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Parents' Perceptions of Transition and Postsecondary Services for Their Children with Disabilities

Elizabeth Joyce Strong
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Walden University

College of Education

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Elizabeth Strong

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|

Abstract

Parents' Perceptions of Transition and Postsecondary Services for Their Children with
Disabilities

by

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MBA, City University, 1999

MS, Western Oregon State University, 1990

BS, Akron University, 1987

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

Students with intellectual and other disabilities who age out of transition programs or graduate from high school may experience marginalization as young adults. There exists scant literature on the perceptions of parents about access to employment and services for their adult children with disabilities. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how parents perceived educational services, financial burdens, social isolation, and lack of access to employment for their children with intellectual and other disabilities. Critical disability theory and transformational theory constituted the study's conceptual framework. The research questions concerned how parents perceived access to services related to financial assistance, postsecondary education, employment, and vocational consultation. The design was a case study with a purposefully selected sample consisting of 5 parents from a Western U.S. state. Data sources included field notes, interviews, and artifacts. A field log, newspaper articles, and interview transcriptions were gathered, sorted, and categorized into themes. Results of the study revealed that employment gaps for adults with disabilities decreased with better knowledge about disability strengths, social capital, employer and employee diversity training, and competitive employment opportunities. A position paper was developed based on study findings, which was targeted to employers and included information on the reasons for a business to embrace diversity in the workplace. Business leaders' promotion of social enterprises that enable community inclusion and financial independence for people with disabilities may result in a positive paradigm shift towards equitable employment as a positive social change outcome.

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Dedication

I am dedicating this dissertation to Eric, Garrett, Niafo, Alex, Sarah, and Maria. Your encouragement and love picked me up during the low points of the doctoral journey. I will always be inspired by your persistence to make this world a better place for all.

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Section 1: The Local Problem

Introduction

Young adults with intellectual and other disabilities who aged out of a transition program or graduated from high school encountered obstacles when accessing services from outside agencies, colleges, and employment organizations (Baker, 2013; Blacher, Kraemer, & Howell, 2010; Canha, Owens, Simoes, & Gaspar de Matos, 2013; Carter et al., 2013; Kerr, 2013). Reporters for a Utah newspaper in the local study area observed that there were no guarantees or assurances of transition into state, federal, and nonprofit services and employment for adult students with intellectual and other disabilities (Baker, 2013; Kerr, 2013). When adults with intellectual and other disabilities attended transition programs or high school, their parents had at least seven hours a day where their supervision was not necessary. The roles of parents of adults with disabilities changed when their sons or daughters aged out of school-district transition programs or graduated from high school, and, as a result, parents' perceptions about access to school and community services and employment changed because direct school-district transition support was no longer available to parents.

In this study, I presented parents of young adults with intellectual and other disabilities information about transition services and future employment for their young adult children. Access to such information could result in a direct pathway of employment and postsecondary education in local services between school districts, outside agencies, and potential employers, thus empowering parents and children with disabilities to freely pursue opportunities in their communities.

Most parents of adults with intellectual and other disabilities are managers of their adult children's employment and service options. After school-district transition services or secondary education, the parents primarily managed service delivery for their young adult children (Chambers, Rabren, & Dunn, 2009; Clegg, Ansorge, Stackhouse, & Donlan, 2012; Grigal, Hart, & Migliore, 2011; Hendricks & Wehman, 2009). Davis and Beamish (2009) researched the roles of parents of adults with disabilities and the different events that could or could not take place following their children's termination from school-district transition programs and graduation from high school. Educators in Utah and other western U.S. states conducted annual needs assessments and annual reports about disability services. However, these needs assessments and annual reports only included data from adults with disabilities services, state, federal, and nonprofit agency-provider surveys (Chambless, McCormick, & Robinson, 2010; Colorado State Rehabilitation Council, 2012; Harkin, 2012; Oregon Department of Human Services & Vocational Rehabilitation, 2017; Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, 2011; Wilhelm & Robinson, 2010). The investigators for these needs assessments and annual reports excluded parents' perspectives and the parents' knowledge of management for service delivery systems.

As part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1991, the U.S. federal government mandated annual individual education plan (IEP) participation from parents of students with disabilities, teachers, and school administrators as well as applicable state, federal, and nonprofit agency support professionals, family advocates, or developmental disability caseworkers until a student turns 18 years old. The Utah state

annual report revealed a limited concentration on data from adults with disabilities due to privacy laws and parent guardianship policies. These researchers also had time-constraints and strict criterion guidelines established by the state of Utah.

Congress signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law in 1991. The ADA (1991) included civil rights protections for individuals with disabilities and guarantees of equal opportunities for public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government, and telecommunications. Since the law's enactment, Utah moved from being a state with inaccessible sidewalks, buses, and buildings to a state working to ensure access to all locations and activities for individuals with disabilities (Harkin, 2012).

Conversely, the case was different for young adults with intellectual (persons with an I.Q. of 70 or lower) and other disabilities due to their inability to gain total access to employment or attend college (Baker, 2013; Balcazar, Kuchak, Dimpfl, Sariepella, & Alvarado, 2014; Harkin, 2012; Kerr, 2013). For the past two decades, this element of the ADA lagged behind the law's other successes. According to Canha et al. (2013), the successes of family dynamics, economic status, community supports, and availability of services affected transition outcomes.

In the next section, I describe some community supports and services for adults with intellectual and other disabilities who attended transition programs or received specialized support services in high school. I also describe Utah legislative changes that could impact access to transition services for aging out and graduated adults with intellectual and other disabilities. I also define other disabilities encompassed in the

definition of disability used in this study. These disabilities include autism spectrum disorder (ASD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), hearing/deafness, visual impairment, multiple disabilities, mental health, and specific learning disabilities.

Transition Programs

The federal government attempted to remediate this discrepancy regarding adults with intellectual and other disabilities and their ability to gain employment by establishing many transition programs (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990). These programs provided job training for adults with intellectual and other disabilities, ages 18 years to 22 years, within school districts or at job sites within the community if they were unable to obtain a high school diploma (Information retrieved from Utah school district websites, September 2012). Such transition programs were available for adults with intellectual and other disabilities within Flowing Rivers School District (FRSD) (pseudonym) and other Utah counties. In a few cases, adults with intellectual and other disabilities earned a diploma. These students were no longer eligible for a school district transition program within FRSD and other Utah counties. Of the students with intellectual and other disabilities who earned a diploma had the option of finding employment through community services such as vocational rehabilitation (VR) or attending a 2-year and 4-year degree college program. Furthermore, some federally funded colleges had disability support services for any student with a disability.

In this Utah study area are three different types of transition programs for young adults with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities within FRSD and in other Utah school districts. Each program has different learning models. Program A provided in

school, pre-vocational skills, life skills, and independent living services (Information retrieved from a Utah school district website, September 2012). In this program, students accessed the community through volunteer work. Support from the school faded as support from peers and community increased. In essence, students phased-out of a school schedule and into a workday schedule. The workday schedule continued after a student aged-out of the program.

Program B in this county provided vocational and educational programs in a sheltered workshop or enclave settings within a Utah school district (Information retrieved from a Utah school district website, September 2012). The students cared for linen and laundry. They also did assembly and custodial work as well as food services. In this program, students and their families developed partnerships and linked with community programs and resources so that upon aging out, community supports were accessible. Unlike Program A, this program did not discuss fading of support from the school to the community on their website.

At one time, Program C provided transitional services in a high school setting where some students commuted to different volunteer work sites within the community (Personal communication with the anonymous speech-language pathologist, August 2011). In 2011, this program moved to a central location along with special education teacher, aide, and related services (occupational, functional communication, vision, hearing, and physical therapy) supports. As such, young adults with cognitive impairment, ASD, and multiple disabilities from various high schools experienced opportunities to participate individually or in groups of four or five at different work sites

within the community with or without teacher aide or peer support. Unlike Program A and B, this program had a rural setting and did not post a website that states its mission, goals, and objectives at this time (Information retrieved from a Utah school district website, September 2013).

Therefore all three transition programs had some form of coordination and planning with parents of young adult students with intellectual and other disabilities, teachers, and outside agencies with family advocacy or development disability caseworkers or VR counselors. However, some Utah parents worried that there were not enough extended job support experiences between the ages 16 and 24 years for their children with social and communication disabilities. As a result, Easter Seals-Goodwill paired teen mentors with teen and young adults with disabilities who wanted to volunteer in various work settings. Teens and young adults with disabilities in this program encompassed workplace experiences and social interactions that intended to help them with their higher education and employment goals (Cortez, May 15, 2015a).

Current Changes to Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Postsecondary students with disabilities and students with disabilities who attended these transition programs had the option to request VR support. At the Utah Capitol building during some recent session, legislators made some changes to the vocational rehabilitation (VR) services (Anonymous email communication within a Utah school district, January 23, 2015). These changes were due to an increase in the number of clients served and the cost of services for diagnostic, restoration, and training. For

example, there was approximately a 49% increase in expenditures from Fiscal Financial Year (FFY) 2007 to FFY 2014 for Utah.

As of July 22, 2014, the federal government passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIOA), and this act allowed officials in the state of Utah to implement an "Order of Selection" process. Under this "Order of Selection" process those officials in Utah could prioritize who received funding for VR services. This recent change of events affected all current students with disabilities who had a current Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) in the following ways. Any students with a current IPE had financial assistance but only if VR received funding from the State and Federal government. If the funds were not available, then students continued to receive VR counseling with no payment for training and schooling. However, all students with disabilities could continue to apply and placed on a waiting list until monies became available. The first category in the "Order of Selection" are mostly students with most significant disabilities, ages 16 – 21 years. Therefore any specialized education teacher needs to encourage students with disabilities to apply for VR services when they turn 14 years old or before they age-out (Anonymous conversation with a VR case manager on August 19, 2015). At this time, VR officials are unable to serve all young people with disabilities, and these officials are hopeful that this new "Selection of Order" process will improve this situation over a long period (Anonymous email communication within a Utah school district on January 23, 2015).

Other Factors that Impact Access to Services

Occasionally, the parents of young adults with disabilities who attended Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings assumed that the IEP was a means to receive

automatic VR services. According to Utah state law, the parents and student who qualified for specialized education support were to review and discuss three components with the IEP team at or before the student turned 16 years old. These three components are the student's career interests, current coursework, and ways that the IEP will address the student's future postsecondary goals or aging out transition program goals. (Retrieved from the website <https://www.disabilitylawcenter.org/education/>). However, many transition planning goals in middle school and high school fail to provide guidelines for students with disabilities and their parents on how to navigate the entire transition planning process.

Instead, students with disabilities answer questions provided by the State of Office of Education about what job the student would like to have, a short statement about the student's strengths by the teacher and the type of courses that will support the student's transition goals. I witnessed the following scenario at some IEP meetings. The student wanted to be a nurse, but the student could not read past the 3rd-grade level or calculate math problems past the 2nd-grade. The teacher moved on to another portion of the IEP instead of discussing how students could pursue nursing in a unique way such as charting notes and managing a patient's medication. At another IEP meeting, I observed how teachers at the junior high reviewed the student's career interests and told parents to expect more information about transition plans at the high school (Personal observation at IEP on November 18, 2015). At any 10th-grade high school IEP meeting, teachers usually encourage parents to apply for VR services for a child to start an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) before that child ages-out of a transition program or graduates

from high school (Personal observation from IEP meetings since 2011 to current date). At these IEP meetings, the parents received a booklet of community services with VR's number written on the front. I can only recall up to five times where the VR counselor attended an IEP transition meeting (Personal observations at IEP meetings from school years 2013-2015).

Accessing Services Related to Aging out and Data Collection

At 22 years of age, all students within Utah transition programs aged-out (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). That is, all Utah state transition services for assisting with employment through the school districts were no longer available (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). When students with disabilities aged-out of a school district program or started postsecondary education after 12th- grade, the school district tracked them for up to one year. Then the data from the survey transferred from a statewide data bank to the Federal government's databank (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). Sometimes, the data gathering process failed because (a) the student with intellectual and other disabilities misunderstood the question enough to answer it, (b) the postsecondary student opted out of survey participation, or (c) the parents had no guardianship authority.

Access to Services and Guardianship

In other cases, some parents without guardianship only guided and asked for participation with community support systems when their young adult with disabilities aged-out or received a certificate of completion. However, there are parents with full guardianship. When parents obtained guardianship, it could cost as little as \$450.00 or as

much as 2,000.00 dollars (Anonymous personal communication with VR counselor, October 16, 2012). Some parents completed the paperwork independent of a lawyer and go through a non-profit agency such as a parent advocacy group and other parents retained a lawyer (Anonymous personal conversation with VR counselor, October 16, 2012). At FRSD IEP transition meetings, I observed how only a small number of parents obtained guardianship for their adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. Before the student turned 18 years of age, the IEP team case manager inquired about the status of guardianship and asked that the parent and student with a disability sign an "Age of Majority Rights" form (Retrieved from a website <http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/DOCS/IEP/11.aspx>). The status of guardianship is valuable information for the planning of a student's transition from school to the community because it impacts the amount of parental decision-making made on behalf of the student with disabilities.

Other Factors Related to Accessing Services

There are additional factors that could impact accessing services after aging out from a school district transition program or graduation from a high school. Some students who aged-out of a transition program were at risk to become isolated from employment, social life, and recreations because they no longer received school district transportation services or had daily access to friends in a program (Anonymous personal communication on May 7, 2014). Some parents changed from dual income to a single household income to care for their adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. The latter could create reduced income for transportation that could cause social isolation

to both the parents and their adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. Additionally, the postsecondary student with disabilities may not problem solve adequately enough to navigate through a college environment and advocate for VR support (Personal experience and anonymous communication at IEP meetings from August 2012, 2013, and 2014).

When students aged-out of school district programs at age 22 with a certificate of completion or graduate from high school with a diploma, the parents or guardians assumed some or all collaboration, management, and advocacy work for their adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. At this juncture, parents and I discovered how school district and community agency information was difficult to interpret due to ill-defined categories and mazes of community agency resources. Personally, as a parent of a daughter with dyslexia and anxiety, I received transition information at the Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting, and I attended a meeting on VR services during a parent/teacher conference night about six months before she graduated. When my daughter turned 18 years, she had independent decision-making and full privacy rights. Her decision-making skills made collaboration, management, and advocacy difficult because her social-emotional skills were immature for multi-step tasks. As a result, she missed college enrollment deadlines and follow-up appointments with outside agencies. She never did receive VR support or disability service support at college because VR counselors assessed her as having adequate skills to find work and enroll independently in any college program. Currently, my daughter is 24 years of age, and she has quit two

college programs even though she has been in good standing academically. She relies on friends and family members to help her navigate the Medicaid system.

Another dilemma that eventually affected these young adults with intellectual and other disabilities was in regards to how businesses learned about grants and tax incentives to hire adults with disabilities. Utah legislators passed legislation to allow a continued a tax credit of 3000.00 dollars per employee per year for up to two years to businesses for hiring any person with a disability. For businesses to qualify for this tax credit, the employee must either be receiving services from a program certified by the State Department of Human Services or be eligible for services from the Division of Services for Young People with Disabilities (DSPD) at the time the individual began working for the employer. Also, the employee must work for the employer in the state of Utah for six months, and the employer must pay the employee minimum wage. (Information shared by a DSPD service director at a professional conference in the study area, February 4, 2015).

A Gap in Practice

The process of applying for services with DSPD and VR services has many tedious steps and deadlines. According to DSPD, about 4000 persons with disabilities received assistance, and about 2000 applicants remained on a waiting list for services as well as other people that were ignorant about DSPD services (Information shared by a DSPD director at a professional conference in the study area, February 4, 2015). There is a gap in practice between parents, teachers, state/federal, and non-profit agencies regarding the collaboration of communication updates that could or could not impact

access to services. There are many agencies and advocacy groups in Utah that are accessible to parents of children with intellectual and other disabilities and school districts. However, resources within Utah high schools, colleges, transition programs, state and non-profit agencies have been reduced down to websites, links, pamphlets, a brief one on one consultation, and waiting lists.

The Rationale for the Problem

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Parents of adult children with disabilities may not fully understand the services available to their children once they age out or transition from school programs. Some parents attributed their lack of understanding of services to limited access to general information or guidance from school personnel (Grigal et al., 2011). The unique perspective of the parent should be considered by the school, business, and agency personnel when identifying possible reasons why adult children with disabilities have problems accessing services of school districts, outside agencies, and potential employers, according to Canha et al. (2013). In their systematic literature search, Davis and Beamish (2009) discovered, however, that only a few small-scale U.S. studies had been conducted on parents' perspectives on family experiences and outcomes after the children of these parents aged out and exited a school transition program. Thus, there appears to be a gap in the literature on the study topic.

In the Utah area examined in this project, the Utah government commissioned Chambless et al. (2010) to conduct a needs assessment to determine the rehabilitation needs of adults with disabilities. A census report conducted by a Utah university

indicated a 46% employment rate for all adults with disabilities within the local study location as compared to a 39% rate nationally (Wilhelm & Robinson, 2013). Chambless et al. associated the higher employment rate with lower state-wide unemployment rates. In a 4-year period between 2004 and 2008, the percentage of employed adults with disabilities had not changed at the local and national level (Chambless, 2010; Harkin, 2012; Wilhelm & Robinson, 2013). According to Harkin (2012), the cause of the lag in the employment of adults with disabilities was due to the 2008 recession and other events. (I confirmed this information with a DSPD director at a local study conference on February 4, 2015.) This lag in the employment of adults with disabilities resulted in higher unemployment rates, lower median wages, a disinterest in searching for jobs, and longer periods of poverty than other low-income populations (Disability Statistics and Demographics Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, 2011; Livermore, 2009).

In Utah and other western states of the United States, special committees represented adults with disabilities. National and Utah government leaders noticed a lag in the employment of adults with disabilities and how this population had further been affected by the economy (Balcazar et al., 2014; Harkin, 2012). To address these issues, officials in Utah and other western states of the United States organized special committees at the federal level and conducted needs assessments and economic impact studies at the state level in the local area of this research study. Officials in the Obama administration also signed the Workforce Investment Act into law on July 22, 2014. Former U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, a special committee member, identified adults with disabilities who were not working because they were not interested in returning to any

job (Harkin, 2012). He also stressed how adults with disabilities experience poverty at a much higher level than the general population, and therefore, have a harder time recovering from poverty (Harkin, 2012). Leaders in Utah and other Western U.S. states conducted needs assessments to learn about employment supports for adults with disabilities. These adults with disabilities requested better support for tuition and books expenses, ways to locate potential employers, health benefits, and job training for a short time (Colorado State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2012; Lucenko et al., 2009; Oregon Department of Health Services/Vocational Rehabilitation, 2017). Community members could develop employment projects to alleviate poverty from needs assessment results and economic impact studies. Researchers who conducted economic impact studies have calculated that agency and officials' support of VR can result in increases in the earning potential of their client because state coffers have more tax revenues when adults with disabilities work, which results in less benefit assistance (Kregal, 2012; Wilhelm & Robinson, 2013). Despite these benefits for Utah and other Western U.S. states, most officials continue to notice high unemployment for adults with disabilities (Kerr, 2013).

Although these economic impact studies, special committee reports, and needs assessments have provided numeric data on the problem and a better understanding of services access from the perception of adults with disabilities, other avenues need to be explored to further comprehend access issues following individuals' aging out of transition programs and graduation from high school. In my review of the literature, I found no information about the parent's perspective in regards to transitions from

preschool to 12th- grade level schooling, postsecondary experiences, and aged-out options following their son or daughter's exit from school-based transition programs and secondary education. I also found few studies concerning the risk of social isolation and financial dependency on families. Davis and Beamish (2009) suggested that parents want to be more involved in the transition process and have access to better transition planning services. The parents of adults with severe disabilities in the study reported barriers such as elevated levels of unemployment, community isolation, and financial dependency upon families (Davis & Beamish, 2009). I observed how most of the parents of adults with intellectual and other disabilities in FRSD directly noticed the outcome of the aging out and graduation processes, but they were not often involved in the federal/state and legislative changes.

Based on my review of the literature, there appears to be a gap in collaboration and timely access to resources related to (a) transitions from preschool to 12th-grade level schooling, (b) postsecondary information, (c) services following aging out between parents, teachers, and state, federal, and nonprofit agencies, and (d) financial and social service supports in the local area. If parents could access updated resources, then the parents of children with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities could lead to better choices in guiding their children. As a result, parents' perceptions may have an improved understanding of access to services in the following areas:

- transitions from preschool to 12th-grade level schooling,
- aging out and postsecondary options from outside providers with support specific to community living, employment, and higher adult education,

- financial independence and DSPD support, and
- employment and community opportunities and social isolation.

Definition of Terms

Age out: A term used for the termination of individual special education services offered by the state when students reach 22 years of age (Sanford et al., 2011).

Asperger syndrome: A term that used to be a subcategory of autism spectrum disorder (ASD); In the DSM-5, however, Asperger syndrome is no longer a diagnostic category as it is now considered a broad collection of issues under the category ASD (Paul & McCarty, 2014).

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD): A neuro-developmental disorder where the child exhibits persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction as well as restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (Paul & McCarty, 2014).

Critical disability theory (CDT): A theory that encompasses the notion that a disability is not the consequence of impairment but, rather, is a social construct rooted in an individual's personal experiences with society dignity (Mazeikiene & Ruske, 2011; see, also, Freire, 1970).

Developmental disabilities (DD): A severe, chronic disability that originated at birth or during childhood and is expected to continue indefinitely, and which substantially restricts the individual's functioning in several major life activities (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2010).

Multiple disabilities: Concomitant impairments, which can include hearing, vision, intellectual, physical, speech, language, or learning disabilities which result in severe educational needs (IDEA, 1990).

Social Security Insurance (SSI): An supplemental income program for individuals with little or no income or minimal prior work experience that the government subsidizes through general tax revenues. The participants follow strict income and resource limits (Kregal, 2012).

The Significance of the Local Problem

Researchers suggested possible reasons for elevated levels of unemployment, community isolation, and financial dependency upon parents when their children with intellectual and other disabilities aged-out of a transition program or graduated from high school. There were multiple possibilities for the lack of access to services after aging out or graduating from high school. These possibilities could be a disconnection between pedagogy and the amount of job training support as well as employer expectations of job skills needed to employ adults with disabilities could be possible barriers. For example, these young adults with intellectual and other disabilities experienced a variety of teaching pedagogy which prepared some of them, but not others for employment or work experience outside of high school (Neubert & Moon, 2006; Phillips et al., 2009). Moreover, the job training program provided better integration of young adults with intellectual and disabilities; it also increased reliance on job training support which could lead to unsuccessful independent competency levels (Ferguson, McDonnell, & Drew, 1993; Riches & Green, 2003).

A possible cause for reliance on job training support and a disconnect between teaching pedagogy could stem from a lack of awareness of what employers considered to be priority job skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Phillips et al., 2009; Riches & Green, 2003). These factors created an atmosphere of marginalization that facilitated learning opportunities for some adults with intellectual and other disabilities “yet restricting opportunities for others” (Knoll, 2009, p. 122). The marginalization of young adults with intellectual and other disabilities affected all demographic and geographic areas—locally, nationally, and internationally—creating a financial burden on families of young adults with disabilities and their communities (At-Turki, 2012; Hasnain & Balcazar, 2009; Sanford et al., 2011). Therefore, the lack of adequate teaching pedagogy found in the on-the-job training for these students as well as the disparity of the different types of job training programs impacted access to services and employment for adults with intellectual and other disabilities which could result in marginalization of these adults.

Other researchers cited additional possible reasons for an impact on access to services, and these were a financial burden and community isolation. Some parents had to change from a two-income family to a one-income family because their adult children with disabilities needed supervision, guidance with daily living skills, and transportation to physicians, jobs, postsecondary school, and social events (Davis & Beamish, 2009; Madaus, Grigal, & Hughes, 2014). Other possible reasons for financial burden in the Utah families could be that some families could not apply for assistance whereas other families could apply for and received \$650.00 to 1000.00 dollars per month (Personal communication with anonymous adult disabilities advocate, November 13, 2012). This

assistance amount is budgeted to cover rent, food, utilities, clothing, entertainment, and transportation. Lastly, if adults with intellectual and other disabilities remain unemployed or earn lower than median pay of the general population, then their ability to move from poverty to sustainability becomes harder to achieve (Schechter, June 21, 2013).

