played little league baseball, he played AYSO soccer. You know baseball was his thing, which the other kids didn’t do and he loved baseball.”

Additionally, she shared:

My husband and I served on a committee called the interagency coordinating council (ICC) for birth to three years old with the state. We went up once a quarter to Reno and we met with a group and they were in charge of the early intervention. I think it was through that and also a class called Nevada Partners in Policy Making that was also in Reno.”

Brenda shared how she got Betsy involved with a trainer at the gym that she attends because Betsy was going through a shift due to puberty.

When I first approached him, I had been there, had been going there for a long time, and I kind of watched him with different people, was watching the different trainers. And, I approached him and said, “would you be willing to work with my 16-year-old who has Down Syndrome?” And he was like, “Sure.” And you could tell he was like, and he says, “I never have, but I’m willing to.” Three years later, and he’s not only her trainer, he’s become a very good friend of the family. He actually has worked with a couple other kids in the program at the school because he now, like when we have the barbecue at the school, which is our biggest fundraiser, he comes in and is there, and helps out, and he’s trying to work on a couple of programs with the teacher to just offer help to any of the kids. He has worked real hard to find ways to work with Betsy.

Patty confirmed the importance of involvement.

“Yeah, we’re certainly involved, and Patra does some volunteering, and we occasionally, when the organization has a fundraiser, we’ll participate in that. Patra does participate with the City of Las Vegas adaptive recreation, the adult part of that. She also bowls, once a week. She’s on a bowling league with another organization. And, she enjoys doing the movie and buffet once a month.

Calvin and Cathy shared their experience with other organizations as well as work experience that Cameron has been able to obtain, stating that both have been a valuable resource for them.

So, he was involved in the, Grant a Gift for Autism, and they started a program called Teen Works, right around the time that Cameron became a teenager. So, he was one of the, what would you call it, like the forefathers of this program. And, he started off, and this is an internship opportunity for teenagers. Once you are a teenager, you can participate in this Teen Works program which is completely non-paid internships.
But, they have a very **good set up for internship opportunities**. So, his first, I think, was working at a little restaurant and then the Ford dealership…he worked at a library, and these are, like three-month internship opportunities. They do it once a week.

Families tend to lean on various resources for a variety of reasons. For families with individuals with IDD who are faced with transitioning to the “next phase” once the students’ complete high school, resource acquisition can become a critical piece of the puzzle. One important resource that families shared was their involvement in organizations as well as work experience that their young adult was able to receive while in high school. A positive correlation was noted between successful employment outcomes for individuals when they have participated in some sort of work-based learning while still in high school (Luecking & Fabian, 2000). This theme falls directly in line with how the resources which were accessible helped parents achieve a successful post high school outcome for their young adult.

**Componential Analysis**

Spradley (1980) defined a componential analysis as a way to visually see the manifestation of themes across cases. The componential analysis for this study (Table 5.4) is an illustration of the themes and codes that emerged from the study. The componential analysis shows the key themes among the individual cases as well as the focus group. The “x”s in each category on the componential analysis represent each time the family member mentioned that specific code in the interview. The information from the focus group is based on information the program staff, interns, and volunteers have been told by the families during their intake process, or through the other family interactions the university program staff has had with the families. Thus, the focus group information is a report of secondhand information, and also serves as a form of data triangulation to show comparison or contrast with the interview data.
The key findings by theme based on the componential analysis include: Challenges (disappointed in school district training programs); Lacking (no transition support); Communication (amazing communication with university program staff); Coping – Self (uncertainty); Coping – Situation (helping family members); Coping – Strategies (Connections, Resourceful and Involvement); Coping – Support (Family, Friends, University Program); Expectations (Independent, Employment, Independence, Work Experience); and Resources (Involvement, University Program, Advocacy). These key findings were identified based on at least five of the families identifying those codes in their interviews, as well as the focus group participants confirming hearing such information by the parents.

It is important to mention those codes/themes that were consistent among all of the families and also mentioned by members of the focus group. Those key codes included the no transition support, which was related to the lacking theme. Under the coping-strategies theme, the connections code was consistent amongst all participants. In the coping-support theme there was consistency for the family and friend codes and under the resources them the involvement theme was consistently mentioned. One very interesting finding was every family that participated mentioned advocacy but it was not mentioned by the focus group participants as something that families had conversations with them about during their interactions.

The first research questions—What were experiences of parents of young adults currently involved in a postsecondary educational program for individuals with IDD located in the Southwestern part of the United States during the transition from high school into the program and or a work setting? incorporated the following subquestions: What were the experiences of these families? What barriers did they encounter? What resources were most beneficial? and To what extent were those resources utilized to support the transition from high
school to a postsecondary educational or work setting? —were addressed through the information gathered during interviews with the families. The barriers encountered were displayed with challenges lost, opportunities they missed because of what was lacking during that period. Some expressed issues with communication at various phases, families talked about the theme coping – self, as they dealt with a range of emotions during that critical transition time frame. The coping – situation theme addressed this research questions as families shared what was going on in their lives during the transition and how that affected them and their child.