Sometimes one burden leads to other burdens for both the parents and their children with intellectual and other disabilities. When adults with intellectual and other disabilities aged-out of a program, there was less socialization with peers. Blacher et al. (2010) reasoned that cognitive and multiple deficits impacted adults with intellectual and other disabilities. Only with family support, these adults with disabilities could contact peers and access community services. In summary, even though Utah and other western states received more tax revenue and provided less allocation of benefit assistance to employed adults with disabilities, this populations' employment in the community lagged behind adults without disabilities (Balcazar et al., 2014; Harkin, 2012). At-Turki, (2012), Janus, (2009), and Phillips et al., (2009) suggested a couple of possible factors that contributed to this lack of access to service. First, school district transition programs were preparing parents for future transitions between developmental milestones instead of having job transition support and teaching pedagogy aligned with potential employer expectations. Second, aging out of a school district transition program without community support from outside agencies lead to community isolation and increased financial dependency upon families which created apathy towards finding jobs in the community

As a result, these adults with disabilities became marginalized as members of society, and parents of these adults encountered financial burdens and changes in family dynamics. The purpose of this study is to gain in-depth knowledge from the parents' perspectives of service access related to (a) transitions between preschool and 12th-grade level schooling, (b) public assistance, (c) postsecondary education, and (d) employment as well as (e) the potential burden of financial support and risk of social isolation after their children with intellectual and other disabilities aged-out or graduated from high school.

Guiding/Research Questions

For this case study, I developed three research questions to explore participating parents' perspectives of their experiences with the aging out process and of the postsecondary options for their adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. These questions also allowed me to explore if lack of access to services resulted in financial support burdens on parents and the possibility of social isolation for their children with disabilities. The questions were the following:

1. How do parents perceive transition experiences of their children with intellectual and other disabilities who have qualified for specialized services and placement while attending preschool-12 grade level school?
2. How do parents perceive the aging out or postsecondary options for their children with intellectual and other disabilities who have attended school-district transition programs or graduated from a high school?

3. How do parents perceive the burden of financial support and potential of social isolation for their children with intellectual and other disabilities who have aged-out of a school-district transition program or graduated from a high school?

The participating parents' retrospective responses to individual interview questions provided insight into their experiences of the aging out and postsecondary process for adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. For example, their retrospective responses afforded a better understanding of how to access Utah state-run application processes for Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) and Developmental Delay (DD) services, vocation rehabilitation counseling, nonprofit social advocacy groups, employment agencies, and recreation organizations.

Review of the Literature

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

In the following section, I present the conceptual context of an explanatory theory, Critical Disability Theory and CDT principles, and social constructivism which helped me understand the potential reasons related to the marginalization of and significant hiring gap between individuals with or without disabilities.

Critical disability theory. Young adults with disabilities who participated in a transitional training program experienced different types of employment within their communities. Unfortunately, when some of these students reached 22 years of age, there could not be further employment opportunities or training due to hygiene, cognitive, behavioral, or physical challenges (Havercamp & Scott, 2015; Shogren & Shaw, 2017).

As a result, their life could become more isolated due to financial, time, and transportation constraints placed upon the parents of young adults with intellectual and other disabilities (At-Turki, 2012; Janus, 2009; Phillips et al., 2009). Although there are many different reasons for this phenomenon, I focused on the concept of dignity for young adults with disabilities or Critical Disability Theory (CDT). From the standpoint of CDT, disability is not the consequence of impairment; rather, it is a social construct based upon an individual's personal experiences with dignity (Freire, 1970; Garrison-Wade, 2012; Mazeikiene & Ruske, 2011). Furthermore, disability is an interrelation between impairment, individual response to impairment, and the social environment (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011; Devlieger, Rusch, & Pfeiffer, 2003; Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) explained individuals with different learning abilities acquire a voice in society by giving them opportunities to experience life. Breault and Lack (2009) complemented Freire's words by suggesting that critical pedagogy is a political position that teachers must take to change attitudes, beliefs, and even definitions that could marginalize individuals with disabilities and other groups in society. Lastly, the social disadvantage experiences caused by the physical and social environment of young people with disabilities failed to meet the needs of these citizens who do not relate to the social expectation of normalcy (Freire, 1970; Hosking, 2008; Ward, Nichols, & Freedman, 2010).

Historically, CDT emerged with Paolo Freire's pedagogy. To him, it was important to strive “for social equality,” develop “the dignity of all marginalized people,” and give “voice to the voiceless” (Mazeikiene & Ruske, 2011, p. 29). Freire (1970) was purported to engage in genuine contemplation of the kind when a person is conscious of

his or her relationships within society. Freire's critical disability pedagogy connected with social constructivism which defined the social reality between reconstructed groups of individuals (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2010; Bone, 2017; Mazeikiene & Ruske, 2011; Plata, 2011). Freire (1970) emphasized that teachers, parents, students, and administrators are mutually responsible for a system in which all learn and grow within the community. Additionally, Freire's critical disability pedagogy related to dignity for marginalized populations, which includes people oppressed due to disability, race, or economic status. Mazeikiene and Ruske (2011) agreed that the "issue of dignity for young people with disabilities had not been sufficiently developed within sociology and education" (p. 21). Freire (2007) suggested that this issue was due to society's resistance to change.

CDT principles and social constructivism. When considering CDT principles and social constructivism, these constructs have helped me understand the potential reasons related to the marginalization of and significant hiring gap between individuals with or without disabilities (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hosking, 2008; Knoll, 2009; Mazeikiene & Ruske, 2011). Disability has been described as a social construct resulting from limitations that others place on persons of a different gender, ethnicity, physical, or cognitive ability (Baglieri et al., 2010). For example, researchers noted that adults with cognitive disabilities and adaptive living deficits were less likely to work full-time for an employer. Instead, these individuals worked part-time hours with fewer wage increases or restricted to segregated facility-based settings and earned less than minimum wages

(Hughes, 2013; Hughes & Avoke, 2010; Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011; Morgan & Openshaw, 2011; Smith & Routel, 2010).

At a national and a Utah level, most members of society consider young people with disabilities to be a homogeneous group (Smith & Routel, 2010). Instead, adults with disabilities are a heterogeneous group with many different characteristics—various classifications of disability, intellectual and physical challenges, gender, class, and cultural—to name just a few (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012; Grigal et al., 2011; Hasnain & Balcazar, 2009). Bone (2017) and Hosking (2008) explained that there is a gap between the medical model which tries to abolish disability and the society model which accepts/rejects and values/devalues young people with disabilities as equal/unequal members of the community. Therefore, given this discourse, it is important to protect the dignity and civil rights of all marginalized populations within communities.

Current Research Literature

I used educational data and book sources from a local university library and online publisher sites (Sage Publishing, Carfax Publishing, Routledge Publishing, Wiley Online Library, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Dalhousie University) for this literature review. These online publisher sites provided me with further peer-reviewed studies where I found additional references. For finding readings of Freire and case study methodology, I benefitted from locating such resources at a local university library. Additionally, I searched through the following Walden University educational databases: Academic Search Complete Publications, ProQuest Central New Platform, and Sage Premier. Some of the disability-related and case study articles were linked and organized

in Mendeley Desktop, and other articles were orderly local problem scenarios that pertained to areas such as parent perspectives, social isolation, financial burden, and pedagogy. The Boolean searches consisted of phrases that had connecting words of or/and a concentrated search of the years from 2012 through 2016). The keywords used and cited in 32 of the articles in the literature review section are *constructivism, critical disability theory, perspectives, disabilities, intellectual disabilities, cognitive disabilities, mental health, autism, learning disabilities, postsecondary, transition planning, vocational rehabilitation, and employment*. It was not my intention to focus on any particular type of disability classification, but in some cases when I focused on a particular type of disability classification, I found more articles about parental perspectives.

In this literature review, I provided possible factors related to parents' perceptions related to their experiences, their children's aging out options, and their burden of financial support and social isolation of their children with intellectual and other disabilities who have attended and aged-out of school-district transition and secondary programs. Several factors are discussed to help understand the practice gaps between employers, parents, teachers, and outside agency staff and reasons for financial burden and social isolation. I discuss the following factors: (a) teaching methodologies, pedagogy, and work experience for adults with disabilities, (b) teachers' knowledge of resources, (c) demographic variables, (d) self-determination, communication, and self-care, (e) family expectations and monetary resources, (f) lack of understanding of how transition services applied, (g) parents as primary advocates, and (h) relevant public data.

Teaching Methodologies, Pedagogy, and Work Experience

Over many years, teachers and researchers practiced and investigated effective ways to address gaps in transition services. A variety of teaching methodologies, pedagogy, and work experiences were available to adults with disabilities which could or could not prepare them for employment (Alverson, Naranjo, Yamamoto, & Unruh, 2010; Carter, Brock, & Trainor, 2014; Chambers et al., 2009; Hasnain & Balcazar, 2009; Lindstrom et al., 2011; Phillips et al., 2009).

Teaching methodologies. There are some agreements and disagreements regarding teaching methodologies amongst researchers. Lindstrom et al. (2011) offered case study results that indicated transition services lead to increased confidence and clearer planning for post-graduation education and work of young adults with disabilities. A comparative study by Chambers et al. (2009) of 15 surveyed high school participants indicated that 83% of students with disabilities reported that high school had prepared them for work, but only 19% of the students felt prepared to attend college. Whereas only 63% of high school students without a disability felt prepared for work, yet 40% of those students felt prepared to attend college. Comparatively, other researchers conducted a 10-year follow-up case study that involved two young adults with ASD and four young adults with multiple disabilities that indicated full inclusion in the general education classroom leads to societal exclusion after graduation. This teaching methodology encouraged a reliance on SSI (Kregal, 2012; Philips et al., 2009). Also, Carter et al. (2014) identified how teacher transition-related needs of adolescents with severe and developmental disabilities were heterogeneous. In fact, 107 out of 134 students with

severe disabilities had exceptional profiles that were distinctive to each student. A Carter et al. (2014) study also observed that teachers needed to include parental perspectives about their children to gain the latest information for a transition profile. Therefore, the parent's perspective is an area for further exploration.

Pedagogy. Researchers started to explore foundations for a better transition from high school, college, and work settings for young adults with disabilities. Grigal et al., (2011), Hasnain and Balcazar, (2009), and Philips et al., (2009) agreed that a young adult with disabilities needed work experience while in high school. After a systematic review of peer-reviewed articles, technical papers, and dissertations done by Alverson et al. (2010), there also needed to be more cross-agency data to establish common operational definitions. Canha, Owens, Simoes, and Gasper de Matos (2013) also reported parents of adult children with intellectual and other disabilities perceived that teachers did not collaborate with the community enough to facilitate a successful transition from school to adult life. Of transition empowerment, teachers who used best practices which promoted student involvement observed successful transitions of youth with disabilities.

Work experience. Researchers initiated further need for research in the area of work experience for adolescents and young adults with disabilities. Lindstrom et al. (2011) noted that young adults with disabilities needed work experience to gain complex skills like teamwork, responsibility, and ethics. Grigal, Hart, and Weir (2012, 2013) and Philips et al., (2009) reported that young adults with disabilities should have customized employment that matches their wants and skills for the job as well as the employer's needs and skills for the job. There are many different disability classifications. Therefore

researchers need to continue to explore workplace experience from the perspective of parents and of young adults with disabilities.

Teachers Have Limited Knowledge of Resources

Researchers discovered the importance of teacher knowledge about the need for collaboration with outside agencies and transition planning while students with disabilities attended school. Although special education teachers are actively involved in transition planning, their knowledge of extended services such as VR, parent support groups, and alternative avenues for financial support is limited (At-Turki, 2012; Gillan & Coughlan, 2010; Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009; Phillips et al., 2009).

Resources. Some researchers explored and disagreed about successful implementation of transition programs at the high school level. In contrast to Philips et al. (2009), Li et al. (2009) found situations where job training and academics should not be blended because youth with disabilities had unique needs. Specifically, Li et al. (2009) provided a survey to 343 special education teachers who belonged to a professional organization to investigate five domains—interagency collaboration, job development, the role of liaisons between agency and parent, teachers' role with limited knowledge, and the impact of dual roles assumed by teachers. Li et al. (2009) indicated that educators who assumed dual roles as teacher/coordinator provided better transition services because they collaborated with interagency/job development staff and acted as a liaison between an agency and parents. Furthermore, when teachers collaborated with interagency staff, they learned more about resources for parents such as support groups and alternative avenues for financial support (Grigal, Migliore, & Hart, 2014). Teachers who performed

dual roles as educator/collaborator provided better support to parents, yet researchers showed how teachers did not consistently apply this practice.

Demographic Characteristics

Researchers determined associations and predictors for demographic characteristics. Some researchers associated demographic characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, size of community population, access to transportation, and disability competency/category with differential work outcomes (Balcazar et al., 2012; Boeltzig, Timmons, & Butterworth, 2009; Grigal et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2009; Simonsen & Neubert, 2012; Test et al., 2009). Other researchers indicated that demographics and student competency are predictors of employment, and school programs are not predictors of employment after exiting a transition program (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2012; Joshi, Bouck, & Maeda, 2012; Madaus et al., 2014; Wehman, 2013). For example, Chan et al. (2017) noted that sustained community employment predictors for adults with ASD were living in a large populated area, participating in inclusive education, and having independent daily living skills. Also, few adults with ASD took and passed a driving test to obtain a driver's license, so a long commute to work from a rural area could be taxing (Falkmer et al., 2015). Yeung and Rauscher (2014) agreed that young adults with disabilities living in urban population areas have better employment opportunities and transportation systems than rural population areas. Therefore, access to transportation and size of the community affected job prospects for young adults with disabilities.

Gender. Some researchers ascertained that there were no gender differences. However, there were wage differences between men and women with disabilities. The

results a few researchers found from a survey given to community rehabilitation providers at the individual level (who work in the community with typical peers with at least minimum wages) and to nonprofit agencies (who work in a community where other crews with disabilities and receive less than minimum wage) and sheltered workshops (without pay) revealed that there were no significant differences between the age of men and women with Developmental Disabilities (DD) who held jobs and between gender differences and types of employment settings (Boeltzig et al., 2009; Simonsen & Neubert, 2012). Between men and women with DD, there were significant differences in weekly wage earnings and distribution across industries (Boeltzig et al., 2009). For example, men with DD earned approximately 22.00 dollars more than women with DD. Although men with DD earned more wages in food service, maintenance, and janitorial jobs, women with DD earned more wages in assembly/manufacturing and clerical jobs. In contrast, Simonsen and Neubert (2012) found that gender was not a predictor of community employment; however, the dependent variable in their study did not include a minimum number of hours worked per week.

Race/ethnicity and disability classification. Researchers found differences between race/ethnicity and disability classification of young adults with disabilities who pursued employment. Simonsen and Neubert (2012) conducted a survey of transitioning youth with intellectual and other developmental disabilities of various races/ethnicities, including Caucasian/White, Black/African American, Asian, Spanish/Latino origin, American/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and American Indian. Contrary to other studies, Caucasian/non-Hispanic race/ethnicity had negative

employment outcomes which attributed to a better representation of a diverse national demographics (55%); whereas other studies only compared 33% of a diverse national demographics (Simonsen & Neubert, 2012).

Disability classification. Overall, due to the level of functioning of young adults with intellectual disability and/or other disabilities, there was greater employment support for young adults with severe disabilities in special education programs than from VR and mental health support which was significantly lower in post-school employment (Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010; Joshi et al., 2012; Test et al., 2009). The school staffs' implementation of work experiences in school was not significant for young adults with mild intellectual disabilities. However, the geographical location of the school was significantly related to the participation in paid work experience apart from school-sponsored work (Graham, Keys, McMahon, & Brubacher, 2015; Joshi et al., 2012). For example, urban students with disabilities are six times more likely to have experienced paid employment than rural students with disabilities. In contrast, the school size and percentage of students receiving specialized instruction was not a predictor of employment-related transition activities (Joshi et al., 2012). Many different aspects impact the employment of people with disabilities.

Factors that Impacted Employment

Researchers learned how classification, personal factors, self-determination, communication, self-care, social skills, job search skills, and transportation impacted people with ASD and intellectual disabilities than other disabilities.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Young adults with ASD experienced more

dependency on their families for basic needs, financial support, housing, daily supervision, and companionship than their same age peers. Wehmeyer, Shogren, Zager, Smith, & Simpson (2010) indicated that more research was needed to investigate the effects of teaching students with ASD self-determination skills as a transition skill. In comparison, the NLTS2 data showed that 43% of postsecondary students with ASD did participate in college education (Chiang, Cheung, Hickson, Xiang, & Tsai, 2012). Chiang et al. (2012) predicted how family and student characteristics, along with transition planning factors, impacted better postsecondary outcomes for students with ASD. Some of these predictions were: (a) high parental expectations and high annual household of above \$25,000, and (b) an above average academic level. Chiang et al. (2012) also found a significant correlation between student's participation in transition planning and involvement in postsecondary education. However, students with ASD who participated in transition planning did not necessarily have a predictor of participation in postsecondary education. Only the student's primary IEP post-high school goal was a predictive factor.

Outcome of outside agency assistance. Researchers showed how transition planning did not guarantee full-time employment for adults with ASD. Burgess and Cimera (2014) indicated that people with ASD only worked part-time and required more funding than other disabilities except for sensory disorders. The VR agencies in the 50 states increased their services for transition-age adults with ASD from 913 individuals in 2002 to 8,154 individuals in 2011. However, there was variability in the rate of successful employment over time within each state. Even though transition-aged adults

with ASD had equal access to employment support; there continues to be no improvement of employment outcomes for adults with ASD from 2002 to 2011.

Impact of personal factors. Young adults with disabilities are successful as employees. However, their level of adaptive, cognitive and social skills defines their successes. Shogren and Shaw (2017) suggested from their study that people in the high incidence disabilities group (specific learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, speech or language impairment, and other health impaired) had greater opportunities for postsecondary employment. In contrast, the cognitive incidence disabilities group (ASD, multiple disabilities, and deafness) and the lower incidence disabilities group (intellectual impairment) had lower rates of employment. The cognitive and lower incidence disabilities group of people were not provided the same access to and experiences in integrated employment as the higher incidence disabilities group. Subsequently, people with intellectual impairment and cognitive impairments demonstrated higher levels of financial support, but they had lower levels of financial independence. These researcher results amplified the need for developing opportunities for competitive employment for people with intellectual impairment, ASD, deafness, and multiple disabilities.

Self-determination, communication, and self-care. Researchers associated several competencies about the areas of self-determination, communication, and self-care with future employment prospects (Jivanjee, Kruzich, & Gordon, 2009; Ju, Zhang, & Pacha, 2012; Seong, Wehmeyer, Palmer, & Little, 2015; Test et al., 2009). Jivanjee et al. (2009) conducted a pre-post focus group questionnaire of 42 family members who were supporting persons with mental health problems in Oregon/Washington. These family

members balanced assistance for their son, daughter or sibling with mental health disabilities with encouragement for independence. These family members also reported how the maladaptive behaviors of their son, daughter or sibling created significant barriers to community integration and transition to adulthood. Test et al., (2009) identified and correlated school predictor data with a potential level of evidence for employment. These researchers indicated 16 evidence-based predictors: career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, paid employment for work experience, parental involvement, a program of study, self-advocacy/self-determination, self-care/independent living, social skills, student supports, a transition program, vocational education, and work-study. However, Wang, Hill, and Hofkens (2014) indicated in their study that parents' traditional involvement became less effective at the middle school and the high school level. Subsequently, Hirano, Garbaez, Stanley, and Rowe (2016) explained that parents of secondary students became less involved for the following reasons: (a) lack of knowledge about how to contact community support, (b) lack of communication with their youth about plans for the future, (c) fewer expectations for the future from the parent's perspective, and (d) time and energy.

Carter et al. (2013) also added that self-determination skills are a developmental task that students with ASD and intellectual disabilities can learn, but these supports should start before these students enter high school. Specifically, Ju et al. (2012) surveyed 168 employers to assist with the identification of five top job skills of employees with disabilities and without disabilities. The five top job skills were these

abilities: (a) to demonstrate personal integrity and honesty, (b) to follow instructions, (c) to show respect for others, (d) to be on-time, and (e) to show high regard for safety procedures of employees with disabilities. These top five job skills were the same for employees without disabilities except that being able to read with understanding was rated higher than showing regard for safety procedures.

Social skills, job search, and transportation. People with disabilities experience different outcomes for employment. Zalewska, Migliore, and Butterworth (2016) illustrated the relationship with employment of young adults with disabilities. The youths with ASD scored lower on the social skills scale in the area of assertion when compared to their peers with other disabilities. Youths with ASD and intellectual disabilities did not initiate job search strategies such as checking with employment services, employers, or family and friends about jobs than youth with other disabilities. Forty-one percent of youth with ASD and 20% of youth with intellectual disability had driver's license or a permit as compared to 74% of youths with other disabilities. These researchers also added that 55% of youths with ASD and 53% of youths with an intellectual disability used ride services from family/agency/ dial-a-van services to get to their current or most recent job. Therefore, employment outcomes for youth with ASD and intellectual disability were less successful compared to youths with other disabilities. These researchers further discovered that psychological empowerment associated with self-determination skills. Plus, the youth with disabilities who were employed had higher social skills than peers who were not employed, and youths with disabilities who knew how to drive or how to take public transportation had higher opportunities for

employment. Many factors impact the transition of young adults with disabilities and the collaboration early between schools and VR agency could make the employment process more unified.

Employer and employee attitudes. Even though governments provide incentives to hire employees with disabilities, some employers will not employ adults with disabilities. Kaye, Jans, and Jones (2011) surveyed human resource professionals and supervisors who were resistant to complying with ADA employment provisions. The participants reported the following obstacles to employing workers with disabilities: (a) lack of awareness of disability and accommodation issues, (b) concern over cost, and (c) fear of legal liability. Furthermore, some employers expressed a willingness to hire adults with disabilities, but then they did not hire these applicants. The HR and supervisors rated the job applicants as warm people yet not employable (Kulkarni & Kote, 2014). These job applicants with disabilities were type-cast as not competent or suitable employees.

Obstacles to employment. Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014) summarized obstacles that could block people with disabilities in the workplace. First, some managers could stereotype and be biased. Second, managers could be using hiring sources that have only a few people with disabilities. Third, the recruiter could be narrowing the search by screening applicants, and during the screening, the mention of a disability could exclude the job applicant. A group of United States employers participated in a survey which showed a negative bias towards hiring people with disabilities. Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014) concluded that attitudinal barriers continue to exist in the workplace which then result in fewer opportunities for people with disabilities. Fourth, people with

disabilities self-created their barriers when they inaccurately assessed their limitations and had difficulty transitioning into the workplace. Lastly, some business establishments posted support for equal opportunity but did not practice equal opportunity employment.

Family Expectations and Monetary Resources

Family expectations and monetary resources could also influence post-transition employment. A comparative study of caregivers of 246 young adults with learning disabilities, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and undifferentiated learning disabilities such as ASD and intellectual disability with moderate/severe IQ indicated positive feelings from parents about having their young adults with ASD and Down syndrome work. Whereas, there was a higher rate of negative feelings from parents about having their young adults with cerebral palsy work (Blacher et al., 2010). Furthermore, the parents of young adults with ASD reported how they expected their son or daughter to live in the community with greater frequency than the parents of young adults with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or moderate /severe intellectual disability. Blacher et al. (2010) also suggested the parents of young adults with Down syndrome earned more money than the other caregivers and experienced greater socioeconomic advantages. However, these researchers did not address the possibility that the parents' higher socioeconomic status could discourage independent living in the community for their young adults with Down syndrome. They noted how family members managed SSI and encouraged their young adults with cerebral palsy or moderate/severe intellectual disability children to stay in residence.

Lack of Understanding of Transition Services Implementation

Parents and teachers navigate between massive federal and state-funded systems. The political leaders debate and decide how to manage and fund the county, state, and federal programs. In past years, schools emphasized academics more than functional community skills. There could be a lack of understanding of how transition service experiences contribute to later employment; that is, some teachers could implement an educational program to establish what transition goals need to be learned. Only not address where and how these skills are taught (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2011; Cimera, Wehman, West, & Burgess, 2012; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Daviso, Denney, Bauer, & Flexer, 2011; Hendricks & Wehman, 2009).

For example, students with emotional or behavioral disorders and the female gender students with low self-esteem had lower rates of competitive employment after high school than other groups (Doren & Benz, 1998; Wood & Cronin, 1999). Accordingly, students with disabilities who had high-performance grades in reading, writing, and math were twice as likely to be employed competitively than those students with lower academic skills (Doren & Benz 1998). The federal and state government may collaborate to provide additional training and funding support to young adults with disabilities, yet there continue to be gaps within both government agencies.

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. The role of the VR is to assist youth with disabilities in bridging the planning gaps in their transition to postsecondary and after transition services. When the parents of young adults with disabilities navigate the VR support systems, they discover that the process is time-consuming and confusing.

Equally important, VR staff often offered different VR counselors who had various eligibility requirements, and VR staff rarely provided job placement and mentorship placement due to funding restrictions (Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen, & Owen, 2010). The NDRN (2012) stated that many state VR agencies are unwilling or unable to coordinate services until later in the student's transition years or near the end of high school. At the same time, the adults with disabilities who registered early for VR services continued to experience slow application processes due to an order of selection (OOS) state policy (Honeycutt, Bardos, & McLeod, 2015a).

Order of selection (OOS). The state-controlled and planned for the annual cost of occupational rehabilitation services and allocated VR money to individuals based on the severity of their disability. Honeycutt et al. (2015a) stated that OOS created an obstacle to young adult students with disabilities who were applying for school to work transition. The young adults with severe disabilities were served immediately while those young adults with less severe disabilities were placed on a waiting list for many months or never served at all due to resource limitations.

Sheltered and non-sheltered workshops. Non-sheltered workshops cost less than sheltered VR services, yet the majority of individuals with intellectual disabilities work in sheltered workshops (Blacher et al., 2010; Cimera et al., 2012; Migliore, Grossi, Mank, & Rogan, 2008). Those individuals with intellectual disabilities who received services in the sheltered workshop are usually exhibiting learned helplessness or developing behaviors that might not be acceptable in non-sheltered environments (Cimera et al., 2012). Due to sheltered workshops' loss of popularity, the state-federal

VR programs developed supported employment (SE) services for people with intellectual and other disabilities. The SE service provides competitive work in an integrated setting with ongoing support services (United States General Accounting Office, 2001). State VR agencies are investing in SE as a service mechanism to facilitate successful competitive employment closures (Wehman, Chan, Ditchman, & Kang, 2014).

Student-focused planning. The Cobb and Alwell (2009) systematic review of the literature indicated how there were relative gaps in educational practice despite empirical and theoretical knowledge of educators. There also seemed to be a lack of respect and understanding by some teachers for their students with disabilities and a lack of cognitive clarity and systematic instruction in specialized instruction curricula. Additional factors that affected student-focused planning were teachers' uneven transition expertise, low levels of parent/student involvement, and the influence of families and extended families on career choices and job acquisition. Joshi et al. (2012) countered that some factors are beyond teachers' control for providing work experiences due to a lack of employers willing to participate and of schools with a high special education population do not have enough resources for paid employment experiences.

Parents as Primary Advocates

Parents of young adults with intellectual and other disabilities are primary advocates who experience with their son or daughter the transition to post-school life. Parents are intermittent participants in transition research (Davis & Beamish, 2009). According to Davis and Beamish (2009) over the past 20 years, parents have continued to report low family participation in the transition process and poor coordination of

transition planning. These parents of adults with disabilities also identify concerns with unemployment, restricted levels of participation in community activities, and prevalence of dependence upon families (Clegg et al., 2012; Davis & Beamish, 2009). The research on this topic within the United States mostly concentrates on parent and student involvement in transition planning, systematic national data collection, and development of surveys about transitions (Davis & Beamish, 2009; Landmark, Ju, & Zhang, 2010; Rabren & Johnson, 2010). There is limited research on parent perspective of transition from school for their young adults with disabilities, with the exception of studies done by At-Turki (2012), Blacher et al. (2010), Gillian and Coughlan (2010), Hasnain and Balcazar (2009), Jivanjee et al. (2009), Li et al., (2009), and Test et al. (2009).

At-Turki (2012) and Gillian and Coughlan (2010) created international peer-reviewed studies which offered parental perspectives, but these articles are not applicable to Utah transitional services policies and procedures. At-Turki's study had a focus on the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. At-Turki (2012) reported vocational training that was not compatible with labor markets and that hindered the realities of employment for persons with disabilities. There continued to be employers who believed that persons with disabilities do not have the same abilities as another employee without disabilities. As a result, the company ignored the legislative law to hire a designated number of persons with disabilities. Gillan and Coughlan (2010) noted how transition services in Ireland were not individual-centered and how services lacked coordination between services. For example, Ireland's transition services split off into different branches where the service system consists of waiting lists, limited information about available options, and lack of

parent involvement in decisions and planning. Overall, there were less financial support and organization of government policies and procedures in both the Kingdom of Jordan and Ireland when compared to the state of Utah.

Relevant Public Data

From articles in a Utah newspaper from 2013 to 2014, I found reports on the following subjects: (a) experiences of students with disabilities pre- and post-graduation from a high school, (b) factors that could be impacting employment for any young adults with or without a disability, and (c) strategies implemented by communities and colleges to address unemployment of young adults with disabilities. For example, Wood (2013) reported on the importance of parent advocacy and the need for a liaison between the parents and the school to help educate and guide the parents of students with disabilities through the special education process. Furthermore, Merling (2013) discussed how polarization for high and low skills (service workers, waiters, and security guards) could limit employment opportunities for high school graduates. Some colleges/universities are trying to address the need for highly skilled workers by developing support service options such as academic tutoring and a life skills counselor for young adults with disabilities (Pope, 2013). There are community success stories such as one report where a police department employed two employees with disabilities after job coaching from a nonprofit organization (Cortez, 2014). Lastly, the staff in the Utah State Office of Education has been coordinating with university researchers to gather survey information on the transition process (Conversation with nonprofit parent support agency, June 25, 2014).

Potential Implications for the Project

Parents already know through their own experiences that their aged out adult children with disabilities encounter barriers of elevated levels of unemployment, community isolation, and financial dependency upon them (Davis & Beamish, 2009). To promote social change, I could encourage a 'community of practice' where there is collective attention between parents to improve knowledge about services before and after their son or daughter ages-out of a transition program or prepare to graduate from high school (Wenger, 1998). I could promote learning from each other by collecting and sharing resources—experiences, tools, and methods for approaching repeating problems. I could collaborate with parents in small group and one-to-one meetings. In doing so, these parents could shift from justifiable marginal participation into complete participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Through these means, parents could have better access to resources within their unique communities and could learn how to proactively advocate for collaboration of transition planning services within school districts and between outside agencies before their children with intellectual and other disabilities ages-out of a transition program and graduate from high school.

Also, I could attempt to influence and promote a change in practice, if necessary, concerning suspected practice gaps between schools and outside agency services and actual employment positions for young adults with disabilities after they age-out of transition programs and graduate from high school. Through exploration, I could better understand possible influencers within or outside school districts that either promote social change or demote social change of these young adult students with disabilities.

Through this discovery process, norms for critique could succeed along with feasible goals for social change (Hosking, 2008).

Summary

There is only limited research on how the parents of adults with intellectual and other disabilities perceive transition and postsecondary options. The lack of access to services affects the burden of financial support of parents as well as the possibility of social isolation of their children with intellectual and other disabilities. Using the critical disability theory as a guide will promote a better understanding of parent perceptions about gaps between the aging out process within a school district and postsecondary access to outside agencies and employment opportunities. Further exploration could provide enhanced awareness of how parents could access transition, postsecondary, financial, and social services and employment for their children with intellectual and other disabilities through community networking.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this section, I describe how I used an exploratory case study to gain insight into parents' perspectives of access to services for their adult children with intellectual disabilities or other disabilities. I wanted to gain perspective on how parents perceived their children's experiences of their transitions from preschool to 12th-grade level and after high school graduation. I also wanted to better understand parents' perspectives on their children's options after aging out as well as the potential for financial burden on the family and social isolation. In the section, I address the following areas: participants and procedures for gaining access to information, my working relationship with participants, the ethical protection of participants, data collection procedures and management of interview data, and thematic analysis of interview transcripts and procedures for ensuring the credibility of data.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

I conducted an exploratory case study of how parents of young adults with intellectual disabilities or other disabilities perceived the transition process offered via school district programs and their children's access to outside agency supports or employment after aging out or graduating from high school. I also explored parents' perceptions of the financial burden and social isolation risks following the aging out process. My specific focus was within counties in the U.S. state of Utah.

Research Design

I designed a case study to explore the local problem and gain in-depth knowledge of the study phenomenon. I specifically focused on lack of access to services for students

with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities as they transition from preschool to 12th-grade level schooling and age out of a transition program or graduate from high school. I also concentrated on ascertaining participating parents' perspectives of the financial burdens they faced after such transitions and their young adult children's risk for social isolation. My three guiding research questions were as follows:

1. How do parents perceive transition experiences of their children with intellectual and other disabilities who have qualified for specialized services and placement while attending preschool-12th-grade level school?
2. How do parents perceive the aging out or postsecondary options for their children with intellectual and other disabilities who have attended school district transition programs or graduated from a high school?
3. How do parents perceive the burden of financial support and potential of social isolation for their children with intellectual and other disabilities who have aged-out of a school district transition program or graduated from a high school?

The case study I conducted promotes better understanding, I believe, of the study phenomenon among educators, community service personnel, parents of young adult children with intellectual and other disabilities, employers, and local and national professional organizations (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children, National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI), and the Utah Speech and Hearing Association).

A single case study or exploratory design. According to Yin (2014), an exploratory case study is a single case study in which a researcher seeks to understand a

phenomenon more deeply by analyzing multiple subunits gathered from interviews, public data sources, artifacts, field notes, and observations. Parents also could feel safer to express their ideas more freely. A few studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Corcoran, Walker, and Wals, 2004) reported how parents who had set aside or had not addressed social issues before were more willing to participate in this explorative research process.

Justification for case study design. At first, I considered an ethnography research design; however, that design was not appropriate for this research project. Instead, I explored how parents perceived the transition experiences of their children with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities. Researchers who use ethnographic studies focus with great depth and detail on a group of people or person to learn more about their cultures and beliefs. Whereas researchers using an exploratory case study design apply inductive analysis followed by a description of perceptions or a process (Merriam, 2009). Comparatively, an ethnographic researcher participates in groups' community affairs or religious rituals as a quiet observer and then, after gaining the trust of group members invites participants to talk (Glesne, 2011). Some ethnographic study researchers spend a year or more immersed in the culture and experiences of a group of people (Glesne, 2011). In contrast, I conducted face-to-face or Skype (with and without video) interviews with purposefully selected volunteers to explore and gain insight into the perceptions of parents. Although I described participants' perceptions in- depth, I did not have extensive data required for an ethnographic study.

Quantitative versus qualitative research. Some quantitative researchers use 5- to 7-point scale surveys with large samples of randomly selected participants and then

analyze numerical data (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative and qualitative researchers both state the purpose, establish a problem, formulate research questions, define the research population, identify preferred methods, develop a time frame for data collection, collect and analyze data, and present outcomes (Glesne, 2011; Lodico, Spaulding, Voegtle, 2010). I presented these similar elements to show the processes of qualitative research. I did not pursue a quantitative study design, which would have involved discovering relationships between independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2013). I used a qualitative case study to gain an in-depth knowledge of participants' perceptions of their children with intellectual and other disabilities experiences from preschool to 2 years following graduation from high school or a transition program.

Participants

In this section, I describe the criteria for selecting participants, the sampling and gaining access procedures, how to manage researcher and participant relationships, and ethical protection of participants.

Criteria for Selecting Participant

I purposefully selected parents and guardians of children with intellectual and other disabilities who met the following criteria:

- Participants were parents or guardians of children with intellectual and other disabilities who graduated from high school or aged out of transition program one to two years after graduation.

- Participants were parents or guardians of children with intellectual and other disabilities who participated in an IEP or 504 meetings anytime during preschool to 12th-grade level schooling.
- Participants were involved in any of the 28 nonprofit parent and family advocacy organizations in the Utah county selected for the study.

I expanded the range of purposefully selected participants to other counties in Utah after five days if I had not found enough variation in demographic information from selected parent participants in a specific Utah county.

Number of Participants

Five participants were chosen to allow for an in-depth exploration of a few parents' perceptions (Creswell, 2009; Lauckner, Paterson, & Krupa, 2012; Polkinghorne, 2005). I used two guidelines to help me determine if I had selected enough participants (Seidman, 2013). First, I asked if there were a sufficient number of participants and experiences to assure that others outside of the sample made a connection with the experiences of participants. Second, I listened to participants until information from participants emerged and repeatedly diverged into the same patterns of perception.

Sampling Procedures

I used transferability strategies to develop trustworthiness. First, I exercised the maximal variation sampling method where I purposefully selected participants that had different demographic characteristics such as disability classification, program type experiences, and income ranges instead of similar demographic characteristics (Creswell, 2012, 2013; Polkinghorne, 2005; Seidman, 2013). However, because I only received

three or fewer responses to the invitation for participants, I added snowball sampling where potential participants who did not meet the criteria could voluntarily forward the study announcement or could blog to other possible participants registered with the cooperating agency. When I determined whom to select with the snowball sampling, I continued to purposefully select participants by using demographic characteristics. By including snowball sampling and maximal variation sampling as transferability strategies, there was a higher likelihood of gathering enough data for a better understanding of participant perceptions and a more in-depth account of participant experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005; Seidman, 2013).

Procedures for Gaining Access

Following approval from IRB, there were 28 possible non-profit parent/family advocacy groups in this study's area. I contacted three of the potential non-profit parent/family support groups by phone and email because I needed organizational cooperation before I was permitted to approach volunteers. After three weeks of pursuing non-profit organizations, only one of three parent/family advocacy groups reached out by phone, accepted my invitation, and signed the letter of cooperation. Previous to their acceptance, for an additional two weeks, I shared and answered questions about the contents of an introduction letter and then requested approval of the accessibility procedures from the parent/family advocacy group's administrator. Following these actions, the designated parent/family official signed a cooperation form. Due to limited staffing, this organization was not able to post the research announcement in their newsletter for two weeks. For those two weeks, the designated administrator and I agreed

to a link from their website that I could use to add a free blog I began to write about the study. Overall, I spent up to seven weeks gaining access to potential participants with the cooperation of a non-profit parent/family advocacy group.

In summary, I posted a blog networked to the cooperating organization's website which notified potential parent participants of the study. I had proposed that the cooperative organization email a flyer to parents; however, this group did not have adequate staffing to perform this task. Instead, I posted the flyer on the blog. Although I designed the appearance of the blog flyer and research announcement to be different, their text was the same. I wrote text that had a brief description of the study, participant criterion, a contact number, and email address for potential participants to use when they had questions about being a participant in the study.

I disclosed in conversation and email correspondence the presentation of a gift card worth 10 dollars from a local grocery store as a token of appreciation for each participant's volunteer work in the study (Russell, Moralejo, & Burgess, 2000). I added that all participants who had signed a consent form could withdraw from the study but could continue to receive a gift card.

Also, I had planned to inform potential participants about the study by announcing this information at any of the 28 parent/advocacy group monthly meetings. I intended to introduce the following announcement contents: a brief description of the study, participant criterion, and my phone number and email address. At the end of the announcement, I wanted to present a flyer with the same information to each potential participant. The duration of this announcement was 3-5 minutes. However, I did not

attend organization meetings because meetings were convened only during school calendar months.

Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

In the local area for this study within the state of Utah, I could be considered an outsider to the community because I was not born and raised in the same area, nor do I participate in the main religious organization of this region of the western United States. I attended to cultural norms such as never requesting an interview on a family home evening night or Sunday. I dressed in conservative attire and used a calm vocal tone. I conducted these interviews with both the mother and father or solely with the mother, but I did not meet with the father privately. I learned how to fit in or to be accepted as a trusted person by paying attention to how the words of the participants are expressed and by being diligent to any non-verbal language cues such as mood and facial effects (Baur, Van Elteren, Nierse, & Adma, 2010; Glesne, 2011). By efficiently listening, I inferred meaning from participant responses and developed a better appreciation for the participants' situations (Yin, 2014).

I worked with a group of parents who brought a variety of caregiver experiences. It was imperative that I established rapport, fit in, built trust, and was an active listener to any response (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2014). As a speech-language pathologist, I developed a rapport with students to encourage utilization of therapy strategies that were appropriate for each student. As a researcher, however, I established rapport to gain information from the parents that remained highly confidential (Baur et al., 2010). As I kept their responses to questions in confidence and worked on alleviating participants' feelings of

vulnerability, my demeanor and professional practices-built trust with the participants (Baur et al., 2010; Glesne, 2011). Glesne (2011) suggested that the building of trust begins with establishing rapport. The participants' rapport and trust were achieved by being sensitive to the nonverbal language of participants as well as showing the participants how conscientious, empathic, and engaged I was with them (Glesne, 2011).

Ethical Protection of Participants

I assigned pseudonyms to protect the anonymity and help to preserve the confidentiality of all potential participants who responded to newsletters, emails, and blogs. I asked participants to establish contact via phone or email to protect their privacy. I implemented these efforts to maintain confidentiality as a necessary protective measure because participants could have colleagues, relatives, or other church members within 100 miles or less of them. Some participants did not want acquaintances and non-acquaintances in the community to know about their participation because they did not want to appear as if they were straying from the local social norms. I respected this privacy by not discussing with anyone the participants' responses (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013). Other ways to protect their privacy was to organize the data into summarized, aggregated narratives, and paraphrased text of participant quotes. Even with scrutiny for the preservation of anonymity and confidentiality, there continued to be the risk of recognition, so the participants were given pseudonyms for names and a few locations (Glesne, 2011).

I provided forms for the transcriptionist and participants that explained the risks and precautions taken to protect the rights of participants when a private organization did not guarantee confidentiality. These forms were:

1. A confidentiality form where I documented a plan to acknowledge procedures to protect the participant's anonymity and confidentiality.
2. An informed consent form where I shared with the participant an invitation to participate, risks of vulnerability, rights of the participant to help mitigate the risks of vulnerability, confidentiality of records, and contact information for IRB (Seidman, 2013).

The participants were not obligated to stay in the study, and they continued to have anonymity and confidentiality protection during and after the study was completed.

To protect data storage, I copied lists, graphs, field notes, newspaper articles, and transcripts of the interviews as well as from member checking notes into PDF copies that were uploaded to a Cloud lockbox and after five years will be deleted by Iron Mountain. Iron Mountain is a security company that destroys paper documents and database files. I gave a pseudonym to all digitally recorded interviews, and then I gave these files to a transcriptionist.

Data Collection

For this study, I conducted one face-to-face and three Skype conference call interviews. I also collected documents such as *Deseret News* articles. I used *Deseret News* articles, from 2013 to 2017, to provide a broad stroke source of parents' experiences related to their children with intellectual and other disabilities as they

transition into the community. I used semi-structured interviews to explore in-depth the perceptions of parents who are caregivers to young adult children with intellectual and other disabilities (see Appendix B). These conversations with parents assisted with making connections with community resources and enabled them to have a voice (Foley, 1998). Lastly, when I selected information from *Deseret News* and conducted interviews for evidence of credibility, the study contents became a trustworthy source of information for colleagues and another scholar.

Face-to-Face or Skype Conference Call Interviews

Only one participant wanted to participate in-person for a face-to-face interview. The other participants chose a phone conference via Skype conference call, either with audio-only or video. Only two out of the five participants selected a video Skype interview. The other two participants met via phone conference with audio-only Skype. I gave these option choices due to the size of the county, the logistics of commuting, privacy, and due to being home-bound with the care of their young adult child with disabilities. I arranged for the face-to-face interview and the Skype conference calls to take place at a mutually convenient time and place. Before starting either of the face-to-face and other phone conference interviews, I requested of the participants if it would be acceptable to digitally record the conversation for clearly remembering what they said as well as for providing a transcript for future analysis.

Seidman (2013) suggested that phenomenological researchers should conduct three 90-minute interviews that cover the following areas—life history, experiences, and reflection. Although Polkinghorne (2005) agreed with Seidman (2013), he recognized

that the majority of qualitative study interviews took 60-minutes. I conducted one 60-minute interview with the married mother and father and each of the three mother participants. Comparatively, I did not need three 90-minutes' interviews because I was not exploring the life history and critical reflections of parents. Instead, I interviewed the parents in one session to explore the parents' experiences and obtained demographic information. As a result, I utilized an exploratory method of data collection from Polkinghorne (2005) to address case study design procedures plus time and budget constraints.

I used a digital recorder and a laptop with a microphone as a back-up to collect data from face-to-face and Skype conference call interviews. Only the voice output from Skype video remained digitally recorded to protect the identity of the participants.

I asked presupposition questions which encouraged thoughtful responses (Glesne, 2011). Even though presupposition questions were used to assist with participant response completeness, limit interviewer bias, and facilitate organization of interview responses (Allen, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). I also knew that the participants who recalled experiences over time might experience faded memories of the past (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004). To come as close as possible to the selected participants' experiences, I learned from the first interview to focus on parent experiences of their adult children with disabilities from middle to aging out of a transition program or graduating from high school because all parents experienced faded memories before middle school time spans.

I also requested demographic characteristics about economic status based on income tax range, children's, classification, gender, ethnicity, age range, parent's occupation, and type of employment for a young adult child with a disability. I inquired about their experiences with applying for and contacting services after their son or daughter had aged-out of transition programs or had graduated from high school as well as transportation and isolation issues, along with finding out if there were any family lifestyle changes. Additionally, I solicited information about services provided while attending A, B, or C transition programs and about how the special education and related service providers of these programs prepared them for life after their son or daughter aged-out. I managed the interviews for over a period of two weeks.

Member Checking

I used member checking as a trustworthiness and credibility strategy. I provided transcription copies to the participants to check for content plausibility (Seidman, 2013). I emailed a pdf (read-only) copy of the transcription to each participant after two weeks of transcription completion. I scheduled a 10- to 15-minute member checking session via Skype conference call because I had moved out of the state of Utah. During these 10- to 15-minute conference calls, we briefly referenced and discussed their perspectives about parent advocacy, teaching methodology, and social and financial burdens.

Additional Data

The logged field notes contained thoughtful comments, analysis of interview procedures, and a critique of data collection methods. I used these recorded records to solidify credibility and transferability content in this study. I triangulated field notes with

transcribed interviews and with material from public documents from *Deseret News* articles.

Evidence of Quality and Procedure of Data Collection

I developed an audit trail by keeping logged notes of transcribed interviews for confirmability purposes. Within a time-span of 48- to 72-hours, a transcriptionist transcribed interview data. After receiving the transcript from the transcriptionist, I read and listened to the same digital recording and made notes in the transcript margin about voice inflection, pauses, and tone of voice (Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson, & Carlson, 2014). I used this procedure to reflect on the words said by each participant (Freeman, DeMaria, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Glesne, 2011). Lastly, I judged how much of the interview could be useful for the study, and I created aggregated summaries from all transcripts. I used the log to self-critique the interview experiences. I wrote the following five components into the log. First, I wrote a list of questions asked. Second, I wondered if there were other issues I should have requested to promote elaboration from the participants. Third, I flagged in interview notes where I should begin at another interviewees' session. Fourth, I noted any particular circumstances that I felt affected the quality of the interview and any other comments that prepared me for subsequent interviews. Lastly, I identified tax code data about gender, socioeconomic ranges, ethnicity, age range, and occupation (Glesne, 2011).

Contents of Notes

After each interview to promote trustworthiness, I evaluated the effectiveness of the interview process by using a dependability strategy (see Appendix C) that was

suggested by Hollway and Jefferson (2000): first, what did I notice? I implemented this question by continually searching for discrepancies in data collection and data analysis. Thus, I did not ignore relevant points of view. Second, why did I notice what I noticed? When I asked this question, I reflected on what I had observed and heard. I used this strategy to help me to think critically. Third, how did I interpret what I noticed? I achieved applicable self-reflection by spending appropriate amounts of time with participants to build rapport and trust. Lastly, how did I know that the interpretation was the "right" one? I knew the interpretation was correct by analyzing participant responses from the conceptual framework of CDT, reflecting upon their answers, and acknowledging limitations in the study.

Role of Researcher

I have been a speech-language pathologist for 25 plus years in the private, medical, and public education sectors. I became interested in transition services when my daughter received specialized instruction and support in high school. Even though she participated specialized education in the high school, she struggled to find employment, guidance, and financial assistance for social services and community college after graduating with a diploma from high school. In Fall 2015, I attended a NAMI meeting to learn more about a family member's mental health and how to be a resource for him or her. I did not anticipate contact from parents in NAMI meetings because I was the only parent in the group with a child over the age of 18. The other parents had children who were three years to 16 years of age. Also, I did not disclose any information about being a

student at Walden University. However, a few parents knew that I was a speech-language pathologist for the same district where their children attended school.