Additionally, families shared examples of coping – strategies, coping – support, expectations, and resources in addressing the second and third part of the first research question. Findings also indicated that families shared barriers they encountered while their child was in the school system, as well as when they were transitioning out of the school system. They discussed a host of resources they found most beneficial and shared how they utilized resources, including family, friends, and university program staff, to help meet their expectations and overcome the barriers they encountered during the transition period.

Addressing the second research question, In what ways did the program at the university in the Southwest assist families with the overall transition experience into a postsecondary educational and or work setting? This question was addressed with information gathered from the families as well as information from the focus group. Families shared the university program provided them with consistent communication, support to their family when the family was dealing with different situations, connections to organizations and a variety of activities on campus, and great support in helping their child meet and exceed their expectations.

Lacking was also used to answer the second research question, as the university program staff confirmed many of the same concerns families shared related to the information, resources
and connectedness that are lacking within the county. Lastly, the majority of the families confirmed the university program has been a huge resource for them and their families, as well as how it has led them to be more confident in what the future holds for their child because of their experience with this postsecondary educational program at a university in the Southwest.
Table 5.4. Componential Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>FG</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School district not inclusive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>xx</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disappointed in school district training programs</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School district no vision for individuals with disabilities to work</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>xxx</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School district not enough help</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant fight with the school district</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No program that fit the need</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect information provided by agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of follow through from Voc Rehab</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School district lack of flexibility</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not a lot of options</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No transition support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Great communication while in high school</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Amazing communication with Postsecondary educational program</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff and families</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited communication in high school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Breakdown in communication from agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coping: Self</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
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<td>Worried</td>
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<td>Scared</td>
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<td>Stressful</td>
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<td>Concerned</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coping: Situation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Marriage of sibling</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other siblings going to college</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Helping family members</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Health issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coping: Strategies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td>Resourceful</td>
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<td>Building up</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Early intervention</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td>Providing support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coping: Support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
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<td>Postsecondary educational program</td>
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<td>Church</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co-Workers</td>
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<td>People in other organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expectations</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Employment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continued growth</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop friend base</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Postsecondary educational program</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td>Advocacy</td>
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Chapter Summary

Families with individuals with IDD face numerous decisions when approaching, going through, and coming out of the transition phase (Schlossberg, 1995). Families with children who have intellectual and development disabilities face tremendous difficulty during this phase compared to their non-disabled peers (Sosnowy et al., 2017). Parents often feel it is difficult to get the information, help, and assistance related to transitioning their child to a suitable postsecondary environment (Sosnowy et al., 2017).

The service providers and families who participated in this study confirmed key findings of previous research. Overall, the families shared experiences that mirrored what was found in the research related to the transition of their young adult from high school to a postsecondary setting. While all of the families who participated in the study were successful in getting their young adult into the postsecondary educational program, the transition process was not easy for the majority of families. The program staff was instrumental in helping to ease some of the worry and concern with the overall transition for these families; however, the program still faces challenges that limit the overall support staff can provide families. The consensus among both the families and the program staff was that there is still much to be done in this county with regard to transition services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the transition experiences of parents of young adults with IDD as they transitioned from high school to a postsecondary educational setting. This chapter reveals the findings in relation to the framework and provides connections to the relevant literature. Additionally, this chapter includes an interpretation of the findings and the key themes related to the research questions. The primary research questions for this study were:

**RQ1:** What were the experiences of parents of young adults currently involved in a postsecondary educational program for individuals with IDD located in the Southwestern part of the United States during the transition from high school into the program and or a work setting?

a. What barriers were encountered by parents during the transition?

b. What resources were most beneficial to parents during transition?

c. To what extent were the resources utilized to support with the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting?

**RQ2:** In what ways did the postsecondary educational program assist families with the overall transition into the program and/or work setting?

A local postsecondary program at a university in the Southwest was the site for this study. Families currently involved with the program served as individual cases for the study and participated in in-depth interviews. The program staff took part in a focus group, after which a review of key documents associated with the program occurred.
Using Schlossberg’s transition theory as a framework for this study, the researcher interviewed parents to determine the type of experiences each had during the transition period. A total of six parents participated in in-depth interviews and answered questions based on Schlossberg’s transition theory. Additionally, seven of the program team members participated in a focus group to discuss the assistance provided to the families involved in the program. The document review assisted with triangulation efforts for the overall study.

Data analysis revealed nine major themes, four of them predetermined by Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory: (1) Coping: Self; (2) Coping: Situation; (3) Coping: Strategies: and (4) Coping: Support. An additional five themes emerged from the data: (1) Challenges; (2) Communication; (3) Expectations; (4) Lacking; and (5) Resources. The information gleaned from this study will help school personnel and service providers better understand the transition-related experiences and hardships parents had gone through. Data helped to define coping mechanisms used and challenges faced, define effective communication strategies as well as barriers to communication, explore how expectations aligned, and identify what was lacking and the resources used to overcome issues families faced. This information is valuable to service providers, school district personnel, community agencies, and other parents who have a child with IDD preparing for or going through this transition period.