I had to be mindful of my role as a researcher. As I asked parents about their perceptions, I continued to reflect on how or why questions as I collected data to be savvy to contradictory information. Secondly, I stayed flexible to unexpected occurrences if there was a contradiction, and then I gathered more evidence through a literature review and stated the limitations of the study. Lastly, I avoided biases by sharing any contradictory evidence even if it disagreed with the research questions.

Data Analysis

In this section, I explain evidence of quality and data analysis procedures and summarize trustworthiness quality indicators.

Evidence of Quality and Data Analysis Procedures

For coding the data, I sorted and categorized *Deseret News* articles, and field log notes into a priori codes that were pre-determined and aligned with research questions RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 about parents' perceptions to self-critique the data collection and the interview transcript content from selected participants. When applicable, I gathered the interview content, and subcategorized codes into CDT, teaching methodology, pedagogy, and work experience of teachers from preschool through transition program or 12th-grade, teachers knowledge of resources, demographic characteristics, children with intellectual and other disabilities, self-determination, communication, and self-care skills items. I also added the subcategories of family expectations and monetary resources, parents' understanding of transition services, and their role as advocates. After that task, I

completed and sorted these analytical subcategories into subunits for gender, racial/ethnicity, disability classification, sheltered versus non-sheltered workshops, and student-focused planning.

I used analytic memos in the margins of the transcribed interview. Then I designed a matrix/table to organize further developing themes (Saldana, 2013). I used a matrix or table as a method for labeling, sorting, and accessing information acquired through interviews (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, I used self-reporting and introspection from interviews to explore themes because self-reporting and introspection comments are considered a critical component to gathering data about the human experience (Polkinghorne, 2005).

I used additional procedures to remain honest, flexible, and to tolerate any ambiguity in the study. Dey (1993) suggested that any category is not final and should be continually modified and updated through interactions with the data. Therefore, I had to be mindful of the risk of fitting qualitative data into a set of codes and categories that were not applicable when analyzing data.

To critique this qualitative study, I also used some of Rocco's (2010) guidelines for critiquing qualitative studies. First, I had a rigorous methodology and data collection procedures that were grounded in relevant literature. And secondly, I had a clear explanation of sampling strategies, data analysis process, discussion of study significance, and implications of research results so peers would be able to replicate or review this study for their purposes.

Summary

I maintained trustworthiness by using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability strategies or tools as quality indicators. I selected and purposely chose participants with maximum variation and snowball sampling. The results of data and field notes were analyzed and stated to transfer knowledge from one researcher to another. Secondly, I provided notes on the interview process with self-guided interview reflections to demonstrate dependability. Additionally, I developed an audit trail by keeping logged records of transcribed interviews and by using the log to self-critique my interview experiences for confirmability purposes. Lastly, I used member checking to ensure that data and tentative interpretations of that data are credible. I triangulated field notes with transcribed interviews and public documents from *Deseret News* articles.

Data Analysis Results

Process for Finding Data Results

I generated data by purposefully selecting participants with maximum variation and snowball procedures. As a result, I had five parent participants of young adult children with disabilities who had either graduated from high school, planned to attend a postsecondary institute or transition center, or had aged-out of a transition program from 2013 to 2017. Each parent lived in either an urban, suburban, or rural area and worked outside of the home with an annual household income of between \$35,000 and \$95,000. Lastly, the parents in this study were caregivers for their young adult children diagnosed with medical and educational classifications of other health impaired, ASD, intellectual

disability, Down syndrome, anxiety, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and nonverbal learning disorder (NLD).

I gathered data by interviewing all five parents for 60-minutes and by reviewing *Deseret News* articles from 2013 to 2017, explored other sources of information from professional, state and federal websites, and examined field notes to determine dependability of the data. For credibility, I digitally recorded all five interviews and then spent 15- to 20-minutes reflecting on each interview to decide how I could gain a deeper understanding of their experiences without biases. And after each transcription, I reviewed and checked for accuracy of interpretation and any other additional perspectives from the parents.

I recorded additional data by occasionally jotting down notes about gaining access procedures and about reflections about an interview. I also designed word tables to help with the organization of data in preparation for data analysis. I triangulated all data from field notes, reflections, *Deseret News* articles, and parent quotes. Then, I aggregated information from the parent participant's transcriptions.

Findings

Local Problem Data

I discovered from a priori knowledge and data obtained from the interviews. There is a gap of collaboration and timely access to resources about (a) transitions from middle through high school, (b) postsecondary information, (c) services following aging out between parents, teachers, state/federal, and non-profit agencies, and (d) financial and social service supports in the local practice. From the perspectives of parents of children

with intellectual disabilities or other disabilities access to updated resources would lead to better choices in guiding their children. When parents of children with intellectual disabilities or other disabilities received transition service resources; it improved the parents understanding of how to access services. Plus, the parents then had a less complicated way to access services (a) between transitions from middle through high school, (b) for school district aging out and postsecondary options from outside providers specific to community living, employment, and higher adult education, (c) for financial independence and DSPD support, and (d) about employment and community opportunities and social isolation.

I purposively generated, gathered, and recorded data to gain a better understanding of how parents perceived transition services which specifically focused on the phenomenon of where there was a lack of access to services when students with intellectual disabilities or other disabilities transition from preschool to 12th-grade level schooling. However, the parent participants were unable to recall with certainty events from preschool up to middle school, but parents presented better perceptions about their young adult children aging out of a transition program or graduating from a high school. The parents of children with intellectual and other disabilities shared minimal information about any financial burdens. However, parents shared transparently their concerns of social isolation after their young adult children graduated from high school or aged-out of a transition program.

Coding and Data Synthesis

I organized the coding and data synthesis into two areas: (a) a priori information themes and (b) summation narrative themes to systematically explain the findings of this study.

A Priori Information Themes

I developed a list of possible categories from previous literature searches. These literature search categories were: teaching methodology, pedagogy, work experiences, teacher knowledge of resources, demographic variable, self-determination, communication, self-care, family expectations and monetary resources, how transition services work, parents as advocates, and legal trusts. I reviewed 25 articles from the *Deseret News* from 2013 to 2017 to obtain additional a priori information for this study. When I compared the topic derived from the literature review and *Deseret News* articles; I discovered 15 articles out of the 25 articles that emphasized same inductive themes from parent quotes. Seven themes emerged from parent quotes I then determined the number of parent quotes that were appropriate for each theme as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of Parent Quotes in News Articles By Theme

Themes	Number of parent quotes
Teacher Methodology and Pedagogy	5
Teacher Knowledge of Resources	2
Communication	1
Self-Care	1
Family Expectations and Financial Concerns	5
Parents as Advocates	4
Legal Trust	2

Profile of Participants

I interviewed five participants from rural, suburb, and city locations within the study area. All participants were Caucasian within the age range of 30- to 70-years of age. The participants shared information about being the parents of a young adult with other health impairments or Down syndrome, intellectual disability, or ASD. The participants work in the fields of education, county or federal government, or healthcare. Two of the participants were married, and I summarized their story in one narrative rather than two separate accounts. One of the parents was a single working mother. The other two parents were married, and only the mothers participated in the study. After all four narrative profiles, I wrote the meanings of findings as related to alignment with RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 and how some narrative content connected to a priori knowledge from literature reviews and the *Deseret News* articles.

Profile of Acke and Abby

We are Family

This story takes place in a suburb outside of a major city in the study area. The characters are Acke (the father) and Abby (the mother), and they live with their only young adult daughter. Their daughter did not have to share time with anybody or another person's interests to learn how to manage conflict. Acke worked in the field of education, and Abby worked for the county.

School and Agency Programs

Their daughter was classified as other health impaired. The IEP team decided on this classification because their daughter demonstrated the following characteristics: anxiety, nonverbal learning disability, and sensory integration disorder. Due to this fact, Abby thought that her daughter's social skills appeared to develop slower than peers her age. As a result, their daughter participated in special education instruction for one hour of the day from first to twelfth grade. Acke and Abby's daughter has attended elementary and secondary level public and middle-level charter schools. During their daughter's middle school years, sixth through eighth grades, the parents transferred her to a charter school because the class sizes were smaller—one teacher per every ten students. Comparatively, at the time, public school middle schools had a ratio of one teacher for every 40 students. After three years, the charter school changed its focus back to elementary curriculum. The administration at the charter school had to modify the charter school's focus because there wasn't enough funding to fill middle school teacher positions with State standard endorsements and qualifications.

High School. As a result of the charter school closing, Acek and Abby re-enrolled their daughter into a public high school, with ninth through twelfth grades. Their daughter attended as a freshman student, and Acek worked as a teacher at the same high school. In this way, he had access to most educators and administrators. It was during this time that Acek advocated for and assisted his daughter more directly. Abby shared that during this period in their daughter's life, Acek was able to advocate for their daughter more effectively than she could because he knew the high school system better. Previous to this time in their lives, Abby was the primary advocate for their daughter.

Then in their daughter's later years of high school, Acek transferred to a different high school to work as a counselor. Both parents reported that the special education teacher in the high school system provided them with the most resources and guidance on how to find a job and college assistance for their daughter before graduation.

Graduation. Acek and Abby and their daughter celebrated her graduated in June 2016 with a diploma. As of August 2016, their daughter continued to work part-time as a custodian at school in their county. Besides academic experiences, Acek and Abby also noted how work experiences improved their daughter's ability to be socially confident and demonstrate self-satisfaction more naturally. Their daughter's work experiences taught their daughter how to be on time for work and to be responsible for job duties even though she does not like specific tasks of her job. During the summer of 2016, Acek and Abby had met with disability services at a local university. They learned that the university had a smaller satellite campus close to their home.

What Does the Future Entail?

In high school, the counselor and mostly the special education teacher at the high school encouraged the parents to apply for a VR grant. Just before the Utah legislation cut funding for such a program due to state fiscal priorities, their daughter accepted grant funding. This award and a small scholarship earned from their daughter's academic performance will supplement their daughter's education funding. Acke and Abby received no state assistance and managed their daughter's health care and other expenses with private insurance provided through employment at their jobs. They both found that the cost of mental health services for their daughter had impacted the family budget, and for this reason, they were thankful that their health care covered mental health services. They had enough money to cover out of pocket medical costs.

Profile of Bahar**We Are Family**

This story takes place in a rural area outside of a city in the study area. Bahar used to be a stay at home mom, but as the children grew up, she decided to work in the field of healthcare. Bahar lives with her husband, a son and two daughters. She gave birth to her daughter with disabilities after she had her son. Her daughter always wanted to be like her brother and sister, so she would share stories with her friends that included the new vocabulary learned from movies and conversation with her brother and sister.

Bahar also established a parental support group that meets a few times per year where the parents share their resource knowledge with each other. Furthermore, she

provides liaison support for new mothers of children with disabilities by giving contact information to parents with similarly aged children with like disabilities.

School and Agency Programs

Bahar's daughter received a classification of Trisome-21/Down syndrome per medical guidelines and intellectual disability per IEP team decision. Her daughter participated in specialized instruction from preschool to the 12th-grade in a rural public school system. Bahar described how her daughter learned life skills such as how to ask for help, along with different reading and math strategies, speech techniques, and social skills when she attended a transition program. Before her daughter attended the transition program, the teachers from preschool to 12th-grade mostly concentrated on academics instead of on life skills.

Transition program. This transition program is new to this rural school district. Before the more modern program developed, the students with significant disabilities were given a title, Exceptional Senior (pseudonym) and then stayed at the high school until the age of 22 years. The new transition program opened two years ago. The students now go through the 12th-grade at a high school, and then they leave to go to a separate application. The teacher for the transition program used curriculum that concentrated on life skills and job experiences. According to Bahar, the transition program was only to focus on life skills and job preparation because students already had learned academics to match their potential [learning ability] in high school.

Job site. For the past two years, Bahar's daughter tried out different job site experiences as a volunteer with the assistance of a job coach. At the time of this

interview, her daughter worked without a job coach as a paid employee at a gas station where she completed a few job tasks such as stocking the shelves. She also helped a small group of preschool school students.

Her daughter used to be happy with isolating herself in her room. Now, her daughter showed a positive attitude towards life and enjoyed being surrounded by people. Bahar also acknowledged the rural community where the neighbors and business owners are kind, giving, and accepting of her daughter's disability.

What Does the Future Entail?

When Bahar's daughter was born, she immediately applied for state assistance. During this time in life, Bahar and her husband were college students with their first baby. Her application stayed on a waiting list for only one year. As a result, she received state assistance for respite care and medical insurance since her daughter was a baby. Her strategy was to apply early and keep calling and pestering the State of Utah Social Services office and the support coordinator. Bahar explained that she advocated for Social Security Insurance (SSI) when her daughter was a baby to assist with the cost of care. Her daughter continues to receive SSI assistance.

Life after aging out. Bahar visualized her daughter taking local community college courses in art and creative writing and then writing children's literature at the core reading level. Even though, Bahar's daughter will be aging out of a transition program. She did not think her daughter had made enough gains to graduate from the transition program.

Legal trusts. Guardianship had not been set-up for Bahar's daughter because it was costly. Besides that, because her daughter with Down syndrome was high-functioning, Bahar felt that she would be taking away her daughter's independence.

Profile of Gabby

We are Family

This story takes place in an urban area of the study area. Gabby worked outside of the home in healthcare, and the father worked outside of the house as well. Her daughter is the youngest child, and the brother is the oldest sibling in the home.

School and Agency Programs

Gabby's daughter was diagnosed with Down syndrome at birth and classified with intellectual disability by the IEP team.

Middle school. In middle school, Gabby's daughter's learning performance was a bit ahead of the rest of the students in the classroom but not high enough for the general education curriculum. When her daughter attended middle school, her teacher did not provide homework. Gabby was frustrated when no homework was sent home because she thought her daughter needed repetition to learn and retain academic information. In fact, Gabby did not care what type of homework would be assigned. Just one worksheet a day would have been beautiful to her.

High school. In contrast, the high school provided a simpler version of high school level of science and arts. Gabby's daughter became a part of doing botany projects and participating in *Romeo & Juliet*. The high school IEP team discussed and implemented social opportunities within the school instead of attending a transition class.

During the school store experience, Gabby's daughter learned how to interact with different people, how to make eye contact with the customer, and how to ask the students questions instead of them asking her questions. She also learned how to monitor the credit and debit operation of the store and to count back change.

Related services. Gabby's daughter received physical therapy for a limited time and speech therapy for quite some time (Gabby did not provide an exact timeline). Both services were right for her daughter. Even though her daughter's speech improved, she continued to have pragmatic language deficits such as when she could not keep a conversation going for more than two reciprocated turns. There were no related speech services on her daughter's IEP for the transition program.

Teacher Preparation. Overall, this mom felt that her daughter had some prepared and some unprepared teachers in the public-school system. She felt as though some teachers never tried to set higher benchmarks for her daughter. It looked to her as if the teachers taught content on a level that would be a good fit for most of the students in the class but not for the few others because the teachers seemed to be too busy to address each student's learning needs. Additionally, teachers did not know a lot about extra community services. Gabby could recall only one high school teacher who had shared information with her about different community services. She also believed that special education programs managed money inappropriately. Gabby emphasized that the special education system needed repair before services addressed the individual needs of students.

Transition program. As of Fall 2016, Gabby's daughter entered a transition program, and the curriculum changed from academic skills to life skills—budgeting and shopping for clothes and groceries. In addition to these skills, her daughter went out into the community to explore different job options. Gabby stayed involved with educational issues by talking to other moms who parented other young adults with Down syndrome. According to Gabby, these other mothers continued to be concerned about previously learned math, reading, and writing skills because teachers only taught life and vocational skills in the transition programs.

What does the Future Entail?

Both parents work to assist with their daughter's financial needs. Plus, her daughter has been on a waiting list to receive SSI since birth. However, Gabby felt fortunate that she and her husband made enough money to support their daughter's needs because they knew of other families who struggled financially to take care of their son or daughter's expenses.

Caregiver. Gabby ultimately feels that she and her husband will always be their daughter's caregiver whether she lives on her own or with them. They have thought about planning and setting up care for their daughter before either of them dies. Moreover, they did not expect their son who is in his early twenties to take on this responsibility.

Additional remarks. Gabby spoke about how there are enormous amounts of resources for parents. Unfortunately, the lists of resources are too extensive for many parents to find and to consider. She emphasized that parents needed an advocate or a

liaison that connected them to appropriate services because parents wanted a direct line of communication to different organizations.

Profile of Rafiq

We are Family

This story takes place in a suburb outside of a major city in the study area. Rafiq was a divorced and single parent, and she works for the government. The mother described herself as the boss, disciplinarian, comforter, and soloist for her daughter. When Rafiq received respite care for one year, she was relieved to have a few hours to herself. She also saw herself as an interpreter between her daughter's literal understanding and the reality seen by her other children and other family members. Rafiq felt that some family members didn't understand ASD and what it would take for her daughter to be "normal," like them. Her daughter did quickly become upset because she interpreted figurative words literally, and then Rafiq had to be the peacemaker between her daughter and other family members.

School and Agency Programs

Rafiq's young adult daughter with ASD and intellectual disabilities participated in an intern program. This intern program had a community partnership with local and federal government as well as local businesses. These community business partners agreed to train an intern student. If the student did a great job, he or she obtained jobs as a full-time employee.

Middle school and high school. Rafiq described her experiences with teachers as a close network of specialists who seemed to know how to help all students with special

needs, not only her daughter. The educational community openly considered the information presented by other mothers and distributed any applicable new information to other parents. In the past, there had only been one complicated relationship with a teacher at the middle school. Rafiq did not perceive it as an unresolved relationship with the middle school teacher. Instead, she acknowledged that her daughter was going through the beginning stages of puberty. Furthermore, Rafiq perceived that the teacher was overwhelmed, which contributed to a challenging middle school year. When she attended high school, her daughter participated in academic classes modified for her cognitive abilities.

Transition center. At the transition center, the staff concentrated on teaching Rafiq's daughter life skills such as how to make a change and do her laundry. Rafiq daughter's first internship job was transporting residences to activities in the recreation room of long-term care or acute care facility. She has also worked as a custodian at a movie theater and a bowling alley.

Each time Rafiq's daughter participated in a job she learned how to make a list of tasks and how to check things off the list. These positions taught her how to be respectful, how to work cooperatively with co-workers, and how to keep track of her hours worked on a time card. Her daughter also learned how to make a change at the grocery store and managed bus schedules. Also, Rafiq daughter's transition program had an apartment and laundry facilities to practice independent living skills.

Rafiq felt that the transition program taught her daughter how to say what she did not like, but the school curriculum did not focus on teaching taking small risks when a

person feels a bit anxious about a new experience. Rafiq shared details of how the consequence of taking a bit of risk brought an increased feeling of a sense of accomplishment. She reported that knowing real fear and things that made her daughter a little nervous needed addressing along with self-determination skills.

Community partnership program. The community partnership program only had funding for six months out of the year. Rafiq had to find things for her daughter to do when she was not participating in the community partnership program. Examples of what Rafiq was asking herself are (a) How can I keep my daughter exercising, (b) How can I get her to volunteer somewhere, and (c) How can I get her out of her room? Rafiq's only complaint about the community partnership program was that it was only in operation for six months a year.

What Does the Future Entail?

At this stage in life, Rafiq's daughter was not confident or comfortable with others. She has a lot of emotional dependence on Rafi which made it difficult for her to leave town even when there was a relative to take care of her daughter. When her daughter was younger, she did not seem to be aware of her differences among other students. At this time, Rafiq's daughter had become more conscious of her differences, and this awareness had shaken her self-confidence. Nevertheless, Rafiq's daughter had improved her life and work skills. In spite of these improvements, her daughter continued to isolate herself in her bedroom because she did not want to try new experiences.

Rafiq was thankful for having the money to support her daughter. She knew of other people who were struggling financially. Rafiq knew that she had to plan for the

future for her daughter, but this planning had not taken place yet. As long as her daughter continued to respect her motherly authority, Rafiq did not see the need for guardianship.

A Summary of Outcomes from Interviews and Other Sources

Each parents' perception provided a lens into the experiences of their young adult children with disabilities. I organized the five parent participants' experiences into the following themes:

1. Charter school versus public school;
2. Class size;
3. Programs from middle to high school;
4. Educational classification of disability;
5. Classroom environment and teacher communication;
6. Preparing for college;
7. Work experience and then employment;
8. County, state, federal, and private businesses as partners;
9. Parent advocate;
10. Social isolation;
11. Monetary concerns; and
12. Future Planning.

I narrated these themes from the applicable information gathered from the interview from each participant. I also shared perceptions that directly applied to each parent's experience.

Charter School versus Public School Experiences

Acke and Abby, parents of a young adult with other health impairments, described how the middle school charter school and the public high school used different teaching methodologies and pedagogy. The charter school had smaller class sizes. And although the charter school teacher was willing to learn how to help the daughter via information from parents, the general education teacher struggled with meeting their daughter's specialized needs in the general education classroom. Other parents experienced smaller class sizes at the middle school charter school and witnessed better-specialized attention for their children when the charter school staff had specialized credentials. A mother of a young adult son with ASD made the following statement about a dedicated charter school in Utah:

The [program] has given him an opportunity to interact and develop friendships with like-minded youth also challenged by ASD in a collaborative environment. It removes the grading, judgment, and evaluation present in school replaced with collaboration, responsibility, and pride in accomplishment (Bench, 2015, p. B1, B8).

Just as Acke and Abby, Bahar, Gabby, and Rafiq noted how teachers with specialty credentials and experience appeared to have a genuine interest in their children's education. Acke and Abby also described how teachers with appropriate training and who took an interest in their daughter's education obtained the best results, year to year. Plus, Rafiq explained how her daughter had a challenging middle school year. Although she did not fault the teacher, Rafiq shared how the teacher had limited

behavioral experience which impacted her daughter's academic progress. As a result, teachers who stayed current with methods and philosophies appeared to present a genuine professional interest in young adults with disabilities.

Class Size

Acke and Abby's daughter went from a small class ratio of ten students to one teacher at the charter to larger classroom settings of 40 students to one teacher at the public high school. To reduce the effects of that transition, Acke provided additional support for his daughter because he worked as a teacher in the same high school as she did. Bosworth (2014) showed that students who struggled with learning did better in reduced sized classrooms although students who performed better academically were not affected by class size. Along with that finding, Hattie (2012) also determined from an in-depth meta-analysis that reducing class size from 25-30 students to 15-20 students indicated a small amount of change. Acke and Abby provided educational support opportunities for their daughter intuitively without reading research literature. In this case, Acke and Abby's daughter transitioned from a small to a more significant learning environment with the implementation of social and emotional support. Their daughter received a small amount of practical education in a small classroom setting which could have influenced their daughter's academic progress.

Programs from Middle School to High School

Except for Acke and Abby, each parent participant described different curriculum emphasis from middle to high school. The program curriculum for Acke and Abby's daughter with other health impairment remained the same in her IEP year after year. She

attended only one specialized instruction class, and the rest of her classes were in generalized instruction. Bahar shared how her daughter with Down syndrome maintained the same specialty program from preschool to high school. The teachers taught specialized reading, writing, and math instead of life skills. Gabby had a daughter with Down syndrome as well, and she expressed frustration with the specialized instruction system. In middle school, Gabby's daughter had learning abilities that were higher than the rest of classroom but not high enough for general education classes. From Gabby's perspective, it appeared that the middle school program mostly fit the needs of many students instead of a few of the other kinds of students. At the high school level, Gabby noticed a shift in focus where academic content classes modified subject areas to her daughter's learning needs. The teacher provided her daughter with job experiences and was not too busy to address her daughter's needs within the high school setting. Rafiq's memory of her daughter with ASD and intellectual disability were vague. She stated that high school mostly concentrated on modified academic subjects to address her daughter's cognitive needs. The participants in this study witnessed how their children experienced different methods of teaching that either increased or decreased the learning potential of their children.

Educational Classification of Disability

Gabby and Bahar knew their two daughters were likely to be diagnosed with Down syndrome at birth. However, for educational purposes, their children were classified as an intellectual disability. As a result of early diagnosis intervention, only Bahar's daughter received community, state, and federal funds. Other parents did not

have the same experiences with their children in the public-school system as Gabby and Bahar. Tanner (2016) interviewed a mother who said, “She [daughter with ASD] didn’t meet the stereotypical behaviors...It was always the hands-off approach. People [doctors and teachers] dismiss it [ASD] in girls” (p. A3).

Similar scenarios happened with Rafiq’s, Acke and Abby’s daughters. Rafiq described how the medical specialists diagnosed her daughter with PDD-NOS, then with ASD. The educational staff on the IEP team settled with the classification of intellectual disability and ASD. Acke and Abby had to contact medical professionals to determine why their daughter was not performing academically like her peers. The medical staff diagnosed their daughter with anxiety, Non-verbal Learning Disorder (NLD), and sensory integration problems. The first-grade IEP team decided on other health impaired as an educational classification. The participants with young adult children with Down syndrome received earlier intervention than the participants with young adult children with ASD and other health impaired.