Conclusions

Nancy Schlossberg originally developed the transition theory in 1981 when she was faced with a difficult transition of moving from one state to the next for her husband’s job. Her intent was to gain an understanding of what adults’ experience when going through transitions, and to identify both assets and liabilities (the 4-S system: self, situation, strategies, and support) individuals used for aid through the transition (Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg credited the
development of this theory to the influence to others who focused on areas such as comprehensive adult development theory; the interaction of aging and personality; and on social stress and adaptation (Schlossberg, 1981).

Schlossberg’s transition theory provided the framework for this study, as well as the context for defining and explaining transition. Researchers noted a need to focus on the families of individuals with IDD and their perspectives of what is important as related to the transition and adult outcomes (Henninger & Taylor, 2014). Unfortunately, the families’ perspectives are not always considered when looking at the overall transition process for individuals with IDD (Henninger & Taylor, 2014).

Previous researchers have confirmed families of individuals with IDD want to ensure a quality of life for their loved one as close to normal as possible (Biggs & Carter, 2016; Nicholas et al., 2015; Simplician et al., 2015). Findings from this study confirmed the immense concern of these families related to ensuring a quality of life for their child and wanting one that is as normal as possible. Many of the families interviewed shared expectations for their children to someday be able to live on their own. They all talked about the desire for their child to be able to obtain and maintain a job. Lastly, many of the families boasted about the skills their child had gained since being involved in the postsecondary educational program, and how these skills are in line with their long-term goals for their child.

Families, school-based staff, and the community play a significant role in the employment-related decisions for young adults with IDD (Timmons et al., 2011). This study confirmed the need for families, school-based staff, and community organizations to work together on moving individuals with IDD toward the goal of eventually being able to secure employment. Participating families confirmed this was a goal for their child, but shared
disappointment in the difference in expectations between them and school-based staff and community agencies with which they have been working over the years. The families did affirm that, since being a part of the university-based program, they had seen a vast different in the alignment of expectations related to goals specifically targeted toward employment for their child.

Sun and Swedeen (2009) found conducting a transition assessment and aligning the assessment of needs, strengths, interests, and aspirations of individuals with IDD and their families is a key piece in the overall transition. Three of the families interviewed mentioned the need for a transition assessment to not only conduct with individuals with IDD, and to be taken seriously. Some of the families reported feeling the IEP team conducted the transition assessment only as a formality, but were not truly interested in identifying the individual’s strengths, needs, and interests for future planning thus making it more difficult for the families to identify options or placements for their child. Additionally, there was a concern for those whose assessment took place at the local vocational rehabilitation office. The families felt that, similar to the school-based team, the vocational rehabilitation staff members were not concerned about the unique strengths, interests and needs of their child.

Postschool outcomes for young adults with IDD are strongly associated with parent expectations (Papay & Bambara, 2014; Young et al., 2016). The findings of this study confirmed the importance of parent expectations. From the time their children were in high school, each family had high expectations motivating them to figure out how to navigate the transition period, ultimately getting their child enrolled in the postsecondary educational program offered at the local university of which many families shared they learned about this program serendipitously or by accident. Many shared future expectations for their children, and how they felt enrollment
in this postsecondary educational program would help to move their child closer toward meeting those goals of self-sufficiency and independence.

**Research Discussion**

Parents of individuals with IDD have an ongoing desire for their young adult to be successful, especially during transition from the high school setting into a postsecondary or work environment (Martinez, Conroy & Cerreto, 2012; Wagner et al., 2005). Researchers have shown parents of young adults with IDD who are preparing to finish high school often feel their children have not been adequately prepared for moving into adulthood and self-sufficiency (Martinez et al., 2012). Additionally, some researchers found parents often believe they are given minimal information regarding transition planning along with little support, and are therefore left to navigate this process alone (Martinez et al., 2012). Parents often use their social capital (e.g., knowledge, connections, network) to find viable ways to help their child during this period.

While the transition from high school to a postsecondary and/or work environment can be a challenge for individuals with IDD, increasingly more families desire their young adult to make that transition successfully (Cameto, Levine, & Wagner, 2004). The services families receive at the high school level are critical to their overall transition experience (Henninger & Taylor, 2014). It is critical for schools and community agencies to identify and value the goals of the family related to the transition planning for individuals with IDD (Henninger & Taylor, 2014).

Researchers have confirmed the importance of family involvement related to the overall transition for individuals with IDD (Kramer & Blacher, 2001; Morningstar, Turnbull & Turnbull, 1995), thus justifying the need to identify the specific barriers, resources, and strategies parents
must use to assist them with the overall transition process. These data can provide valuable information to facilitate improvements within the local school district and community.

As the parent of a young adult with IDD currently in the transition phase, I saw in the findings of this study just how much I have in common with the experiences shared by these families, such as the difference in expectations between my family and the transition team, and the lack of transition support and transition options following my daughter’s graduation from high school. The trial-and-error process I have used when navigating this complicated maze of bureaucracy requires extensive advocacy when figuring out how to proceed and make decisions regarding my daughter’s future. Some families interviewed had similar concerns and thus hired an advocate to attend IEP meetings with them to help ensure the law was followed. Unfortunately, families with few resources may not know this is an option or have adequate resources to associated with hiring an advocate.

Innovative programs such as this postsecondary educational offering are clearly missing across the city in the southwest part of the United States and absent for young adults with more severe disabilities. Opportunities are limited for higher-functioning young adults and families with adequate financial resources. Only now, following the U.S. Department of Education’s approval of the program as a comprehensive transition program, will financial aid be an option for families that qualify. There are only 75 programs that have this designation across the U.S. Since this approval, one of the families interviewed for this study confirm eligibility to receive financial assistance for their child. Clearly, more programs such as this are needed across the U.S.

Because of my own frustration, I was interested in learning the experiences of other families in the same predicament, and finding other pathways parents may have taken to secure
the next steps for their young adult with an IDD. The information families shared allowed me to relate on multiple levels and validated many areas I had questioned for years. Because of conducting this study, I am relieved to learn these challenges are not unique to me; rather, I understand systemic challenges exist within the school system and across some of the agencies responsible for serving these populations in this community. Specifically, there is a tremendous gap in the information shared by these agencies with regard to the transition itself and providing families with proper transition support.

**Research Implications**

Research focused on ensuring successful transition planning for individuals with IDD and their families continues to be a strong area of interest for many educators, organizations, and policymakers (Biggs & Carter 2016; Cimera et al., 2014; Curtis et al., 2009; Doren et al., 2012; Harber et al., 2016; Kirby, 2016; Kramer & Blacher, 2001). The future of individuals with IDD is important and the transition from the high school setting is a critical period in their lives (Murray, 2003). Ensuring a successful transition from high school to a post–high school setting is important, as it can determine the long-term plans for these young adults (Mazzotti et al., 2015). The overall transition process takes a collaborative effort between schools, families, and agencies to ensure the transition is successful.

**Implications for Teachers**

The families and program staff were very open and honest when sharing their overall transition experience in this community. The majority of families and staff members within the program shared a lack of connection to the community agencies designed to help individuals with IDD and their families during this transition period. Several family members shared how they had to rely on their personal resourcefulness to gain knowledge about available
programming and services. Many revealed a lack of communication between those they trusted to help them through the process, leading to a feeling of uncertainty throughout the entire senior year for their young adult.

Program staff members confirmed similar feelings when working with families that have transitioned to their program from the school district. These staff members are often left helping to connect the families with services they need to help with the overall transition of their young adult. Additionally, the program staff noted an apparent disconnect between what the schools should be doing to prepare families for the next step and what actually happens during those last few years of high school.

The high schools in this community can benefit greatly from the information shared by the families and the program staff who participated in this study. In addressing the barriers identified by families and this service providers, teachers must ensure they are aware of the resources available in their community; work to develop a communication plan on how they will communicate with families about resources and transition options; build partnerships with organizations that can support families during the transition period; and work to individualize their teaching strategies.

**Implications for School Administrators**

School administrators are an intricate part of the transition process, as the mandates set forth for a school district often begin with them. Teachers look to the school administration on guidance for what they need to implement and the processes they need to follow. If the school administration identifies an issue and makes necessary adjustments, then teachers will be in a better position to make any modifications needed to address the barriers identified by families and services providers. Some of the suggestions for school administrators to consider when
addressing the barriers include organizing large-scale transition fairs; create and share best practices with families including developing a list of advocates for families who may need the help of an advocate; implementing skill-based curricula focused on teaching transferrable skills to individuals with disabilities; and assess the current transition outcomes offered by the district and explore ways to become more inclusive.

Implications for Community Agencies

Community agencies within this community can benefit from the results of this study because it highlights key areas of focus related to services they should be providing to families. Several families stressed a concern with getting their young adult through the intake process with these agencies often walking away feeling as if they were not valued or important. Program staff members and a few of the families shared their concern with the lack of agency support for the program, even though the overall goal of the program aligns with the service they should be providing.

Community agencies can use the information from this study to examine how they can better partner with the school district, establishing an alliance to ensure the availability of a representative in transition planning meetings for these young adults. In addition, community agencies can conduct an assessment on the current practice to help identify gaps, and then establish an improvement plan to help with closing these gaps; collaborate with the university program to explore a referral process for individuals who qualify; and ensure the placement of emphasis on the quality of the service provided.

Research Limitations

There are several limitations for this study that need to be addressed. One limitation relates to the participants in this study. All of the participants had intact families and were not
reflective of diverse family units. It is unknown if these experiences represent other family structures, such as single-family households, domestic partnerships, or disadvantaged households. A second limitation related to the collection of data for this study; social economic status, educational levels, and ethnic and racial demographic information were not collected in this study; therefore, these results may not reflect diverse experiences or those families considered at risk and/or underprivileged. These may include families with lesser education, fewer resources, or non-documented status. A third limitation is this study’s sole focus on individuals with an intellectual/developmental disability, meaning transition results cannot be generalized to other types of disabilities. Fourth, the results of this study may not be generalizable to other transition periods outside of the high school transition for parents of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The final limitation is the inability to generalize the results to families with general experiences or families whose experiences were not positive in this local community due to the assumption of each of these families having had a “successful” transition with the participation in the program at the local university.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are gaps in the study of transitions of students with disabilities to both postsecondary education programs and to the workplace. Future researchers should focus on the following:

- Expand this study to include transitions of students with more severe disabilities focused on both outcomes.
- Study the transition experiences of families from disadvantaged backgrounds and various family structures.
• Examine the transition experiences of families not considered to have a “successful” outcome.