Classroom Environment and Teacher Communication

Acke and Abby reported that the special education teacher in the high school system provided them with the most resources and guidance on how to find a job and college assistance for their daughter before graduation. Abby added that it is essential for parents to be involved in their children’s education by showing how you appreciate the teacher and at the same time, monitoring your children’s annual IEP progress. Also, Rafiq, Acke, and Abby reported how teachers with appropriate training and who also took an interest in their daughters’ education obtained the best results, year to year. Acke

shared that parents and educators should also discuss subjects about how a chemical interaction between the brain and medication could take two to three weeks, and therefore, psychology and counselor strategies should be used to help the patient cope with this difficult period. Or a mental health professional should maybe use psychology strategies before administering medication. Anderson (2014) wrote an article about a mother of a son with mental illness who needed additional supports due to the stigma of mental illness. She disclosed to Anderson (2014),

The people who say thank you outnumber the detractors at least 10 to 1. In addition to getting help for my son, I am connected with advocates and “dragon moms” ... I don’t feel alone and isolated anymore. It’s not just me. (p. A3).

Unlike the mother of a son with mental illness, Bahar communicated how the teachers and parents in this rural community shared and collaborated on the educational and vocational needs of students, and each group was willing to learn about new information. In contrast, Gabby perceived classroom environment and teacher communication differently from the other parent participants. She believed that too much of the school budget monies go towards classroom resources instead of fixing broken systems and policies.

Preparing for College

Acke and Abby described how their daughter had graduated from high school and worked as a part-time custodian. They believed work experiences outside of high school—working as a landscaper for a year and a part-time custodian—helped to build her self-confidence and self-satisfaction in preparation for part-time or full-time college

enrollment in the Fall of 2016. Also, their daughter's special education teacher had a lot of knowledge about finding VR funding and college grants or scholarships for the postsecondary transition.

The process. Abby described how she and her husband learned about funding through contact with the VR agency and with the counselor at the high school. Abby's description of the counselor at her daughter's school showed how effective a positive relationship between staff and parents could bring about opportunities for the children with intellectual and other disabilities. Abby shared this:

A small portion of the counselor and a significant part of her special education teacher encouraged and helped us through the course of getting together with VR earlier on. Perhaps a year ago we made a connection there through our special ed. And they work closely together, and I don't know if you know the funding has changed drastically for that. So, we got in on that before everything ended drastically. And so, she's [their daughter] been followed, minimally for that year of ...her senior year...but then as that was coming to a close, we were able to apply, and they're helping her with her college now. So, VR gave her [their daughter] ideas for how to get started, who to contact.

Acke added, "So we have taken advantage of a lot of the resources that are available...."

Both parents and their daughter had met with the disability services office at a local college. In the summer of 2016, Acke and Abby and their daughter continued to contemplate whether or not to attend part-time or full-time college classes.

Even though Bahar's daughter did not graduate with a diploma, she wanted her daughter to experience college life. Bahar revealed that her daughter had adequate writing skills to write children's books. Other parents have trusted a college's accommodations only to be let down. The mother of a young adult son with ASD said, "We were led to believe there was more support than there was" (Pope, 2013, p. A10, A11). This mother found another college that provided the accommodations required for her son. Parents of young adults with intellectual disabilities or other disabilities wanted their children to have similar opportunities and experiences as other young adults without disabilities.

Work Experience and then Employment

All five participants' daughters with a disability had participated in chores at home or work in the neighborhood or the community during and after high school. Acke and Abby's daughter worked consistently at a part-time job as a janitor. Gabby's daughter has worked as a dog sitter for vacationing neighbors and participated in the store at the high school. Gabby's daughter transitioned into a transition learning center in Fall of 2016. Bahar's daughter participated in a job coaching program in cooperation with the transition program. According to Bahar,

the transition program did a class that was all about jobs and what do you want to do and different skills to learn. They (the school staff) were able to find jobs in the community, and we would have job coaches go in and help them, and that's how she was able to go from volunteering at a job into a paid position without a job coach.

For the last couple of years, her daughter has worked a gas station and at an elementary school where she helped small groups of children. At the interview in July of 2016, I learned that Bahar was researching options for her daughter after she ages-out of the transition program. Bahar felt that every program was so different, so she didn't think that there was a plan for her daughter at this time. Bahar's daughter with intellectual disability performed expected job tasks by her employer without coaching. As Bahar's daughter ages-out of a transition program, her mother searched for a job that matched job performance with her daughter's job preferences.

County, State, Federal, and Private Business as Partners

Rafiq was the only parent in the study who experienced a service delivery model after her daughter aged-out of a transition program. Rafiq's daughter has aged-out of the school district transition program. In the community where she lived, the county and other agencies have developed an "All Pathways." (pseudonym). There are a few other agencies who participated in this service: (a) Vocational Rehabilitation, (b) Plains (pseudonym) Adult Rehabilitation Center, (c) a county school district in Utah, (d) U.S. Department of Education, and (e) Health and Human Services for Young People with Disabilities. All agencies participated either in funding or staff support. People in these organizations actively pursued community business partners and provided financial incentives to those partners. After a community business partner contract established a site for training, the agency staff placed adults with disabilities into internships which sometimes lead to a permanent employment position.

Rafiq's daughter interned at a care facility that had both a long-term care side and an acute side. She helped the recreation director by taking residents to various activities, passing out games to them, and delivered the newspaper to residents' room. Rafiq reported that her daughter did satisfactory work at this job but "it was not her favorite." Rafiq's daughter did not like to tidy up or clean things up at this internship site. In the summer of 2016, Rafiq's daughter interned at a retail store where she did a bit of cleaning, pulled, sorted and returned signs to the shelves, attached size stickers on shoe boxes, took clothes out of boxes then laid them out for hangers and the steamer. Rafiq thought that the cleaning type jobs were not her daughter's favorite because she had coordination issues. "Plus... just like anybody else, it is not a job that she likes, so she is not keen on doing a fantastic job at it. But I think it did teach her the idea of the discipline aspect of it that this is what work is like."

In high school, Rafiq's daughter didn't like the work duties at the bowling alley and the movie theater where the staff "took a bit of a shine to her." After completing work, "there was a reward for her—small popcorn and drink. These acts of kindness by the staff made her "a lot happier about working there." Rafiq thought that her daughter learned that "you work first, and then you get a reward after, which is sort of like the basic idea of work, kind of."

Rafiq had service gaps of 6 months before her daughter received another internship job. Rafiq discovered that "The right fit between the participant and community partner is essential. But it is a very time-consuming process." Similar to Bahar, Rafiq learned how important job preference and matching of job skills were for

producing better employment success for her daughter with ASD and intellectual disabilities.

Parent Advocate

All five parents described themselves as parent advocates. Rafiq described herself as her daughter's "champion" and her "defender." She shared that nothing in her daughter's life would happen unless she "set the wheels in motion." Rafiq did this by regularly reading articles online and subscribing to newsletters. She also revealed that when her daughter was little, she mostly read articles about treatment. In comparison, she continued to read and researched articles, but the topic changed to adult services.

Gabby described herself as a person who tried to "do what I need to do for my daughter to make it workable for her." There was a transportation scenario where the district's transportation department staff expected Rafiq's daughter with Down syndrome to walk a mile and a half to the public bus stop. Gabby advocated for the safety of her daughter and was approved for the door to door transportation from home to the transition center.

Bahar described her experience after she moved into a rural community.

...[I] just moving to our small town, I came here, and nobody else had services, nobody else knew about anything, and so we formed a parent group, and now they all come to me still saying...What are we going to do about this? The district won't let us do this; what are we going to do? I'm a fighter.

Abby thought that parent involvement was beneficial to her daughter's education:

[you] have to stay on top of things and not pester, but just be involved so that they (teachers) know you're on board, and that you are interested so that they know they're being...one, appreciated, but also that we're keeping an eye on things.

Even though these five participant parents seized the role of an advocate; other parents had some self-doubt about taking on this position. A mother of a son with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) said, "It's hard to advocate a lot of times for your kids. You can feel alone. You don't want to ruffle feathers, but at the same time, you are the only one who is going to do that" (Wecker, 2015, p. A1, A6). Four of the participants in this study expressed word phrases of leadership: (a) "I'm a fighter," (b) "set the wheels in motion," (c) "stay on top of things," and (d) "make it workable for her." However, leadership skills did not happen automatically. All participants grew into their leadership roles as their children transitioned from preschool to elementary, elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to postsecondary education or transition services.

Social Isolation

Four out of five parents expressed concern about social isolation. Rafiq's daughter became more self-conscious about how she socialized with peers her age. Her daughter seemed to function better socially when she was younger. Although her daughter improved upon her social skill levels, she became more aware of "how lacking she is" and "just how much difference there is between her and most other people." Also, due to limited programs for young adults with disabilities who have aged-out of a transition program, her daughter experienced episodes of social isolation which impacted her

social-emotional health. As a result, her daughter became more reclusive and defensive around other family members.

Acke and Abby shared that their daughter mostly met other people through her jobs because “it is hard for her to have friends and to integrate.” When their daughter made a “connection,” she made friendships although her friendships were not close ones. Abby saw the importance of her daughter establishing any friendship.

Bahar thought that her daughter had improved her social and communication skills from working with other people in the community. Gabby also shared how job experience in the store at the high school had helped her daughter learn interaction skills with other people. However, Gabby felt that her daughter did not reciprocate sustained interactions with people. She was concerned that the lack of conversation skills would make it harder for her daughter to obtain a job in the future. In contrast, Bahar lived in a smaller community where her daughter knew most members of the town. The other parent participants lived in the suburbs with less frequent social interactions. These parent participants appeared to be more protective due to the risk of harm in the population, possibly due to the size of their communities. Lastly, these parent participants arranged for and searched for structured environments and social learning experiences which did not always offer spontaneous social conversational opportunities on a daily basis.

Monetary Concerns

All five participants were worried about other parents in the community who might not have the funding, or a means to obtain resources in different counties. Gabby

felt fortunate that she and her husband had jobs to support their daughter. From the time of her daughter's birth, she applied for and continued to wait for Social Security Insurance (SSI). She and her husband assumed that they would always take care of their daughter because they have the means to do it.

Acke and Abby were also a household with dual income. They both agreed that having good insurance through their employer was "very fortunate." In a *Deseret News* article, a parent of a son with mental illness said, "A quarter of my income goes to treating my child with mental illness" (Anderson, L., 2014, p. A3). Comparatively, Acke's and Abby's daughter was offered a scholarship for her grades, and the department of VR had provided some support for college. They do not consider themselves poor or wealthy. When VR offered to provide some extra funding for postsecondary education, they felt thankful for this monetary support.

Bahar had received support through SSI since her daughter was a year old. She and her husband were students with not much money and did not have family around always when she applied for SSI. Bahar knew of other people who did not apply for SSI. These others felt that SSI was a form of welfare or that state tax dollars depleted with SSI. Bahar had found every resource she could that helped to take care of her daughter. Otherwise, her daughter would not have opportunities to learn about independent living skills and social skills in different community environments.

Rafiq had a difficult time answering the question about monetary needs. She felt that other parents had it much worse than she did. In Rafiq's financial needs for her daughter with disabilities, however, Rafiq did talk about receiving respite care for one

year. When the respite care staff had visited the home a few times per week, Rafiq had a couple of hours to herself. She said, “It was the best year of my life.”

The participants all had different scenarios for monetary support for their young adult children with disabilities. These scenarios were: (a) dual income from parents on waiting list for SSI assistance, (b) dual income parents without SSI assistance, (c) parents who receive SSI assistance, and (d) a parent who does not receive SSI support but really appreciated respite care in order to take a break, re-focus, and re-vitalize herself.

Planning for the Future

Bahar hadn't pursued guardianship for her daughter because guardianship was expensive, and her daughter listened to instructions and safety concerns. Some young adults with disabilities can become be a safety risk to themselves and other family members. This possible threat was not the case with Bahar's daughter. Instead, Bahar shared how her daughter with Down syndrome was intellectually high-functioning, loved to be around other people, and was kind to her family and community members. Bahar did not want guardianship for her daughter because guardianship would take away her daughter's independence. As a family, guardianship wasn't a concern of theirs because her daughter was thriving as an active member of the community. However, she acknowledged that it would be a concern in the future.

Rafiq did not have guardianship for her daughter with ASD, and Rafiq admitted that life does not go on forever. Therefore, Rafiq knew that guardianship plans needed attention in the future. Acke and Abby hoped that they witnessed a daughter demonstrating self-determination skills, but for now, they are slowly moving towards

supporting a daughter with other health impairment in college. Gabby shared that she and her husband will always be responsible for her daughter with Down syndrome who is intellectually high-functioning. Gabby stated that she and her husband planned set-up care for their daughter before they died because their son was too young for the responsibility.

Other parents acknowledged that guardianship is a financial challenge; however, they are willing to pay the courts for their adult children have a legal advocate. A few statements from these parents describe their insights. From a mother of a son with an intellectual disability, “Someone has to look out for J, so no one is taking advantage of him” (Cortez, 2015a, p. A1, A8). And from a father of a son with Down syndrome, “It’s always a dilemma when you have a guardianship position. You have to put in so much protection, and it costs so much that people choose not to take it because they just can’t afford it” (Cortez, 2015a, p. A1, A8).

Guardianship is a personal decision made by all parents with young adults with disabilities. Teachers introduce the topic of guardianship at IEP ninth-grade meeting. Every parent has a reason why or why not guardianship should be considered for their young adult children with disabilities (Millar, 2014). Some parents interpret guardianship as a protective act, and other parents view guardianship as means to limit their young adult children with disabilities independence.

Evidence of Quality

I purposefully selected five participants who met participant criteria. I developed interview questions to align with a literature review of the local problem and RQ1, RQ2,

and RQ3. I member checked each transcription with each participant by sending a copy of the transcription to all participants. I spent 15 minutes each discussing the wording of the transcriptions with each person. During these member checking sessions, I verified themes for social isolation, guardianship, parent advocacy, planning for the future, teaching pedagogy and methodology, and outside agency support and work experiences as well as any new developments related to transition services for their young adult children.

Furthermore, I gained additional understanding from re-reads of narratives, keywords, and subthemes. The themes that emerged from interview stories, and a priori knowledge from literature review, the *Deseret News*, and government websites were

- specialized services and placement,
- teacher collaboration in the community,
- aging out or postsecondary options,
- dedicated caregivers,
- the burden of financial support and the potential for social isolation,
- employer expectations from employees with disabilities, and
- self-confidence gained from employment.

Interpretation of Findings

Specialized Services and Placement

The participants' children were either on track to attend, had attended, or were in preparation to graduate from transition services. Students who participated in a transition

program were not eligible for a certificate of completion until they could age-out of the program.

School programs. When I compared three of the participants' perceptions with two other participants' views, I noticed how the teacher's pedagogy and methodology changed relative to how well each of their children performed in the general education setting as well as in their cognitive and mental health abilities. At times, these young adults with intellectual and other disabilities had experienced a variety of teaching pedagogy which could or could not have prepared them for employment or work experience outside of high school (Neubert & Moon, 2006; Phillips et al., 2009). A peer-reviewed article by Papay, Unger, Williams-Diehm, and Mitchell (2015) proposed developing self-determination and career awareness in the primary grades. Self-determination skills are a lifelong process, and by incorporating this skill into the elementary curriculum, the parents experience a better understanding of the transition process over a longer period. At the middle school level, some participants perceived that they received appropriate academic instruction. However, other participants observed that the specialized instruction classrooms were adapted, but they were not modified to meet the individual needs of their children. In a Carter et al. (2014) study the researchers agreed that students with severe disabilities needed to receive education as heterogeneous groups. Due to these students' unique profile, the transition education benefited from tailored, individualized plans.

After middle school, the children of Acke and Abby, Gabby, and Rafiq children received general education and work experience for social communication concerns

while attending high school. Whereas, Bahar's daughter did not start job experiences until she entered the transition program. All participants had young adult children who had worked as volunteers or neighbor helpers or part-time employees while attending high school. According to Lindstrom et al. (2011), young adults with disabilities needed work experience to gain sophisticated skills like teamwork, responsibility, and ethics. In the workplace young adults with intellectual disabilities who experienced high-preferred and high-matched skills sometimes demonstrated higher productivity and task completion (Hall, Morgan, & Salzberg, 2014). However, Papay and Bambara (2014) cautioned that work experience effectiveness had mixed findings which may or may not associate with family involvement and short periods of employment rather than long-term employment.

Equitability. Every program that participants' daughters with disabilities attended in the community was dependent on the continuation of funding from state and federal legislators. Furthermore, the marginalization of young adults with intellectual and other disabilities affects all demographic and geographic areas—locally, nationally, and internationally—and creates a financial burden on families of young adults with disabilities and their communities (At-Turki, 2012; Hasnain & Balcazar, 2009; Sanford et al., 2011). A family's income also impacted the quality of healthcare services and amount of adjunct services or social insurance support (Fremstad, 2009; Parish, Rose, Grinstein-Weiss, Richman, & Andrews., 2008). Another researcher also argued that being disabled resulted “in poverty, a lack of healthcare, inaccessibility to a proper education, and isolation” (Bone, 2017, p. 1307). Due to the unpredictable nature of funding and family income, Bahar utilized resources in her community that helped to take care of her

daughter. The other participants managed healthcare and the care of their daughters with their private funding sources.

Unfortunately, parents received accommodations and modifications to their children's individualized educational plan, but specialized educational supports do not amend the culture surrounding disability services. The parents in this study wanted equal opportunity for their young adult children. At times, the location or type of school negatively or positively impacted program development. For example, a charter school where Acke's and Abby's daughter attended closed enrollment for high school to their daughter due to funding and a limited number of certificated high school teachers. The charter school experienced financial hardship. The high school where their daughter transferred to collaborated, developed programs, and expanded resources to parents. Until two years ago, Bahar's daughter attended a rural high school where the transition program was in the planning stages.

Equitable learning. I discovered that both the teacher and parent contributed to the educational and workplace achievements. In the *Deseret News* article (Author unknown, January 11, 2014), a parent explained how her son received hands-on experience that he did not get at a traditional school, and he has flourished. Holwerda, Brouwers, de Boer, Groothoff, and van der Klink (2015) as well as Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, and Levine (2005) indicated that teachers' expectations of a student's ability to work in competitive employment were the only statistically significant perspective. Therefore, a teacher or parent who was to underestimate the abilities of

young adults with disabilities could have a future impact on their student's success as employable individuals in competitive employment.

An example of this scenario would be when Gabby's daughter attended a specialized classroom in a public school to address her cognitive needs. Gabby thought her daughter's middle school educational experience was not adequate because the teacher concentrated on the various needs of her daughter's peers as a group and not on her daughter's learning needs. Her daughter was marginalized for having a higher cognition in the specialized classroom and for having a lower cognition compared to general education peers. In high school, her daughter received academic instruction with modifications to meet her learning needs and gained school store experience to improve her social communication skills.

There continues to be inequitable employment support from VR with regards to types and severity of the disability. Other researchers indicated that there was better employment support for young adults with severe disabilities from VR than for young adults with mental health who had significantly lower opportunities for employment (Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010; Joshi et al., 2012; Test et al., 2009). Recent data from Honeycutt, Thompkins, Bardos, & Stern (2015b) indicated that the percentage of applicants who received VR services ranged from 31 to 82 percent nationally. In comparison to the nation, Utah did not have the highest ratio of applicants nor did it have the lowest ratio of applicants (Honeycutt et al., 2015b). Rafiq agreed that employment support was better in the transition program than in VR. She reported how different

agencies were working together to find jobs for young adults with disabilities, but these programs did not run year-round and were always at risk for budget cuts.

Teaching methodology and equity. Many of the methods and practices in pedagogy had changed in the school districts due to anticipated modifications in federal and state funding practices. Teachers are always adjusting to state and district interpretation of educational laws about educational transition services. Even though all five participants were Caucasian, their experiences with transition services followed a different plan for each of their young adult children. All five parents relied on other parents, themselves, and educators to provide guidance in preparation for many transitions from preschool through postsecondary or transition center services that occurred in their young adult children's educational and community living experiences. Bone (2017) pointed out that the educational community needed to define disability as a valid identity as opposed to a caregiver's burden. Therefore, the community would address services for people with disabilities better by changing their conversation about diversity and action.

Despite adequate socioeconomic status, Acke, Abby, and Bahar experienced abundant opportunities, but two other parents expressed feelings of unpreparedness. Gabby and Rafiq perceived their children's middle school experience as non-equitable services for what their children needed at the time. Moreover, Rafiq was experiencing gaps in program services since her daughter aged-out of a transition program. Under the educational laws of the federal government, it required that parents received unbiased information and that each student received an equal opportunity to advance. The Obama

administration had mandated Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which became implemented into state-level educational institutions by 2017. Despite these laws and acts, there continued to be non-equitable services for their children with disabilities. By changing the conversation about disability services, diversity, and action, programs for people with disabilities could transform into actual individualized equitable services.

Teacher Collaboration in the Community

Every parent had a different type of experience when they each began collaborating with teachers. Canha et al. (2013) reported that parents of adult children with intellectual and other disabilities perceived that teachers did not work with the community enough to facilitate a successful transition from school to adult life. Gabby observed that teachers at the middle school and few at the high school were not collaborating with the community to facilitate successful transitions from high school. Rafiq was frustrated with the service gaps for employment once her daughter aged-out of a transition program. In comparison, Acke, Abby, and Bahar were grateful for the services they received in high school, transition programs, postsecondary support from VR counselors, and disabilities service counseling from a local college.

Aging out or Postsecondary Options

All five participants were experiencing different stages of transition: (a) high-school to college, (b) high-school to transition center, (c) transition center to aging out, and (d) aging out to community living. All five parents had to advocate for service options for their children with intellectual and other disabilities.

Parents as protectors and advocates. All five parent participants described

themselves as advocates for employment, postsecondary education, and work experiences in the community. When the parents' young adult children were actively participating in public high school and transition programs, the parents described their experiences as collaborative with teachers and administrative staff. All of the parents, except for Gabby, experienced a collaborative outcome when their young adult children transitioned from high school to a postsecondary or a transition program.

Gabby stated how the high school teacher gave her a pamphlet about VR without explanation about their services and other agency services. Gabby also shared how the high school teacher had not arranged for the door to door transportation for her daughter with intellectual disabilities. Gabby advocated for the door to door transportation for her daughter from home to the transition center and back, instead of the high school teacher. West and Pirtle (2014) held a focus group where they explored mothers' and fathers' perspectives on special educators and the attributes that influenced effective inclusive practices. Similar to Gabby's scenario, these parents requested that teachers demonstrate advocacy skills, good listening associated with interview skills, and promotion of schoolwide programs for acceptance of differences.

Equally important, West and Pirtle noted that only the mothers identified critical transition periods support from teachers—into transition programs or aging out of transition programs or graduating from high school and then attending college. In contrast to research findings from West & Pirtle, Acke expressed awareness and past participation in the transition from middle to high school for his daughter. Acke's awareness correlated to his experiences as a teacher and a counselor.

Compared to the other participants, Rafiq described herself to be a protector and interpreter for her daughter. When her daughter was not working, she became increasingly dependent on Rafiq. Surprisingly, Rafiq felt as though she was the only one in the family who could take care of her daughter although she has a few family members available to help her. Rafiq shared how other family members expect her daughter to grow out of ASD. She found herself defending and educating family members about her daughter's behavior. Hence, she does not get time to herself to relieve the stress of being a caregiver.

The Burden of Financial Support and the Potential for Social Isolation

Four of the participants expressed more concern over the potential for social isolation than the burden of financial support. One participant was grateful for funding from the state.

Primary support and guardianship. All participants were accustomed to being the central support for their young adult children with disabilities. They reported that they had enough funds to provide caregiving and other additional costs for their young adult children. Additionally, Bahar was concerned about her daughter losing her independence, if she were to apply for guardianship. Each parent acknowledged the importance of guardianship and making plans should they die suddenly (Cortez, October 24, 2015b). And, all participants had thought about making plans. Each parent in this study was an active advocate for their young adult child with disabilities and had mentioned a partial type of plan for future support. The Millar (2013) study findings are similar to participants. With parental perspectives in mind, guardianship is a legal process where

the courts appoint someone to have power over another individual. Instead of focusing on guardianship, Millar stated that both schools and parents needed to promote self-determination skills and alternative community support that protected the civil rights of a young adult with a disability. Millar emphasized that guardianship takes away autonomy, and families should exercise caution as the last resort. Hence, these partial types of plans for their adult children with intellectual or other disabilities need to review the least restrictive supports before considering any guardian appointment.