• Examine the perspectives of families that currently have a child with IDD who is a junior or senior in high school.

• Examine the perspectives of single-parent households that have a child with an intellectual/developmental disability.

**Summary**

The goal of this study was to explore parent views on transition planning within a community located in the Southwest United States. The experiences shared by the families and staff of a postsecondary educational program at a local university provided valuable information related to the transition outlook for that community. Results from this study can inform practice, policy, and future direction for transition services in that community, and for agencies that provide services to these families and the program. While there has been some progress throughout the years with the transition from high school to adult roles for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, there is still work to be done. By giving individuals with IDD the ability to explore postsecondary options, advancement in the field of transition is visible. Programs around the country, like the postsecondary educational program in this study, provide families with hope for their loved ones—and their loved ones’ future.
Epilogue

Now that I have completed this study, it is only appropriate to share a bit of what this all means to me. As mentioned briefly in the text, I have a 22-year-old daughter who was diagnosed at age 2 with an intellectual/developmental disability. My daughter began receiving services through our local school district when she was 3 years old. She continued to receive services up until the end of the last school year, when we decided to transition her out of the school district.

At the time my daughter began receiving services through the local school district, I was a single parent trying to navigate the system. I often questioned if I was making the right decisions for her, and when things did not go as planned, I was extremely hard on myself for decisions I made. I found myself in this position several times throughout her school journey, and often see that similar feelings come back now that we have transitioned her out of the school district. Those same feelings these families shared of fear and uncertainty and not really knowing the future outcomes for their children shared by the families, who participated in this study, were eerily familiar to me as I experienced the same as it related to my daughter and my family.

Currently, my daughter is in a work training program designed to teach individuals with disabilities different skills with the hope of one day being able to secure a job making at least minimum wage. While this program gives us a little hope, often while collecting the data for this study, I reflected on the fact that the postsecondary educational program these parents had access to, was not a feasible option for my daughter. Interviewing these families was therapeutic for me in some ways. It felt good to know the emotions and feelings I have struggled with over the past twenty-two years are not unique to me. Additionally, the results of this study truly revealed to me the critical need for improving the current system, especially as it relates to options for parents. Individuals with more severe intellectual disabilities, such as my daughter, deserve more options!
Appendix A: Case Study Protocol

Contents

- Data Collection and Data Analysis Timeline
- Participant Recruitment Letters
- Interview Questions

Data Collection and Data Analysis Timeline

- August 8, 2018: University of Nevada, Las Vegas Institutional Review Board Approval
- August 13 – August 18, 2018: Researcher visited postsecondary educational program to conduct document review
- August 30, 2018: Researcher presented at the Fall 2018 Parent Meeting and Parents signed up to participate in the interviews
- September 6 – September 20, 2018: Interviews with postsecondary educational program parents
- September 21, 2018: Focus group with postsecondary educational program staff interns and volunteers
- September 8 – November 1, 2018: Transcribed interview data; entered information into Atlas ti to create case study database, peer debriefing, analysis of data (thematic analysis and CARMA) and draft of Chapter 4 (Case Narratives)
- November 2 – November 9, 2018: Chapter 5 (Findings)
- November 10 – November 16, 2018: Chapter 6 (Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations)
Appendix B: Parent Recruitment Letter

Dear Parent of a Young Adult Participating in a postsecondary educational program at a university,

I am writing to request your participation as an interviewee in a research study on (a) experiences of parents of individuals with IDD (IDD) related to the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting; (b) parents’ and staff perceptions of barriers and challenges during the transition into a postsecondary educational and/or work setting; and (c) how parents utilized their access to resources to overcome those barriers and or challenges.

Because you are a parent of a young adult participating in the postsecondary educational program, you have experiences and information that will assist me in understanding your experiences during the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting. The Director of the program has endorsed this study, as it is anticipated the outcomes of this study will provide a unique perspective for understanding the overall transition experiences for families of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities as well as strategies and resources for other parents and/or families.

Participation in this study includes: a) An interview which will require 60-90 minutes of your time; and b) Review of the interview transcript and response to the researcher with any corrections via email. Your participation is voluntary and will be completely confidential. All information will be aggregated and no personal information will be used in the research report. If you are willing to participate, please reply to this email, rrogersresearch2018@gmail.com, by phone at (702) 439-9308, by (date) confirming that you will participate. Once you have confirmed your willingness to participate, I will work with you directly to identify the best date
and time to conduct an interview with you and/or spouse. Interviews will be conducted at UNLV. You may also choose to participate via video-conference (e.g. SKYPE, FaceTime).

Please indicate your preference in your reply.

Thank you in advance for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Rebecca S. Rogers
Ph.D. Candidate, Workforce Development and Organizational Leadership
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Appendix C: Parent Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this research study. I anticipate this interview will take between 60-90 minutes. I have a series of questions to ask focused on what you experienced during the transition period(s) of your son or daughter from high school into the postsecondary educational program at a university. Please feel free to speak openly. The information that you share today is completely confidential as pseudonyms will be used for you and your child. If anytime you feel uncomfortable, please let me know and we will stop the interview immediately.

Researcher to review consent form and ask participant to sign.

Do you have any questions for me before we start recording the conversation?

I. Background Information (Blancher, 2010)

1. Tell me a little about ________________ (Name of Child)

2. Please share a little about your family structure
   a. Number of family members?
   b. Any other children in the house, if so how many and what are their ages?
   c. Any other children in the house with a disability?
   d. Who is the major decision maker in the home?

3. Can you please share a little about your support system?
   a. Extended Family
   b. Friends
   c. Church
   d. Organizations
II. Preparing for Transition

Reflecting back to (name)’s period transitioning from high school:

1. What were some feelings that you had during that time?

2. Were there any incidents or situations during that period that holds significance for you?
   a. Describe the circumstance and nature of that incident or situation
      i. Describe the outcomes or results of the incident or situation
      ii. Explain why you consider that incident or situation to be significant to you

3. Please share the expectations you had for your (name) while still in high school?
   a. What structure did you put in place to reinforce it?
   b. How did you encourage (name) during this time?
   c. How did you reward (name) during this time?

4. Do you feel that (name) teachers and/or transition specialists were on the same page as you with the expectations that you had for your son or daughter?
   a. What transition related resources did school personnel share with you during this period?
   b. Describe the communication between school personnel and the major decision maker of your family.
      i. Share your thoughts on the alignment of expectations between your family and the school personnel.
      ii. What was your experience with the IEP process and did you encounter barriers? If yes, what strategies did you use to overcome those barriers?

5. When did you first become aware of the postsecondary educational program at the university?
   a. What was the process for getting (name) enrolled in the program?
b. Was the process for getting (name) enrolled in the program easy or hard?

c. Describe the method of communication between you and the program staff and has the communication been consistent?

d. How do you stay informed about what is going on within the program and updates on (name) progress within the program?

**Coping Resources**

1. Think back to the transition period (when ______ was transitioning out of high school into the university program).
   a. Describe significant events that you had going on in your life at that time.
   b. What support did you seek to assist with this transition period?
   c. Who was the most helpful to you during this period?

2. Did you have specific strategies that you used during this transition period and if so, what were those strategies and how did you come up with those strategies?

**Strengthening Resources**

1. What resources did you find that were most useful to you?

2. Since your child has been in the postsecondary educational program, have you thought of ways in which the overall transition could have gone better? If so, what are some thoughts that you have?

3. What skills is (name) gaining in the postsecondary educational program and how valuable are these skills?

4. What goals have you set for (name) once they complete the postsecondary educational program?

5. How has the university program helped in attaining those goals?
6. What do you feel was the most valuable resource(s) for (name) during this period?

7. If you could do it over, what would you do differently?

8. What recommendations would you suggest to improve the experience of parents?

9. What is missing?
Appendix D: Focus Group Recruitment Letter

Dear: Program Team Member,

I am writing to request your participation in a research study on (a) experiences of parents of individuals with IDD related to the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and or work setting in the local community; (b) parents’ and staff perceptions of barriers and challenges during the transition into a postsecondary educational and/or work setting; and (c) how parents utilized their access to resources to overcome those barriers and or challenges.

Because you are a paid staff member or volunteer for university postsecondary educational program, you have experiences and information that will assist me in understanding parents’ experiences during the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting. The Director of the program endorsed this study, as it is anticipated the outcomes of this study will provide a unique perspective for understanding the overall transition experience for parents of individuals with IDD.

Participation in this study includes: a) participating in a focus group requiring 60-90 minutes of your time; and b) Review of the focus group transcript and response to the researcher with any corrections via email. Your participation is voluntary and will be completely confidential. All information will be aggregated and no personal information will be used in the research report. If you are willing to participate, please reply to this email, rrogersresearch2018@gmail.com, by phone at (702) 439-9308, by (date) confirming that you will participate. Once you have confirmed your willingness to participate, I will work with you and other participants to identify the best date and time to set up the focus group meeting. The focus group will be conducted at the university.

Thank you in advance for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Rebecca S. Rogers
Ph.D. Candidate, Workforce Development and Organizational Leadership
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

(Putney et al., 2006)

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this research study. I anticipate this focus group will take approximately two hours. Please feel free to speak openly. The information you share today is completely confidential as pseudonyms will be used for you. If anytime you feel uncomfortable, please let me know and we will stop the session immediately.

Researcher to review consent form and ask participants to sign.