Communication and social competency. Four of the participants expressed how their young adult children with intellectual disability, other health impaired, and ASD had lacked self-determination and communication skills which appeared to negatively impact their relationships with other family members, colleagues, and peers. Acke's and Abby's daughter needed to be encouraged to initiate friendships through workplace acquaintances. A reason for their daughter's communication challenges could be that language, and social deficits which occurred at a young age then carried over to adolescence (Whitlow & Watts, 2014). Gabby's daughter continued to demonstrate limited conversation skills which impacted her ability to work with other workers and ask questions about procedures. Whitlow and Watts (2014) stated that "social competency is highly dependent on language skills" (p. 32). Lastly, Rafiq's daughter did not have enough work due to 6-month program gaps. As a result, her daughter became more dependent on Rafiq and less confident in social settings.

Even though, Rafiq's daughter had improved her social communication skills and became more aware of how she compared to her same age peers without a disability. In

contrast to the other participants, her daughter had much more difficult time adjusting to social scenarios in the community. A potential reason for Rafiq daughter's social factors were explained by a Taylor, Smith, and Mailick (2014) longitudinal study which examined outcomes for adults with ASD and focused on the timing of the relations between behavioral change and vocational activities. The participants in the study were adults with ASD, ranging in age from 19.0 to 53.3 years and parents of some adults with ASD. Stats showed that approximately 64.1 of adults with ASD had a diagnosis of a comorbid psychiatric disorder. Besides communication and social skill factors, Taylor et al. (2014) claimed that the relations between vocational activities and behavioral development for adults with ASD tended to be the same as adults without disabilities, including the potential depression due to underemployment status. This study also indicated that adults with ASD who worked in vocational placements where there was a greater degree of independence had reductions in ASD symptoms and maladaptive behaviors. Wehman et al. (2014) also indicated in a study that there needed to be more research on how the social and psychological factors of ASD impact young adults as they transition out of school. At this time, there are no practical applications for behavioral support implementation for young adults with ASD in the community and work settings (Landmark et al., 2010). Without communication, social skills, and opportunities for independence, individuals with ASD are less successful at forming relationships in the family and workplace.

Dedicated Caregivers

The parents expressed how they would always be the primary provider of care for their children and how they would forever stand by them, even if other family members and teachers did not understand their child's disability. All parents appeared to want more information about how to be more assertive when planning for their children's educational future and vocational experiences (Milshtein, Yirmiya, Oppenheim, Koren-Karie, & Levi, 2010). The parents also wanted to know how to present their cases to decision makers in the schools, outside agencies, businesses, and legislators. A conclusion emerged that no parents be allowed to carry their burden alone; instead, people in the community need to bear the burden together.

For parents not to carry their burden alone, school districts could promote partnerships with parents. A study by Pleet-Odle et al. (2016) suggested that school districts needed to raise expectations for postsecondary success by developing a partnership with the parents of children with intellectual or other disabilities. Teachers could empower parents by

- letting parents know about adult service providers in the first year of high school,
- connecting parents to role models such as successful adults with disabilities,
- interacting respectfully with families with varying backgrounds,
- planning early for the transition by teaching elementary school students about self-advocacy,

- partnering with parents to identify everyday activities that develop employability and life skills as well as natural supporting help from other family members,
- enabling parents to trust their instincts and consider receiving special education service until they graduate or age out, and
- having families with their children participate in school or community-based activities that foster teamwork and leadership.

Guardianship. None of the parents in this study had pursued legal trust protection for their children with disabilities and guardianship due to time constraints and expense. Furthermore, none of the parents mentioned any concern about how the state could or could not take care of their young adult child with a disability should they suffer an unexpected death or a significant injury. A Millar (2014) study supported taking these kinds of legal actions by parent participants. Millar believed that school district IEP teams put too much emphasis on guardianship. Sometimes, the school districts IEP created undue stress and financial expenses for the parents of adults with disabilities. I found that every day-to-day care for their children with disabilities took precedence over the parents' planning for their children's future, and all parents accepted their responsibility as the forever caregiver with no expectations placed on other family members. Millar's research results reinforced these precedencies. Furthermore, none of the parents thought guardianship was necessary because their children were not harmful to self or others and followed house rules. Even if the above case were true, Millar (2013) suggested alternative support systems for the family before guardianship. Some of these

supports might be respite care, analysis of medications, and partial guardianship until behaviors subside. When these parents retire, they could experience a lifestyle which could or could not change their perspective about asking for more family support, setting up a trust, and applying for guardianship.

Risks of social isolation. The parent participants talked about driving their young adults to programs and about initiating work as well as social opportunities for their young adult children with disabilities. Without the parents' money for transportation and their time to drive the children to those locations, their children would not have had these opportunities. Even though all five parents dedicated countless planning hours and pay for their young adult children with disabilities, there continued to be at risk social isolation due to communication, cognitive planning deficits, limited self-determination skills, and gaps between services or employment (Bell & Clegg, 2012).

Social Inclusion. Although people with disabilities have friendships, their level of social inclusion changed if they had no access to the community. Furthermore, service providers seldom sustained social inclusion in system-wide organizations due to small-scale of their interventions and confusion amongst stakeholders about the meaning and content of social inclusion (Amado, Stancliffe, McCarron, & McCallion, 2013; Simplican, Leader, Kosciulek, & Leahy, 2015). Amado et al. (2013) concluded that social inclusion was successful when people with disabilities participated in varying environments that involved opportunities for significant interactions. Simplican et al. (2015) and Luckasson and Schalock (2013) endorsed ecological factors of individual, environmental, and social factors to define social inclusion for individuals with

developmental disabilities. These researchers suggested that there were several ecological factors to consider when considering the social inclusion of individuals with developmental and other disabilities.

Individual. Social inclusion increases happiness, but a sense of belonging and social inclusion may or may not increase loneliness.

Interpersonal. Family members, friends, and group home staff results in positive or negative relationships due to feelings of respect and trust or discrimination in workplace settings or abuse from family members, intimate friends, or service providers.

Organization. These conditions exist with group cultures such as the family, churches, schools, places of employment, and law enforcement. Some organizations are ambivalent and sabotage enabling conditions at the individual and interpersonal level. However, positive organizational establishments improve the effectiveness of individual and interpersonal conditions.

Community. These conditions are types of living accommodations, availability and access to appropriate services and transportation, community attitudes, culture, and geography. Amado et al. (2013) cautioned that there is limited research on public attitudes.

Socio-political. There is limited research that examines how political levels impact social inclusion. In their study Hermsen, Embregts, Hendricks, and Frielink (2014) concluded that funding cuts had negative influences on organizational cultures and staff behavior.

The results of their study and other research studies indicated that the risk of social isolation occurred due to communication, cognitive planning deficits, limited self-determination skills, and gaps between services or employment as well as social inclusion factors. All researchers agreed that there needed to be more research in the area of social isolation and social inclusion.

Expectations of parents. Each parent participant talked about the young adult child's level of independence and how they were facilitating activities at home and community to work on those skills. Blacher et al. (2010) reported how the parents of young adults with ASD expected their son or daughter to live in the community with greater frequency than was expected by the parents of young adults with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, or moderate /severe intellectual disability. I did not gather the same data as Blacher et al. (2010). In my findings, the two participants with young adult children with Down syndrome wanted them to be as independent as possible. Rafiq has a daughter with ASD and intellectual disability. She did not discuss any expectation of having her daughter live independently. Acke and Abby were expecting that their daughter with other health impairment try-out college but it was not an expectation to finish college then move out of their home. In comparison, Wehman et al. (2014) focused on predictors of successful transition from school to employment for youth with disabilities. These researchers added that young adult children with higher parental expectations of self-support and of acquiring a job had better competitive employment outcomes. I did not get a clear impression of participant parents' perspective about future expectations for their young adult children with disabilities.

Employer Expectations from Employees with Disabilities

Researchers and parent participants identified the job skills of employees with and without disabilities. Specifically, Ju et al. (2012) surveyed 168 employers to assist with the identification of five top job skills of employees with disabilities and without disabilities. The five top job skills were the ability to (a) demonstrate personal integrity and honesty, (b) follow instructions, (c) show respect for others, (d) be on-time, and (e) show high regard for safety procedures of employees with disabilities. These top five job skills were the same for employees without disabilities except that being able to read with understanding was rated higher than showing regard for safety procedures. According to the parents in this study, job training skills at transition programs focused on how to do these ten tasks to

- interact with different people,
- make eye contact with the customer,
- ask other people questions before others ask them questions,
- monitor the credit and debit operation of the store and count back change,
- build self-confidence and self-satisfaction as well as showing respect,
- work cooperatively with co-workers,
- show up on time for work,
- keep track of hours,
- make a task list and check each task off the list, and
- get to work by bus.

Compared to Ju et al. (2012), these parents' perception of a transition program and job training skills emphasized interpersonal and individual social interaction skills with other employees, money management of pay, and community knowledge about bus service to and from work. Whereas the Ju et al. (2012) study showed how employers expected their employees to have personal character skills of integrity, honesty, respectfulness, punctuality, and alertness for safety within the workplace as well as attention to instructions. Therefore, employers were not as concerned about social inclusion in the workplace as were the parents of children with intellectual or other disabilities.

Self-Confidence Gained from Employment

For the participants in this study, the amount of confidence gained from employment depended upon the individual needs of their children with disabilities. Rafiq noticed less confidence with social encounters at work or in the community when placed in the different working environment after her daughter with ASD aged-out of a transition program. Some people with disabilities were not transitioned into the workplace because they lacked self-awareness of their limitations and misunderstood some parts of the job selection process (Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2014). According to Wehman et al. (2014), there are numerous empirical articles on explored interventions for problem behaviors of children and adolescent age with ASD, but there was limited research on transition-age adults with ASD.

Comparatively, Lindstrom et al. (2011) indicated that transition services lead to increased confidence, to clearer planning for post-graduation education, and to additional

work opportunities for young adults with disabilities. Other researchers also suggested that stable behavior, self-management, and reduced rates of problem behavior are significant for securing employment (Landmark et al., 2010; Test, Mazzotti, et al., 2009; Wehman et al., 2014). Therefore, the amount of confidence gained from employment depended on different disability and transition service factors as well as comprehension of self and the job selection process.

Additional Factors Related to Interviews: Communication, Social Capital, and Tools

Researchers who collected data from systems and individual outcomes for persons with an intellectual and developmental disability experienced many obstacles for effective dissemination of national project and state findings. Gabby also expressed concern about the amount of information for parents because there was no liaison to assist parents with aging out opportunities or with community job opportunities for their children with intellectual and other disabilities. Similarly, Ticha, Hewitt, Nord, & Larson (2013) agreed that some of these obstacles were presentations with content that was understandable to parents, practitioners, scholars, and policymakers to have better accessibility to publications. Moreover, other parents commented that some teachers unintentionally marginalized their students with intellectual and other disabilities.

Some special education and related service professionals marginalized parents by “showering them with information” without listening to the parents’ immediate needs (West & Pirtle, 2014). Curry, Jean-Marie, and Adams (2016) also pointed out how social networking and parent motivational beliefs in urban school districts showed parents how

their involvement did influence their children's education. They found that over time parents could establish partnerships with other parents and informal connections with teachers. Nevertheless, some school districts allowed parent involvement but implemented behavior plans and modifications to the student's education plan which deflated the parent's ability to be an active partner in the educational process (Curry et al., 2016). As a consequence, when parents of children with disabilities afforded the opportunity to become an involved partner in the educational process, these parents developed self-efficiency.

Another parent shared how her daughter did not like some of the custodial jobs at the transition center, but these work experiences taught her to complete a task much better. However, Hall et al., (2014) asserted that workplace experience, counselors, and teachers needed to consider assessment tools for job preference and job-matching to provide better job experience. Hall (2017) also reported that employment for people with disabilities needed to be a compatible match between the person's skills and preferences and job requirements. Morgan and Openshaw (2011) emphasized how the IDEA reviewed the importance of discussing the student's preferences, strengths, and interest (Section 602, 34[b]). Their research used two different assessment tools, job-preference, and job-matching. Each tool was compatible with low-level readers. With these assessment tools, teachers, job seekers, and transition teams can reasonably identify a job-preference which is matched up with the job-seekers level of skill (Hall et al., 2014; Morgan & Openshaw, 2011). Moreover, the individuals with disabilities who participated

in competitive employment had better rural community involvement in job-preference, job-matching, and networking.

Researchers discovered how social capital contributed to better rural community involvement than other larger communities. The Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) and Morgan and Openshaw (2011) studies equated more rural community involvement with social capital because the rural community was neighborly and had an awareness of others as compared to larger communities. Wehman et al. (2015) indicated that high school transition programs, postsecondary education attendance, and vocational services did not predict competitive employment for young adults with disabilities. However, there could be a connection between social capital and successful competitive employment in rural areas.

Summary of Themes

These parent participants provided many different insights into how their young adult children with intellectual and other disabilities were accessing education, daily living tasks, community involvement, and job experiences. The parents expressed concern about (a) equitable learning environments, (b) the continued need to advocate for their young adult children, (c) the gaps in communication between middle school and high school personnel, and (d) outside agency supports when their young adult children transitioned from specialized or inclusion learning environments and from transition programs into community living. Furthermore, when these young adults with disabilities were not working or participating school or programs, they experienced social isolation which increased the burden of care on the parents. In fact, the parents were so busy

managing and advocating for their young adult children's life that planning for unexpected events was not a priority. Therefore, parent participants appeared to advocate for their young adult children with disabilities to reduce the risk of social isolation and reduction of underemployment. Although parents were thankful for some form of social, educational, and workplace support for their children, they perceived the overall social, educational, and workplace collaboration efforts between school, state, federal, and other community agencies personnel as a labyrinth (see Figure 1). Thus, parents seek changes in thinking to facilitate independent living for young adult children with disabilities.

All five participants initiated and collaborated educational services for their young adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. They discussed transition planning goals between community business partners as well as VR staff, teachers at the high school, and disability services at the university. Some of the participants experienced gaps in service when their young adult children were not employed or were not receiving educational services. All five participants were up to date on the latest research about transition success from adolescence to adulthood. Each parent had a different perspective on transition services and teacher knowledge about methodology and pedagogy that related specifically to their children's learning needs. The parents planned for their children's future more than for their destiny. However, the most critical outcome of the interviews with four participants was the concern for increased social isolation as a result of unemployment and structured program lapses.

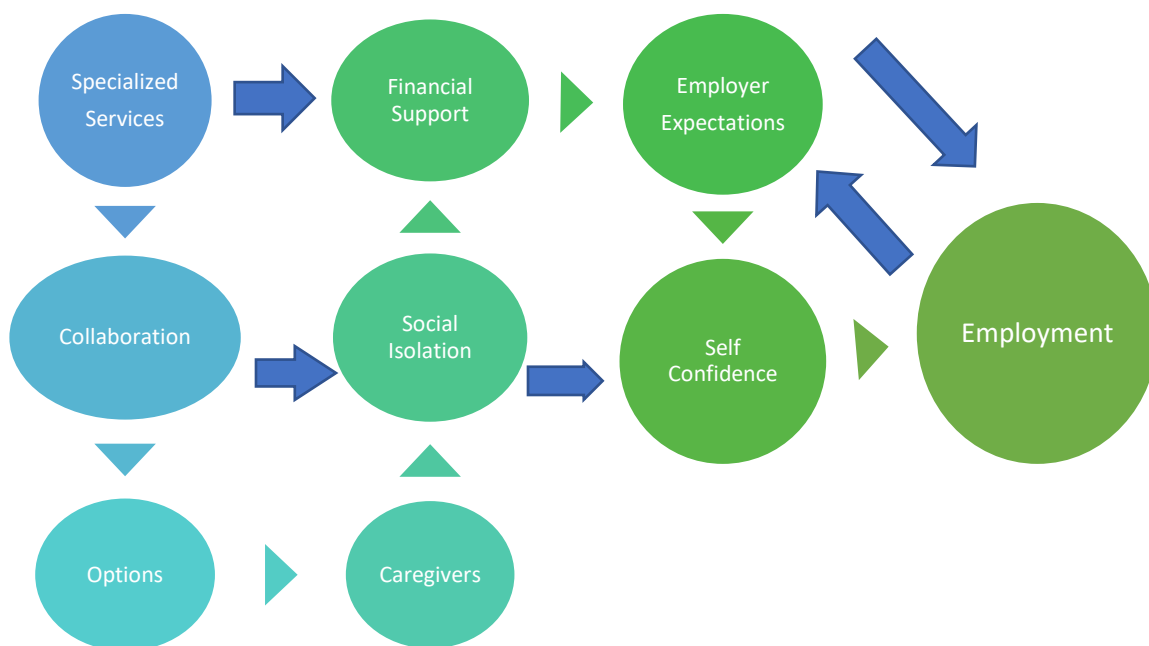


Figure 1. The coordinated efforts by personnel at schools and state, federal, and community agencies to facilitate employment for individuals with disabilities. Many parents in the study found it difficult to navigate the resources offered by these entities.

Limitations and Discrepant Cases of the Findings

There were no discrepant cases in the findings; all parents reported the same themes that were specific to the transition stage for their young adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. However, there were limitations of the findings due to:

1. The small number of participants because this figure only represented a tiny fraction of the community.
2. The type of disability of their children because this study only represented a couple of Down syndrome, one ASD, and one other health impaired classification.
3. The demographic data because the data represented Caucasian parents only.

Factors Related to Competitive Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

In preparation for a position paper, I investigated options for reduction of social isolation and improvement of employment of individuals with disabilities after aging out of a transition program. I noted that young adults with disabilities sustained social interaction and community involvement by participating in the workplace and school employment programs. Furthermore, youth with disabilities employed by business were paid minimum wage. In comparison, young adults with disabilities who participated in sheltered workshops were unpaid or received a lower than minimum wage.

Sheltered Workshop Versus Competitive Work

Recent research indicated that sheltered work services are not self-sustaining. The National Disability Rights Network, (NDRN) (2012) reported that sheltered workshops get most of their money from government agencies. Sheltered workshops allocated funds as follows: (a) 46% from state and county agencies, (b) 35% from production contracts, (c) 9% of retail sales, (d) 2% from donations, (e) 1% from investment income, and (f) 7% from other sources (United. States General Accounting Office, 2001). The NDRN (2012) acknowledged that the workshop executives did not have the marketing skills, or business plans experience to run a workshop efficiently because the workshops did not earn enough through their contracts. In contrast, the non-profit and competitive workplaces obtained contract work. Thus, the sheltered workshops were driven to produce motivating workflow, and competition replaced the income generated by federal and state service systems. In contrast, data supported competitive employment more than sheltered workshop employment because the sheltered workshops appeared to disregard the

individual's disability, whereas people in competitive workplaces provided more individualized accommodations to employees with disabilities (Hoffman, 2013).

Competitive Work for Young Adults with Disabilities

To address the need for more competitive workplace opportunities for persons with disabilities, I wrote a position paper on why businesses should consider hiring persons with disabilities. I developed this position paper to encourage talking points for business partnership³ to help alleviate any misconceptions about hiring an employee with a disability. By talking about these misunderstandings, some employers could change their ideas about the cost of providing modifications and accommodations and how to manage a more diversified company (Hartnett, Stuart, Thurman, Loy, & Batiste, 2011).

Section 3: The Project

To address the needs of adults with disabilities, I discussed in Section 2. I developed a position paper with suggestions for why business leaders should hire young adults with disabilities. I supported this position paper with foundational insights based on these learning theories: (a) transformational learning, (b) colearning, and (c) coaching. The position paper I created included discussion of historical changes in U.S. law related to disability and the impact of these statutes (see Appendix A). I also addressed some myths about employing adults with disabilities and focused on workplace dignity and diversity and why business employers should employ young adults with intellectual and other disabilities. After reading the position paper, community business leaders and organizations may learn specific reasons why hiring young people with disabilities may benefit businesses. In the position paper, I provided reasons for hiring individuals with disabilities in competitive workplaces and resources for business leaders in the rural and urban area of the study site who are interested in employing individuals with disabilities.

Rationale

I developed the position paper to introduce the option of hiring young adults with intellectual and other disabilities at a business within a rural or urban community. This document could be an adaptable template to meet the needs of rural and urban businesses. This position paper provided answers to why some businesses are employing and investigating a more diverse workforce of young adults with intellectual and other disabilities. Without community and business partner involvement, a population of young adults with disabilities can become more homebound (Bell & Clegg, 2012). As a result,

these adults with disabilities experience fewer opportunities for community socialization and demonstrate regression from previously learned work skills (Whitt, Cawley, Yonker, Polage, 2014). By discussing the ideas and suggestions included in this position paper, community business members may take action as they become more aware of the isolation and regression risks for young adults with disabilities. In summary, this position paper could be a catalyst to activate community involvement and business partnerships in ways that could reduce social isolation of both parents and their young adult children with intellectual and other disabilities. By creating this position paper, I hoped to engage the community and business leaders in a discussion about hiring young adults with disabilities and how to effectively integrate these individuals into to the community and a variety of workplace settings.

Review of Literature

I used educational data and book sources from a local university library and online publisher sites (Sage, Carfax, Routledge, Wiley Online Library, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, and Dalhousie University) for this literature review. I found additional references because these online publisher sites further extended the literature search. The resource personnel at a local university library assisted with an extensive literature search for adult learning theorists, Knowles and Mezirow. The Knowles and Mezirow models pertained to areas such as social transformation, andragogy, and stages of transformation. I also used EBSCO and social work databases, which I accessed using Walden University and Utah State University resources. These databases included

Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central New Platform, Sage Premier, and Springer.

I linked some of the project and learning theory articles I found to data management site, Mendeley Desktop. I used Boolean searches which consisted of phrases with connecting words of “and” and “or” included in them. I focused my search on years between 2012 and 2017. However, I broadened the literature search to between 1986 to 2011 when I found 2012 to 2017 required additional primary verification and historical support. The keywords I used were *community outreach, andragogy, transformative learning, social services, colearning, coaching, higher education, transition services, competitive employment, labor participation, specific disabilities, and accommodation issues*. I cited 38 of the articles I found in the literature review in this section.

Conceptual Framework

The parent participants were active advocates for their children but continued to report gaps in service between middle school and high school and transition services after their children aged out of a transition program. They wanted to learn how to work with business partners and with state and federal agencies to address program gaps and the risk of social isolation of their children with intellectual and other disabilities. When developing the project, I researched three areas of learning theory: (a) transformational learning, (b) colearning, and (c) coaching. I used these theories as a conceptual framework because staff in a business organization who hire a young adult with disabilities need to have the following management skills: (a) personal reflection, (b)

leadership skills, and (c) positive collaboration (Cox, 2015; Rutherford, Walsh, & Rock, 2011). These business skills are essential because business partnerships could fall apart without much planning and use of these skills. Sometimes the business partnerships are often unsuccessful due to conditions that are outside of the business team's control (Aguilar, 2016). According to Vogel (2016), "communities are led by growth" (p. 103). No matter how smart the members of the business team are, there needs to be person or persons in the group who knows how to access knowledge from others in the community, whether it be from the plant floor or the office.

A Community Example of the Conceptual Framework

A family car wash in Florida is an example of how a business provided jobs for employees with ASD when given university resources and financial guidance from other business persons in the local community. Staff at the university provided consultation on how to set up the car wash so the employees would have a system to follow (D'Eri & D'Eri, 2014). Another car wash business owner lent his car wash to run the family car wash as a pilot project (D'Eri & D'Eri, 2014). The employees with ASD that participated in the project demonstrated a higher level of performance and developed better social-communication skills while being employed (D'Eri & D'Eri, 2014). Therefore, adults with disabilities and their employers learned how to transform a job experience.

Foundations of Adult Learning and Transformational Learning

An employer of a business that is committed to hiring young adults with disabilities needs to provide alternative ways to teach, manage, and retain employees with or without disabilities. Chen (2014) noted, that "learning is transformative and leads to

personal development” (p. 407). To Chen, adults transformed and further developed intrinsically from learning experiences. Some of Chen’s investigation applied to businesses. For example, the business members could have certain beliefs that could be challenged internally through discussions with other members of the group. Furthermore, in his transformative learning theory, Mezirow (2009) provided a pathway to change because the learner has a transformative experience from a problematic event or thought. From this transformative experience, the employer learning gains are more “inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and has an integrated perspective” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 22). Mezirow (1998) also cautioned that his transformational theory was not meant to be sequential. Instead, adults experienced different phases in their life which caused them to reflect and gain a deeper understanding of their practices.