1. What piqued your interest in being involved with the university postsecondary educational program?

2. Please identify who the program managers and staff are for the program.

3. Who is the program intended to serve and please identify the demographics of the population served?

4. How are the participants in the program to be served?

5. What will be produced or what will be the outcomes by participants in the program?

6. How are the participants of the program using the services?

7. What outcomes have you been the most proud of?

8. What challenges, if any, have you had since being a part of the program staff?

9. What recommendations, if any, would you make improve the program?

10. Share your thoughts on parent participation with the program.
Appendix F: Document Review Protocol

(Putney et al., 2006)

The document review protocol will be utilized by the researcher when conducting a review of the program documents during the site review.

Name of document (s) being reviewed _______________________________

1. When was the document created? When was the last revision, if any?

2. Does the document (s) identify program managers and staff involved with the program? If yes, how many staff are involved?

3. Does the document (s) state who is intended to be served? If yes, who?

4. Does the document (s) state how the participants will be served? If yes, how?

5. Does the document (s) state what will be produced by participants in the program? If yes, what?

6. Can information about the demographics of the population served be obtained in the document (s), if yes, what are the demographics?

7. Can information regarding how the participants using the service be obtained in the document (s), if yes, how are they using it?

8. Is there information on what is being produced by the participants in the program? If yes, what is being produced?

9. Is there information regarding the outcomes of the program? If yes, what are the outcomes?

10. Does the document (s) state the implications for those being served, how they are being served and implications for the outcomes? If yes, what are the implications for those being served, how they are being served and the outcomes?
### Appendix G: Complementary Analysis Research Matrix Application (CARMA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Program Expectations</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Evident Implementation</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Conclusions/Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management/program staff/administrator</td>
<td>Users/participants</td>
<td>Compare/contrast Expected with evident</td>
<td>Evaluator and/or Stakeholder Interpretations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is being served? Who is involved</td>
<td>Who are evident participants?</td>
<td>Expected v. evident, congruent or divergent?</td>
<td>What are the implications? Modify or maintain program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are participants to be served?</td>
<td>How are participants using the service?</td>
<td>Expected v. evident, congruent or divergent?</td>
<td>What are the implications? Modify or maintain program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will be produced by participants in the program</td>
<td>What was produced by participants in the program</td>
<td>Expected v. evident, congruent or divergent?</td>
<td>What are the implications? Modify or maintain program?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix H: CARMA Worksheets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Expectations</th>
<th>Note Taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators and/or support staff</td>
<td>Describe what was intended by program administrators and support staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the program managers and staff</td>
<td>The program managers and staff of the program consist of three full time staff members and intern and volunteers that work with the program each semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is intended to be served?</td>
<td>Those intended to be served through the program are college aged individuals that have IDD that have typically graduated from high school with an adjusted diploma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are the participants to be served?</td>
<td>The participants in the program are being served through person-centered planning, academic advising, academic, social and wellness mentoring, career development, campus inclusion and membership, self-determination and independent living skills enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will be produced by participants in the program?</td>
<td>Those participants that successfully complete the program will receive a 2-year Occupational and Career Life Studies Certificate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evident Implementation</th>
<th>Note Taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users/participants</td>
<td>Describe what is evidently happening in the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the demographics of the population being served</td>
<td>Participants of the program range in age (college-aged), varies by gender, ethnicity and disability type (various types of IDD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are evident participants?</td>
<td>College-aged individuals that have graduated from high school with an adjusted and/or regular diploma that have been diagnosed with an intellectual/developmental disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are the participants using the program?</td>
<td>Participants are using the program to gain a college experience, obtain life, job and independent living skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has been produced by the participants in the program?</td>
<td>The program has had two individuals that have graduated from the program with an Occupational and Career Life Studies Certificate. In addition, there will be a third individual that will graduate in May 2019.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of congruence or divergence</th>
<th>Compare/contrast expectations with evident implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Who are the participants?**
The participants are college aged individuals that have been diagnosed with an intellectual/developmental disability and have graduated from a high school with an adjusted/standard diploma.

**How are participants served?**
The participants are being served by receiving mentorship, person-centered planning, access to job readiness activities, strengthening of life and independent living skills and exposure to the college life experience.

**What has been produced or what are the outcomes?**
The program has produced two individuals that have earned the Occupational and Career Life Studies Certificate and a third that will earn the certificate in May 2019. In addition, the program has been successful in ensuring that all participants obtain essential life skills (learning how to schedule and ride paratransit, etc.), participation in college courses, job readiness activities (intern opportunities), competitive employment opportunities (two participants currently making minimum wage), and independent living skills (three participants currently living in the dorms).

### Conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluator Interpretations</th>
<th>Implications for participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**What are the implications for who is being served?**
The program is designed to service individuals with an IDD that is college-aged and have finished high school with an adjusted/standard diploma. The program is serving this population and it is clear within all of the written communication and information shared by families of the program that the program is serving who it was designed to serve.

**What are the implications for how they are being served?**
The program staff and the families interviewed both shared that the program staff are providing the targeted individuals with mentorship, person-centered planning, job readiness skills, advising, exposure to college life, intern opportunities, competitive employment opportunities and life skills.

**What are the implications for the outcomes?**
The program has proven that it is providing individuals with an intellectual/developmental disability with the opportunity to have a college experience while gaining valuable skills to help them move towards hopefully being able to live independently and gain competitive employment. Families of the program have overall been satisfied with the program only offering minor recommendations (working with the university administration to allow those participants that finish the program to participate in graduation, continue to work on getting some type of financial support options to allow for the program to be more affordable for other families, continue to work with outside agencies to collaborate to provide additional resources to families to help make it an option for more families, continue to fine tune the dorm process to allow students to be able to move into the dorms their first year, continue to work to increase the work experience opportunities and continue to work to get more paid intern opportunities for the participants).
Appendix I: IRB Exempt Review Notice

UNLV Social/Behavioral IRB – Exempt
Review Exempt Notice

DATE: August 8, 2018

TO: Cecilia Maldonado, Ph.D.
FROM: Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects

PROTOCOL TITLE: [1249247-2] A Qualitative Multiple Case Study of the Transition Experiences of Parents and Service Providers of Individuals with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities in a Postsecondary Educational Program

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
EXEMPT DATE: August 8, 2018

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category #1, #2

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this protocol. This memorandum is notification that the protocol referenced above has been reviewed as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46.101(b) and deemed exempt. We will retain a copy of this correspondence with our records.

PLEASE NOTE:

Upon final determination of exempt status, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the exempt application reviewed by the ORI - HS and/or the IRB which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent Forms (Information Sheet) and recruitment materials.

If your project involves paying research participants, it is recommended to contact Carisa Shaffer, ORI Program Coordinator at (702) 895-2794 to ensure compliance with the Policy for Incentives for Human Research Subjects.

Any changes to the application may cause this protocol to require a different level of IRB review. Should any changes need to be made, please submit a Modification Form. When the above-referenced protocol has been completed, please submit a Continuing Review/Progress Completion report to notify ORI - HS of its closure.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 702-895-2794. Please include your protocol title and IRBNet ID in all correspondence.
Appendix J: Informed Consent – Parents

UNLV

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Public Policy and Leadership

TITLE OF STUDY: A Qualitative Multiple Case Study of the Transition Experiences of Parents and Service Providers of Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in a Postsecondary Educational Program.

INVESTIGATOR(S): Cecilia Maldonado & Rebecca Rogers

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Rebecca Rogers at 702-439-9308.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact, the UNLV Office of Research Integrity-Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand (a) experiences of parents of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) related to the transition from high school to a postsecondary educational and/or work setting in Las Vegas, Nevada; (b) parents’ and staff perceptions of barriers and challenges during the transition into a postsecondary educational and/or work setting; and (c) how parents utilized their access to resources to overcome those barriers and challenges. Through the use of a multiple-case study approach, this study will identify support systems relative to the transition experience perceived to be most/least beneficial to parents of students participating in a postsecondary educational program in the Southwestern part of the United States.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criteria: (a) must have a young adult with an intellectual/developmental disability (IDD), down syndrome or autism; (b) young adult must be between the ages of 18-26; (c) young adult must have attended high school in Las Vegas, Nevada; and (d) young adult must be currently enrolled in the Project F.O.C.U.S. program.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: participate in a 60-90 minute interview and review the transcribed interview to confirm accuracy post interview.
Interviews will be conducted primarily in person but will accommodate the participant preferences for other methods such as SKYPE, FaceTime, or telephone.

**Benefits of Participation**

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn about your experiences with the transition period including helpful resources and agencies for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The goal is to help other parents or service providers in the future.

**Risks of Participation**

Participants may experience some discomfort when asked to talk about their experiences with the transition period/s or their involvement in the postsecondary educational program.

**Cost/Compensation**

There may not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 60-90 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

**Confidentiality**

All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential as possible. No reference will be made in writer or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be shredded and destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**Participant Consent**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________________________  _____________________________
Signature of Participant Date

_________________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)
Audio/Video Taping

I agree to be audio or video taped for the purpose of this research study.

_________________________________________  _____________________________
Signature of Participant                     Date
TITLE OF STUDY: A Qualitative Multiple Case Study of the Transition Experiences of Parents and Service Providers of Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in a Postsecondary Educational Program.

INVESTIGATOR(S): Cecilia Maldonado & Rebecca Rogers

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Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you are a paid staff member of the postsecondary educational program or serve as a volunteer for the program and work directly with the participants and families currently enrolled in the program.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: participate in a 60-90 minute focus group and review the transcribed interview to confirm accuracy post interview. The focus group will be conducted in person at UNLV.
**Benefits of Participation**

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn about your experiences with the transition period including helpful resources and agencies for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The goal is to help other parents or service providers in the future.

**Risks of Participation**

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**Participant Consent**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

__________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant                                      Date

__________________________________________________________________________

Participant Name (Please Print)
Audio/Video Taping

I agree to be audio or video taped for the purpose of this research study.

_________________________________________  _____________________________
Signature of Participant                           Date
References


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Curriculum Vitae

Rebecca S. Rogers, Ph.D.

E-mail address: Rebecca.rogers@unlv.edu

Education

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Ph.D., Workforce Development and Organizational Leadership, December 2018

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
M.S., Social Work, May 2005

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
M.A., Education, August 2001
B.S., Social Work, May 1999