Transformational theory (Mezirow, 2009) is applicable when employers hire a diverse population of employees. The employer would have diversity training, and the employees with and without disabilities would be assigned the opportunity to reflect on this new information. Moreover, the human resource department of businesses could have internal supports available to their employees as they moved through these reflective transitions. Daloz (1999) wrote a reflection on adult student mentorship which one can apply to employers who change their business model:

Over the years, I have come to believe that the line between learning and healing is finer than we think ... Within the obvious limits, perhaps a deeper understanding of the dynamics of healing would inform our knowledge of learning (p. 241).

When business leaders adopt a social responsibility such as hiring more employees with disabilities, they may foster less social isolation and more independence for these employees.

Social Transformation

Social transformation occurs when a non-profit or for-profit organization provides community services to the disadvantaged people of society. The volunteers learn to observe without judgment. Rutherford et al. (2011) designed a community outreach that needed an interdisciplinary lens where service providers and community involvement was necessary. With this model, these researchers introduced the concept of social justice, colearning, and action research. I applied the principles of colearning and the three phases of transformation in the position paper. Even though this article does not directly affect to adult business learning, it does provide information on why an organization can transform into a social enterprise and maintain this entity within the corporate place to continue the colearning process.

Colearning

Colearning was a grassroots idea. Research and implementation of a colearning environment with university faculty, students, agency staff, and clients designed by Rutherford et al. (2011). In a business climate, colearning would occur between management and employee. Colearning environments also took place within communities and equalized power relationships (Curry & Cunningham, 2000). The three stages of transformation provided the framework for how colearning occurs. The three

stages of transformation were (a) micro—self-internalization, (b) meso—service integration, and (c) macro—society-externalization (Rutherford et al., 2011).

Micro-self-internalization. This stage of transformation occurs internally with individuals such as managers and employees. This phase of critical consciousness can help managers achieve a reflection of a person’s belief systems, both personally and professionally. These people do not share private thoughts with others.

Meso-service-integration. This stage of transformation helps to inform the person’s reflections. At this level, the manager and employees with or without disabilities examine the workplace practice to find out the effects of social and accommodation factors on the productivity of all employees. Once the employee without disabilities establishes a rapport with the employee with disabilities, who could or could not need assistance, the employer inquires about how satisfied they are with the job. The employees with disabilities are equal partners, so the employee without disabilities and the business waits for natural opportunities, not staged opportunities.

Macro-society externalization. This stage occurs when the company and employees with or without disabilities have equitable communities at their place of work. The participants of equitable communities have significant control of the decision-making process to achieve justice, freedom, and ecological balance. The employer of the business does not shy away from power instead all employees work as equals within the

business organization (see Figure 2).

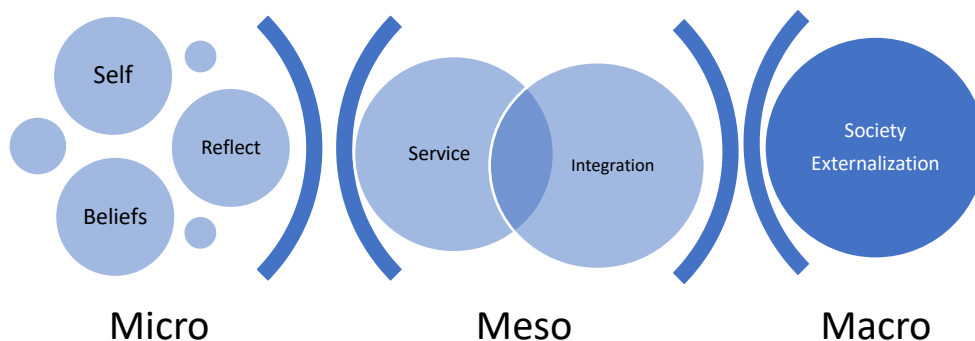


Figure 2. Three stages of transformation during colearning (Rutherford et al., 2011).

Mutual Respect

It is essential that all individuals involved in any business understand that mutual respect is earned and occurs over time. There also should be a shared vision for collaborative learning as companies hire more employees with disabilities. Furthermore, relationships needed to be build up over time to achieve trust between the employer, employees with or without disabilities, and outside agency supports. Eventually, it will be necessary for all stakeholders to learn how to address issues of safety and security along with developing similar and non-judgmental relationships. Accordingly, there needed to be a shared focus on ‘working with’ instead of ‘doing for’ (Rutherford et al., 2011). The individuals involved in a business transformation should be willing to take risks and push the boundaries of bureaucratic and traditional practices. Business organizations that participate in social transformation projects demonstrate a sense of innate worth and dignity of all people.

Coaching

Businesses can use similar adult learning theories to facilitate change in an organization. Cox (2015) introduced how Knowles' theory of andragogy and Mezirow's transformative learning theory can be used to coach adults. Members of the International Coaching Federation (2002) stated that coaching "helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses, or organizations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, to improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life" (p. 1).

Andragogy versus transformative learning. Knowles' theory of adult learning established learning on intrinsic motivation instead of self-reflection as a result of a conflict. Cox (2015) defined coaching as a process that "integrates experiences, concepts, and observations to facilitate understanding, provide direction, and support action and integration" (p. 30). Nevertheless, adult learners who received coaching were not always self-directed by intrinsic motivators as Knowles suggested.

Researchers in the field of coaching utilized Mezirow's theory of transformative learning to address the adult learner's lack of self-direction by intrinsic motivators. Cox (2015) proposed that Mezirow's theory of transformative learning was also relevant to coaching because it created changes in the learner's assumptions about themselves. Mezirow (1990, 1997, 2000) suggested that people tended to reject ideas that were not within their frame of reference. For example, an adult who experienced an event that contradicted his or her expectations, frustrations, intentions or challenges about values and beliefs could question his or her effectiveness. Then the adult could have

inconsistencies and conflicts created as an opening for learning known as “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow, 1990). After experiencing disorienting dilemmas, employees could experience several phases of transformation. These disorienting dilemmas should then initiate coaching from another employee or outside sources.

Guidelines. After the employers read the position paper about why a business should hire young adults with disabilities, they could want more instructions from different coaching sources—a university, VR agencies, and other support personnel such as occupational, physical, communication, or vision therapist. These guidelines for various sources would be similar to what an employee with or without disabilities could need some guidance from the same above sources. The coach guides the employer and employees through disorienting dilemmas by

- helping the individual think through their difficulties by encouraging critical reflection to help identify frames of reference,
- using stories or ask for examples from the individual that illustrate that the current predicament is not remarkable and there is no need to feel isolated,
- helping the individual analyze a variety of interpretations and alternative scenarios, the potential roles, and relationships,
- assisting the individual in formulating plans to deal with new realities; especially when trying out new responsibilities and building new relationships, and
- providing examples of models for functioning within the perspective or offer opportunities to role play (Cox, 2015).

Summary of Transformative Learning, Colearning, and Coaching

Colearning environments are needed to achieve social transformation within a business organization, where the employer and employees with or without disabilities share an equal partnership in the company. Therefore, all employees should exhibit mutual respect. The employer and employees could develop mutual respect and grow in their colearning experiences by going through micro, meso, and macro stages of transformation. Sometimes the employer could designate a coach for those employees who needed additional support to address skill building. The employer could also use the transformative learning and coaching models where nonjudgmental listening and open questioning would build on the employee's learning experience.

Literature Review of Competitive Employment Gains and Positive Outcomes for Young Adults with Disabilities

Changing Educational Trends

Researchers suggested that preparation for transition into the community needed to start at the elementary level of education for all students with disabilities. To fulfill this goal, teachers at the elementary level engaged their students and parents in transition-focused activities. These activities included developing self-determination, career awareness, and increasing parents knowledge about the transition planning process at each school level—elementary-middle school, middle school-high school (Novak, 2015; Papay et al., 2015). These researchers proposed the following self-determination activity—the Self-Determination game for elementary classrooms. The teacher guided the game by asking a series of questions that aligned with self-determination. The

questions centered around hypothetical scenarios and “what ifs,” and students answered the questions from their perspective. These researchers also suggested elementary activities to develop career development. These activities were (a) career day, (b) career interview with guest speakers, (c) classroom roles such as attendance and cleaning tables, and (d) student designed career trading cards with career descriptions in the community. When elementary teachers collaborated with parents and introduced information on the transition process, families were better prepared to be effective members of the transition planning team.

The teachers’ and parents’ expectations for living independently and working for competitive employment also impacted future transition planning for the young adult with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities. Holwerda, Brouwers, de Boer, Groothoff, and van der Klink (2015) investigated the expectations of teachers and parents for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to obtain competitive employment. Holwerda et al. (2015) observed that teacher and parent expectations predicted employment options for the young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. If parents had a high expectation for their young adult children with disabilities to work in the community, these young adults were usually working in the community within a time span of two years. Teachers are encouraged to share any vocational knowledge with the parents of the young adult with disabilities.

As students with disabilities enter middle school and high school, the researcher developed other practices to improve employment or postsecondary success following high school. Simonsen, Fabian, and Luecking (2015) and Schall et al. (2015) suggested

four other factors which increased employment for young adults with disabilities: (a) high social and classroom behavior scores, (b) attendance at IEP meetings, (c) self-advocacy skills, and (d) career awareness training and computer skills. Seong et al. (2015) conducted a study where student participants learned the attitudes and skills necessary to lead their own IEP. These students' who self-directed their IEP gained self-determination skills over time. Other researchers investigated the process of collaborative assessment and a discovery process between special education and adult service providers (Stevenson & Fowler, 2016).

Collaborative assessment for employment planning. Some researchers asserted that transition assessments needed to be a person-centered process. Stevenson and Fowler (2016) claimed that transition assessment and a discovery process focused on person-centered results, but the transition assessment did not direct integrated employment. The discovery process directed integrated employment by learning about what is important to the adult with disabilities. The discovery process mostly centered on adults with intellectual disabilities whereas the transition assessment addressed on all students with disabilities. The discovery process also concentrated on immediate employment and the transition assessment gathered information for employment, postsecondary education, independent living, and instructional planning. Both processes when implemented together could streamline collaboration of services between special educators and VR counselors.

Parental involvement. The role of parent involvement has changed from a passive to an active member of the IEP team. In the past, researchers predicted that parent

involvement is one of 16 factors that increased the chance of employment for adults (Test et al., 2009). Pleet-Odle et al. (2016) and Hirano, Garbaez, Stanley, & Rowe (2016) added that a parent's involvement in the education of their youth went beyond traditional involvement activities and expanded into several roles as decisionmakers, evaluators, collaborators, instructors, coaches, and advocates. Furthermore, these researchers identified evidence-based predictors that included parental high expectations and involvement in transition planning. To help facilitate progress in transition planning for opportunities post-graduation and aging out of a transition program, Pleet-Odle et al. (2016) gathered information from parent advocacy groups and compiled a "To-Do" list for teachers, VR counselors, and other professionals. These researchers presented strategies to promote high expectations and involvement from parents for post-school success either in competitive employment or postsecondary settings.

First, teachers, VR counselors, and other professionals need to change parents' feeling of powerless to empowerment by engaging them in training opportunities to address transition-related school and adult support services, eligibility, and access. Second, teachers need to organize collaboration meetings between families to explore family support groups focused on transition issues and use social media and local newspapers to celebrate student achievements as well as establish connections of families with successful alumni. During the collaborative meeting, all professional staff need to communicate with parents in a manner that respects their cultural-linguistic differences and lifestyle priorities. Plus, teachers can begin planning for a student's transition by contacting families early in the school to discuss the student's future goals and

aspirations. Teachers can facilitate discussion of future goals and aspiration in the home by providing the families with resources for behavior and self-sufficiency. Educators can also improve citizenship skills by encouraging families to have their youth participate in academic, recreational, extracurricular, spiritual, and community settings and events. Lastly, the IEP team can empower parents to envision what their son/daughter's future will be and provide further resources in the process of either aging out or graduate with a diploma.

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency practice. The law requires state VR agencies to be “actively involved in the transition planning process with the school districts (C.F.R. 361.22(b), 2004), instead of “when the student is nearing graduation” (C.F.R 4424 Title 66, 2001). In fact, VR agencies in the U.S. served “almost one-third” (p. 29; para. 2) of the transition-age population (Honeycutt et al., 2015a). Recently, Burgess and Cimera (2014) discovered that VR service delivery was more successful in low population areas than in populations of 10,000 and above, even though there were adequate funding policies available to individuals with disabilities.

Earlier is better. In the local study area when the student with a disability was 14 years of age, some of the VR staff developed a service plan for making community connections after the individual with a disability completed the online VR application. Some counselors for VR requested an early registration for VR services so the students could begin receiving services in their sophomore year of high school. Most school districts do not start planning for postsecondary education until high school. Cimera, Burgess, and Wiley (2013) explored if earlier transition planning by age 14-years resulted

in better vocational outcomes for young adults with ASD. They argued that transition planning and services provided at age 16-years instead of 14-years created more barriers to employment with individuals with ASD. Their results also indicated that when states provided earlier transition services over a span of three years; their service costs reduced by 30%.

Honeycutt et al. (2015b) also suggested policies that combine factors such as counselor skills, program development, and quality monitoring approaches to bridge the gap from OOS. Furthermore, VR staff could define with consistency when youths with disabilities should receive VR support, establish measures that reflect goals of individuals, and standards to measure services and success (Honeycutt et al., 2015b; Shipan & Volden, 2012. Honeycutt. (2015b) Also Honeycutt discovered the following states' transition outcomes: (a) youth who applied for VR services had percentage ranges of 4 to 14; (b) youth who applied for and received VR services had percentage ranges of 31 to 82; and (c) youth who received VR services and closed with an employment outcome had percentage ranges of 40 to 70. These researchers observed that there were many different agencies and state-level factors that were concurrent with these percentages. Honeycutt et al. (2015a) reasoned that due to the wide range of differences between states' transition outcomes for individuals with disabilities, policymakers could develop indicators for agencies to assess services for the transition-age population.

Successful Predictors of Work Access for Young Adults with Disabilities

Over the past few decades, young adults with disabilities experienced better educational opportunities along with better inclusion and participation opportunities. (Hatfield, Falkmer, M., Falkmer, T., & Ciccarelli, 2017; Katz, 2014). For example, over the past three years, ASDSpeaks—a non-profit organization, Microsoft—a large corporation, and Rising Tides Carwash—a small business, developed job opportunities and coordinated with university research teams to learn more about addressing behavioral and adaptive intervention and creating work-based setting employment for adults with ASD. Chan et al. (2017) noted that sustained community employment predictors for adults with ASD were living a large populated area, participating in inclusive education, and having independent daily living skills. Similar to Chiang et al. (2012), Chan et al. (2017) and Taylor, Henninger, and Mailick (2015) predicted a relationship between sustained employment and a higher family socioeconomic status. The family socioeconomic status was unrelated to young adults with ASD with an average IQ having a higher employment rate of 24.7% and a lower employment rate of 14% for young adults with ASD with a lower IQ. Therefore, adults with ASD and intellectual disability sustained employment better if they exhibited daily living skills such as self-care, cooking, and housekeeping skills, and if they were living in a large populated area with a transportation system.

Social Capital in Less Populated Areas

Incidentally, there was one parent participant out of the five parent participants who expressed how the rural community where she lived assisted with providing her

daughter with job experiences. She perceived the community to be trustworthy people who helped to protect and include her daughter in community life. Middleton, Murie, and Groves (2005) noted that social capital became stronger in a community due to an extended period of community vesting.

Comparatively, Simplican et al. (2015) developed a model of the social network and community participation to better understand the social inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their model illustrated how members in a community benefited from the inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These researchers endorsed social inclusion, but their model may or may not apply to various people with disabilities.

Overmars-Marx, Thomese, and Meininger (2017) illustrated the challenges of social inclusion in the neighborhood where residents with intellectual disabilities lived in a group home. Specifically, people with intellectual disabilities only greeted their neighbors yet interacted more freely with clerks at a store. Caregivers at the group home supported the neighborhood social inclusion but struggled with creating opportunities for the people with intellectual disabilities (Hermsen, Embregts, Hendricks, & Frielink, 2014). Thus, most people with disabilities require caregiver support to implement community activities.

Amado et al. (2013) explained that lack of complete integration was due to (a) the size of the community with larger communities having more segregated settings, (b) family involvement, (c) extent of vocational services, and (d) the availability of transportation. That is to say, people with disabilities have increased community presence

rather than community organization for the facilitation of complete integration within large towns and cities. However, a smaller community has less segregation, better family involvement and vocational support services, and limited transportation availability.

Work Environment

The employer's workplace environment determines the likelihood of young adults with disabilities working in the competitive business. Ellenkamp, Brouwers, Embregts, Joosen, and van Weeghel (2016) conducted a literature search of which environment-related factors contributed to obtaining or maintaining work in competitive employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities. These environment-related factors were (a) arrived on time, (b) performed the job well with limited supervision, (c) received limited accommodations, and (d) worked with a diverse company population. In comparison, Erickson, von Schrader, Bruyere, and Van Looy (2014) found that employers differed about hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities. Some employers who stereotyped individuals with intellectual disabilities showed disengagement towards them while other employers were positive about hiring employees with intellectual disabilities. Those employers who were positive about hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities also used sources of support in the workplace from coworkers, managers, job coaches, and family members.

Some companies hired adults with disabilities when support services provided better availability and quicker responsiveness to employers' needs for job coaches and other support staff. Plus, the employer who had a positive experience with hiring a person with a disability considered other individuals with disabilities. However, there continue

to be mixed employer attitudes such as negative stereotyping, disengagement, and favorable reports about hiring people with intellectual disabilities (Ellenkamp et al., 2016).

Presentation. There continue to be stigmas about the employability of individuals with disabilities by other employees who worked for a plant. Nota, Santilli, Ginervra, & Soresi (2014) randomly assigned 80 employees who worked in the metalwork industry to either one of these conditions:

- Candidates with disability introduced by referring to their disability classification.
- Candidates with disability introduced by mentioning their strengths.

Some randomly selected participants had heard descriptions of individuals with intellectual disability, hearing impairment, and behavioral problems such as aggressiveness and angry outbursts. Nota et al. (2014) indicated that employers were more accepting of individuals with intellectual disability and hearing impairment than individuals with aggressiveness and anger problems. When employees provided descriptive information about the candidates with disabilities, the employee participants became more socially accepting of all three individuals with disabilities. These researchers also suggested that the type of disability and how the strengths of individuals with disabilities influenced employer attitudes (Nota et al., 2014). Although this study occurred in Italy, the results showed that manufacturing industries might be starting to demonstrate more social acceptance towards individuals with disabilities.

A Change of Employer and Employee Perspective

Some industries provided more opportunities to adults with disabilities than

others. Erickson et al. (2014) showed that an employer change in attitude occurred because employers acknowledged fewer organizational barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities as a result of fewer attitudes/stereotypes and more supervisor knowledge of accommodations, cost of training, or supervision. However, Houtenville and Kalargyrou, (2015) noted that there continued to be less accepting attitudes from employees and supervisors within the construction, government, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, wholesale, and financial activities. Conversely, the service industries were more willing to hire adults with disabilities. For these reasons, the employer and employee attitudes towards hiring and working with individuals with disabilities are dependent upon the service type industries, supervisor knowledge about hiring individuals with disabilities, and the reduction of other employee stigmas concerning working with other adults with disabilities.

Some industries hired community rehabilitation (CR) providers to facilitate the development of natural supports in the workplace and consultative supports for company management and workers. The CR provider supported the employee with a disability by (a) identifying opportunities for workplace inclusion, (b) formulating strategies for communication and relationships with co-workers and managers, (c) providing consultation services, and (d) assessing the outcome of workplace interventions (Hagner, Dague, & Phillips, 2014). The CR providers stay current with rehabilitation issues by attending continuing education credit classes either in-person, at conferences or through online training and a list of training found on the New England TACE center website. Furthermore, Hagner et al. (2014) noted that CR providers support suggested the

inclusion of workers with disabilities and successful employment within competitive workplaces. In a follow-up study, Hagner, Dague, and Phillips (2015) observed employees without disabilities were willing to help employees with disabilities more than 75% in the workplace. The data from these researchers suggested increased support for hiring employees with disabilities in a competitive workplace setting.

Sheltered employment versus competitive employment. Sheltered workshops were initially set up to teach individuals with disabilities job skills and how to obtain employment. The shelters were also meant to protect individuals with disabilities from public judgment and shame (NDRN, 2012; Rinaldi, 2014). Some employers were given certification by the Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division to pay individuals with disabilities. However, these individuals earned less than minimum wage by their employers. Siperstein et al. (2014) argued that sheltered workshops did not provide pathways for independent employment and those VR agencies needed to provide access for young adults with intellectual disabilities to actively participate in the competitive workforce. The employer's ability to pay an hourly wage below the federal minimum is based on an outdated reliance on "an absolute connection between pay and productivity" (O'Brien & Callahan, 2010, p. 2). The sub-minimum wage philosophy was developed more than 70 years ago and was designed to help veterans return to industrial work (NDRN, 2012). In the past, politicians and advocates for young people with disabilities claimed that individuals with disabilities had earned more money in sheltered workshops than they would make with supported community work.

Historically, individuals with disabilities worked in low-skilled or repetitive manufacturing-type labor. Cimera (2017) indicated that individuals with disabilities earned more hourly wages in the community. However, he cautioned that earned community wages for individuals with disabilities depended on the following variables: (a) disability type, (b) occupation, (c) VR agency, and (d) the region. Still, individuals with significant disabilities use high-power wheelchairs for mobility and high-tech communication devices for communication which has given them more employment opportunities within the business.

Tool for supporting communication in the workplace. Researchers developed communication tools to ensure effective communication between young adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) and ASD spectrum disorders (ASD) and workplace supervisors, co-workers, and support staff. The young adult with ID/ASD used “Communication Stories” to advocate for themselves in the workplace (Pouliot, Muller, Frasche, Kern, & Resti, 2017). The young adults with ID/ASD applied these “Communication Stories” because the electronic application provided a single page text paired with pictures, a video with audio recordings. They also received quality monitoring assistance of the application (van der Meer et al., 2013; Carter et al., 2014). If a young adult with ID/ASD has no access to high-tech applications, the “Communication Stories” are paired with PowerPoint or word processing software and printed onto cardstock with minimal reflection lamination.

Work Performance and Quality of Life for Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

Adults with intellectual disabilities benefit from job experience and higher-level adaptive skills. Siperstein, Heyman, and Stokes (2014) indicated that 72% of adults with intellectual disability who maintained competitive employment had job experience before the age of 21. These adults with intellectual disabilities were competitively more eligible for work when they had high-level adaptive skills and were without emotional or behavioral problems, and they lived independently or in a group home rather than with their families.

Siperstein et al. (2014) and Carter et al. (2011) agreed that adults with an intellectual disability had better employment outcomes due to their higher functioning adaptive skills and due to their being less independent on families. Furthermore, Simonsen and Neubert (2012) and Wehman et al. (2014) indicated additional vocational skills that had a highly significant relationship with competitive employment for adults with disabilities. For example, adults with intellectual disabilities who were employed by competitive business had greater communication, self-feeding, self-dressing, orientation ability to get from one place to another, and household responsibilities. Other researchers investigated the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.

Blick, Litz, Thornhill, and Goreczny (2016) compared the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities who worked for competitive employment, sheltered workshops, and adult day care programs. Their research results indicated that individuals with intellectual disabilities who worked for competitive employment participated in

more community events than sheltered workshops and adult day care programs. These people with intellectual disabilities also reported having access to a bank account and creating their daily schedules. Therefore, individuals who worked in competitive employment experienced life much like their co-workers. Subsequently, students with intellectual disabilities benefited from programs that taught adaptive skills from elementary into vocational education programs and included the practice of these skills outside of the school at the job sites (Bouck, 2014; Siperstein et al., 2014).

Employment Outcomes for Young Adults with a Mild Intellectual Disability

Researchers noted that 60% of employees with a mild intellectual disability worked employed part-time and 78% of those individuals earned at or above 7.08 dollars per hour. Forty-three percent of the employees with mild intellectual disability also reported that “they liked their job fairly well” and 29% reported that “they liked their job very much” (Bouck and Chamberlain, 2017, p. 218). Surprisingly, the employees with a mild intellectual disability who did not receive postschool job training were likely to be more successful in working part-time or full-time. This research may or may not have started a paradigm shift towards on the job experiences as opposed to off-site job training and assessment.

Overcoming Workplace Barriers of Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Young adults with ASD experienced interview and workplace barriers. Researchers identified the following job seeking and workplace barriers: (a) resume development, (b) phone contact, (c) interviews, (d) the adaptation to new job routines, (e)

communication, and (f) social interaction (Gold, Fabian, & Luecking, 2013; Muller, Schuler, Burton, & Yates, 2003). Other researchers found possible solutions to job-related barriers. Lorenz, Frischling, Cuadros, & Heinitz (2016) collected data from an online survey to 65 individuals with ASD (36 females and 29 males) which included quantitative data measures. These researchers qualitative results indicated that adults with ASD used communication (23%) and acceptance of change (21%) over external help from work environment (15%). Lorenz et al. quantitative results showed the highest correlation between personal strengths in the workplace as self-efficacy ($r = .45$), occupational self-efficacy ($r = .48$), life satisfaction ($r = .62$), and job satisfaction ($r = .81$). These correlations between control items were moderate to strong. Therefore, these individuals with ASD broke through workplace barriers when they found an appropriate work setting that addressed their individual needs.

Employment Outcomes for Young Adults with ASD

Researchers have evidence that young adults with ASD demonstrated increased weekly hours and independence in the workplace. Specifically, Schall et al. (2015) conducted a 5-year random clinical trial (CRT) with 49 high-school-aged individuals between 18 and 21 years who diagnosed with ASD. These participants were eligible for supported employment and exhibited independent self-care skills. At the competitive work-site, the non-control participants with ASD received long-term support services. These support services were consultation with the employer regarding workstation design and task assignments, behavioral problem solving, and ways to increase productivity.

First, the researcher's analysis of wages earned by young adults with ASD showed US wages between \$9.53 to \$10.66 per hour, and those participants who employed in the control group earned US wages between \$9.67 to \$10.00 per hour. Second, the non-control group worked significantly more hours after a year of employment. After graduation, the range of hours worked for employed young adults with ASD (non-control group) was 0-40 hours weekly within 3- months and 12-months whereas the control group was 0-22.5 hours weekly within the same amount of time. Plus, individuals with ASD who needed partial physical assistance a least once a day for up to 2-hours to complete a task with acceptable speed progressed to no support to complete the task. As a result, young adults with ASD had a higher employment rate than the control group and an employee retention rate of 83.8%. Researchers also noted that the predictors of social-communication showed how participants evolved from verbal/gestural prompting daily for 30-minutes to 2-hours to interact with co-worker and supervisors to no support. Therefore, individuals with ASD who worked in competitive workplaces eventually no longer required support staff.

Summary of Paradigm Shift Towards Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

In the hiring process, young adults with intellectual and other disabilities can experience positive outcomes. I have the main paradigm shifts towards employing young adults with intellectual and other disabilities. The main paradigm shifts are (a) education changes, (b) social capital, (c) reduction of sheltered workshops, and (d) more acceptance of people with disabilities working for competitive businesses.

There is more research on how to implement assessments, include parents, and collaborate with VR for employment planning. First, the transition assessment collects information to learn what changes apply to the IEP transition plan and the discovery process provides immediate job experiences on or off the high-school campus (Stevenson & Fowler, 2016). The high parental expectations and involvement in the transition planning process predict improvement of postsecondary and employment success for their young adult children with disabilities (Pleet-Odle et al., 2016). VR services for a young adult with disabilities reduce costs and provide optimal services when serving a population of less than 10,000. VR agencies that offer enrollment of 14-years of age and facilitate counselor skills, program development, and quality monitoring approaches provide the best possible services to the community (Cimera et al., 2013; Honeycutt et al., 2015a).

Another successful predictor of work access for young adults with disabilities is social capital. Researchers also indicate that caregiver support for young adults with disabilities is necessary for better integration into the community (Overmars-Marx et al., 2017). People with disabilities who live in larger cities experience greater amounts of social isolation and less assistance from VR, yet they receive better access to transportation. Conversely, smaller communities of less than 10,000 people have better community integration and V.R. support, but transportation for adults with disabilities is inadequate (Amado et al., 2013).

When competitive workplaces are open to leaving social capital footprints in the community due to better support networks with job coaching of individuals with

disabilities, there is less stereotyping, and more understanding of an individual's disability. Moreover, in a competitive workplace, individuals with disabilities are punctual and stay with companies for extended periods of time (Ellenkamp et al., 2016; Erickson et al., 2014). Second, young adults with intellectual disabilities employed in competitive workplaces experience different job scenarios before 21-years of age. These people with intellectual disabilities also have higher level adaptive skills and no type of behavior or emotional issues (Siperstein et al., 2014). And any individual with a mild intellectual disability had part-time or full-time employment without postsecondary training (Bouck & Chamberlain, 2017; O'Brien & Callahan, 2010).

Similar to adults with intellectual disabilities, adults with ASD need a period of on the job support with a community support person. Then, the adult with ASD can become more independent at the competitive workplace. Some of the independent characteristics are social-communication, completing tasks at the same rate as other employees, and same pay and work hours as co-workers (Schall et al., 2015).

In the past 70-years states and federal lawmakers established and amended funding for sheltered workshops. The initial purpose of sheltered workshops was to protect the well-being of veterans returning from war and individuals with disabilities. However, there has been a paradigm shift about how to employ young individuals with disabilities where sheltered workplaces are seen as not providing services toward independent employment and how VR services need to provide more access to competitive workplaces for young people with disabilities (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2016; Kraus, 2017; Siperstein et al., 2014).

Project Description

I developed a position paper that addressed why businesses should hire young adults with disabilities. The position paper can be used as a guide by business organizations to discuss the implementation of jobs for individuals with disabilities along with community supports such as universities, VR, and other community support specialists.

Existing Supports

The position paper provides examples of existing supports of successful business models and contact information for business organizations that mentor other business owners interested in hiring employees with disabilities. Some of these business mentors could provide additional information on how to transform the culture of a competitive workplace. Some business mentors use coaching and transformation strategies in competitive workplaces (see Figure 3). To do this, the mentor guides the employer and employees through disorienting difficulties by

- helping the employees think through their dilemmas by encouraging critical reflection to help identify frames of reference,
- using stories or ask for examples from the employees that illustrate how the current predicament is not remarkable, and there is no need to feel isolated,
- helping the employer and employees analyze a variety of interpretations and alternative scenarios, the potential roles, and relationships,
- assisting employer and employees to formulate alternative plans, and

- providing examples of models for functioning from the perspective of an employee with a disability (Cox, 2015).

There is no particular step-by-step process when the mentor uses these strategies.

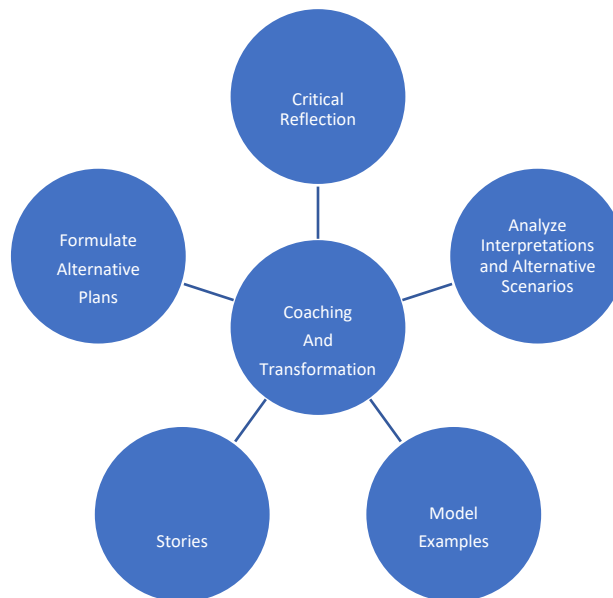


Figure 3. Coaching guidelines.

Roles and Responsibilities

I discussed roles and responsibilities that the business owner could consider to form partnerships with community members who are knowledgeable about the needs of young adults with disabilities.

Community engagement and partnerships. Community involvement and cooperation are ongoing collaborative learning experiences that assist in integrating parents and young adult children with intellectual and other disabilities with lawmakers, scholars, and business partners. The business supporters of a competitive workplace for

young people with disabilities would identify a safe environment where their voices and concerns can be listened to and acted upon by parents, scholars, and lawmakers (Molina, 2013). The business owners could read the position paper to implement a value-based model that calls for action through community partnerships. Here are a few examples of who those community partnerships could be.

University personnel. University professors, graduate assistants from various departments of education, social work, nursing, and other humanity areas could develop and share knowledge about effective delivery of job adaptations and modifications. The professors and business partners could organize colearning environments where students at the university could coach the workers with disabilities.

Fieldwork. Graduate assistants from multiple departments could colearn with parents, professors, and business managers about how to implement work projects that could better improve the dignity and self-worth of young adults with intellectual and other disabilities.

Potential Barriers

I speculated that potential barriers would arise from human rights policies and procedures that were unaddressed by human resources and floor managers. Another possible obstacle to workplace inclusion of adults with disabilities would be how to manage an employee with disabilities accommodations and how another employee would react to new diversity and equitable standards.

Needed Resources

For the project to be successful in a competitive workplace, businesses need to have resources available to them. Therefore, job coaches might have to collaborate with the employer on how to use colearning and coaching strategies. The employer would implement training on diversity and equity standards to all levels of personnel within the company. The timeline for training would begin before the company started to hire adults with disabilities and during the training of employees with disabilities. The duration of the training could be assessed by observation and evidence of inclusive behavior among co-workers and decided by the management of the company.

Potential Solutions to Barriers

I speculated that mutual respect between the employer and employees with or without disabilities addressed the possible solutions to barriers. The employer needs to establish a virtuous organization to accomplish mutual respect. A virtuous organization has top-level management that openly exhibits good citizenship behaviors such as kindness, empathy, courage, and compassion towards employees with or without disabilities (Whitt, Cawley, Yonker, & Polage, 2014). Given a virtuous organization that is led by top leadership provides over time, a workplace environment that supports accommodations for employees as a regular practice may assist with minimizing stigmas. A virtuous organization could provide accommodations such as (a) help with transportation, (b) offer a flexible work schedule, and (c) assign a personal care assistant (Anand & Sevak, 2017; Kregal, 2012). In business, the transformation occurs when companies are willing to take risks and push the boundaries of bureaucratic and

traditional practices. Business organizations who participated in social transformation projects demonstrated a sense of innate worth and dignity of all people. However, business and community partners need to develop trustworthy relationships over an endless amount of time.

Project Evaluation Plan

I used a goal-free evaluation (GFE) to assess the likelihood of businesses reading and applying the principles of this position paper. I used the GFE because a goal-based evaluation (GBE) would not address the innovations and innovative initiatives of this position paper (James & Roffe, 2000; Scriven, 1991). In contrast, the goal-based evaluation (GBE) measured specific objectives. In comparison, the GFE does include anticipated effects, measured outcome, or impacts which can be intended or unintended. Instead, there are observed behavior and actions of people that are unstructured by the evaluator (Scriven, 1991). Also, the GFE applied when a business does not have program goals for a particular project or event (Youker & Ingraham, 2013).

The GFE can be combined with the GBE after GFE has provided the necessary information for the business. Such an occurrence happens when the GFE needs further explanation of anticipated effects such as management factors, employee support, and organizational factors (James & Roffe, 2000). In this case, the business might prefer to use a survey. Some companies use surveys to discover certain information about a particular group of people (Stake, 1970). The employer could send out a measurable survey to all employees at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. The manager could modify the survey to meet the needs of all employees. However, these methods could not

be suitable for all business entities, and in that case, businesses could custom design their assessment parameters.

As a broad goal, I decided to have businesses review the position paper that discusses why it is essential to hire young adults with disabilities. When businesses review the position paper, I further facilitate this goal by providing a list of business organizations that supported employment of people with disabilities and provided examples of other start-up or companies that had changed their hiring policies. I anticipate that the outcome of this goal would be different for each business. The merit of the position paper is based on the actual activity of companies to hire more young adults with disabilities. The timeline for implementation of this goal is dependent upon the actions of business persons and stakeholders who read this position paper. The process of learning and of discussing the position paper with other business organizations could happen with immediacy, during the process of starting up a new business or changing a current business model, which could take six months to a year or longer.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders for this project are business organizations and their employees. The business organizations have a vested interest in hiring young adults with disabilities. The main vested benefit would be to add diversity and to promote social responsibility within the workplace. The employees of a business have a similar vested interest who could be motivated by the need to witness a department's success. Other stakeholders might be business mentors and organizations with a common goal to increase the number of young adults with disabilities in competitive workplaces. Some stakeholders who

might act as advisors for the business could be university personnel and students to promote their educational research and advocate for young adults with disabilities.

Project Implications

Closing the Gap between Services and Access

Individuals with disabilities are a homogeneous group. Each with disabilities and without disabilities has different job preferences and job skill strengths. Therefore, schools and outside agencies would benefit from closing the gaps between services and access. According to new provisions in the law, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) requires that VR agencies adopt a role in preparing youth with disabilities for competitive integrated employment. The statute includes provisions to increase the role of VR agencies in providing pre-employment transition coordination and services as well as supports employment services for young adults. The law also requires formal cooperative agreements between state VR, Medicaid, and developmental disabilities agencies that address the delivery of VR services. Furthermore, the WIOA statutes limit the number of young adults with disabilities who could begin jobs that pay less than minimum wage. Thus, the WIOA prohibits schools from contracting with sub-minimum wage providers.

According to the former Department of Labor Secretary, Tom Perez (2015) in a blog announcing the appointments to the *Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment of Individuals with Disabilities*,

Competitive integrated employment works – for individuals, for employers and society. Models have repeatedly shown that people previously considered

“unemployable” can work, can be productive and can achieve independence. As such, investing in this approach is a wise use of public funds (paragraph 5).

The employer benefits from employing people with disabilities, and competitive integrated employment is an economic responsibility of communities.

Preparation for employment. During the transition planning process, the students with disabilities would develop personal goals that prepare them for life after high school graduation. Students with disabilities would benefit from being active participants in their transition planning from age 14 until graduation, and then teachers would facilitate better plans for students’ future. As previously discussed, students with disabilities would be provided with employment experience as they attended high school because students with disabilities who participate in transition planning, employment opportunities in the high school and the community demonstrate improvements in self-determination and self-advocacy skills. They also show improvement in vocational skills such as the computer, organizational, and mechanical skills through work experience projects (Hatfield, Falkmer M., Falkmer T., & Ciccarelli, 2016).

Competitive workplace. Businesses require access to (a) readily available job coaches, (b) scholars at universities with knowledge about accommodations for workplace environments as well as family member support. When a business chooses to implement job programs that hire individuals with disabilities in turn these individuals with disabilities have an improved quality of life. These young people with disabilities gain positive experiences of working with other employees, and this added experience improves these individuals’ socialization skills. More importantly, there could be fewer

gaps in employment for individuals with disabilities because there would be more job opportunities. Equally important, individuals with disabilities would experience a greater variety of jobs that would take into consideration the individual's job preferences and job placement when businesses would form partnerships with job coaches, scholars at the university, and family member support.

Applications of the Project

The application of this position paper is to stimulate conversations between business organization leaders about (a) gaps of job experiences before and during transition services and after aging out of a transition program, (b) agreement when community employment begins at competitive worksites, and (c) policies of how community businesses can address these issues through positive change. Some of these conversations could start with parents, high school students, transition teachers, and the principal about how to provide equitable employment opportunities for all students. Alternatively, business groups might benefit from holding a town hall meeting to discuss with lawmakers what needs to be done to employ adults with disabilities. Communities could proactively implement an employment project that could stimulate involvement from lawmakers, business partners, parents, and scholars to increase awareness of competitive employment opportunities for young adults in their community. State agencies could educate other members of the community about the risk of social isolation, what marginalization is, and how to assess fair practices concerning young adults with intellectual and other disabilities.

Future Research

More research could conduct how to

- assess and implement job preference for young adults with various types of disabilities,
- provide better community awareness of the social and psychological effects of social isolation for young adults with disabilities and their parents,
- promote accessibility to a variety of competitive workplaces,
- organize communities to provide safe, accessible transportation, and
- change policies that marginalize students with disabilities to support a more equitable learning community from elementary continuing up to 26-years of age.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this project were that the position paper provides topics of discussion about employing people with disabilities for competitive businesses. The position paper also includes local and national examples of businesses in which people with disabilities received training and employment. Using information gleaned from real cases, I was able to provide evidence of how business leaders could implement the contents of this position paper. Other strengths of this project were that the position paper revealed historical facts and benefits of employing people with disabilities in competitive workplaces.

The limitations of this project are that the position paper lacks a chapter on how to facilitate employment of young adults with disabilities. I did not write this section because businesses need to know why their establishment benefits from employing individuals with disabilities as a starting point for discussion. Then business could be more receptive to facilitating employment of individuals with a variety of disabilities.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I reflected on an alternative approach to address the employment of young adults with disabilities that incorporated university support. The university support staff could be graduate students and professors with a specialty in adult rehabilitation or transition services. The potential project could provide integrated project experiences to facilitate innovative approaches to promote the employability of people with disabilities. The project would take place in a controlled competitive workplace environment with

immediate vocational assistance from graduate students and professors. However, this alternative approach would not address the overall problem of businesses continuing to employ fewer people with disabilities than people without disabilities. For example, in the local study area, the unemployment rate was 3.5% for individuals without disabilities. However, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities was 9.9%.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

In this section, I describe my experiences with scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change. The project development and evaluation include my role as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

Scholarship

I learned that the content of the position paper required the same amount of research depth as the qualitative study. I was naïve to think that writing a position paper would be like writing a 10-page paper for a college-level class. I experienced excitement when I researched and found appropriate sources of information, but I also felt discouragement sometimes when I located pertinent sources of support. I also found that I needed to balance my written expression advocacy words with the need to spark interest in the business community.

Project Development and Evaluation

After discussion with my chairperson and methodologist, I decided that a position paper would meet a community and educational need. I addressed this need by writing about why businesses could hire individuals with disabilities instead of how companies could employ individuals with disabilities. It was necessary to answer the question “why”

because people with disabilities continue to be unemployed at a lower rate than people without disabilities, despite community volunteer and funding supports as well as state and federal legislation (Taylor, Henninger, & Mailick, 2015; Ticha, Hewitt, Nord, & Larson, 2013).

Scholar. I have developed better scholarly writing skills and increased my knowledge about how to write narratives so that different reader audiences will benefit from the content. I have also learned that procrastination is not my friend. However, when I changed my study environment to improve my concentration, I discovered that classical music provided a calming experience for writing. I continue to always be in a state of ‘catch-up’ because I work 30 hours a week and balance family member care with doctorate work. Also, I experienced occasional moments of disorganization and mental fatigue. From these weaknesses, I have learned that files on the computer needed to be concrete and accessible. I tend to be a free spirit, so I had to change many of my behaviors to accommodate the scholarly tasks of being a doctorate student.

Practitioner. I have become more aware of how I address postsecondary needs of high school students with disabilities and how to prepare them for competitive employment. I have been asking my students what their goal for employment is, and then based on that, I can make changes to their plan or continue with the same transition plan. I learned from research that these strategies promote self-determination and self-advocacy skills in my students.

Project developer. I enjoyed the project development stage of the dissertation process. The project development stage allowed me to dream and be creative. I found it

surprising that while the project development stage allotted moments of creativity, I continued to be mindful of alignment and how literature should guide but not dictate pertinent topics of discussion to write in the position paper. After all, this position paper was for the business community audience.

Leadership and Change

I have always been a leader for change in any workplace setting by integrating my speech-language pathologist skills of teaching individuals with disabilities how to independently communicate and socialize with peers, other employees, and other members of the community. I have a stable code of ethics to uphold the dignity of individuals. Over my twenty-plus years as a speech-language pathologist, I voiced my opinion about the imbalance of services to students who were living in poverty, were homeless, or could not fight for services on their own. Thus, I am always reading research articles and thinking of ways to improve the quality of life for individuals with intellectual and other disabilities through the promotion of inclusion into the community.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

A friend of mine who grew up in Africa said, “It takes a village to raise a child.” This Nigerian proverb has been translated multiple times into many languages, and it holds true to my own life. For, I discovered a village of supporters as I revised, analyzed, synthesized data and content multiple times, and discussed ways to implement the study in the community to promote social change. I believe I would have quit my scholarly journey without the support of family and close friends.

The importance of writing practice and editing skills became my most significant challenge due to the slow nature of these processes. I continued to revise and edit because I knew that writing is a process that takes years of practice. I have heard different perspectives from other doctoral students on what the terminal journey was for them—a test of endurance and persistence. To me, this doctoral program challenged my fears of academic failure, maintaining the balance between work, home, and academic life as well as the ability to push myself through episodes of mental fatigue. With this in mind, I would advise others to take the doctoral journey because it strengthens character and validates a person’s belief system about working together as a village of concerned citizens for the people in the community without a voice.

Conclusion

It takes a community of caring individuals to offer opportunities for social event participation, part-time or full-time employment, and job coaching to young adults with intellectual and other disabilities. Social change takes constant time and energy from progressive thinking community members that are will to transform old policies and procedures. Schools, outside agencies, and competitive workplace employers can be source community change and support to young adults with disabilities who want access to employment and community inclusion. Business leaders need to include workplace diversity training and initiate company-wide social events for employees with or without disabilities. A virtuous organization forms over time when employers promote mutual respect and provide a nurturing positive team experience for all employees with or without disabilities. As a result, top management in a virtuous organization actively

implements workplace personnel supports and makes accommodations for employees as a regular practice.

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Appendix A: The Project

Reasons for Businesses to Embrace Diversity in the Workplace

By

Elizabeth J. Strong

In a state in the Western United States, business development is thriving and benefiting from an unemployment rate of 3.5%. However, 9.9% of individuals with disabilities continue to be unemployed. Of the 9.9%, about 40.8% of individuals with disabilities work in sheltered workshops. The purpose of this topic is to provide businesses with background information and positive reasons for employing individuals with disabilities. The topics that address the problem of businesses not embracing diversity in the workplace are learning foundations tailored to businesses and answering why young people with disabilities would benefit from employment in competitive workplaces. These are the specific topics to address:

- ✚ the historical changes in the laws;
- ✚ the possible impact of the laws about employment;
- ✚ the myths and myth busters about the employment of individuals with disabilities;
- ✚ the application of hiring individuals with disabilities in different industries;
- ✚ examples of companies who are employing adults with disabilities; and
- ✚ resources in Utah for the inclusion of young people with disabilities within the Salt Lake City area.

The optimal outcome of learning more about this topic would be that businesses explore how to implement a plan to increase employment of individuals with disabilities.

Historical Changes in the Law

In 1840 the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Massachusetts opened to provide jobs for individuals with blindness. These individuals segregated from competitive job markets to create permanent job opportunities for them (Hoffman, 2013, NDRN, 2012). Unfortunately, in February of 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt issued an Executive Order stating that it was all right to pay individuals with disabilities below the minimum wage. Then in 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) passed and

created a special exemption for employers to provide payments that were significantly lower than minimum wage to workers with disabilities.



Sheltered workshops were popular from 1950's and 1960's. The Developmental Disability Assistance and Bill of Rights (DD Act) passed in 1963. The DD Act focused on support and opportunities for independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion of young people with disabilities in the community that emphasized employment. However, in 1966 PL 89-601 created a broader definition under the FLSA by increasing the number of workers that can be paid less than the federal minimum wage while

also increasing the number of sheltered workshops. Then in 1973, the US government passed the Rehabilitation Act which provided a clear emphasis on the importance of competitive wages for all types of individuals with disabilities (PL 93-112, 1973). In 1986, the FLSA amended again, and this amendment removed any minimum wage floor for workers with disabilities which could lead to employers exploiting their employees with disabilities. In 1990, the U.S Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Congress enacted the ADA to eliminate discrimination, segregation and ensured that individuals with disabilities fully participated in all that society had to offer them.

Furthermore, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* held that the ADA required the removal of individuals with disabilities from institutional settings and into communities if possible (Hoffman, 2013; Novak, 2015). In 1999, Justice O'Connor and other justices acknowledged two reasons why institutionalization did not fulfill the purposes of the ADA:



1. "Institutional placement" of individuals with disabilities who can "handle and benefit from community settings perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that [they] are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life" (*Olmstead v. L. C.*, 527 U.S. 581,600, 1999).

2. Institutionalization "severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment" (*Olmstead v. L. C.*, 527 U.S. 581, 601, 1999).

Impact of the Laws

Despite the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) agreement with the courts; the states continued to access money that kept sheltered settings for individuals with disabilities. As a result, the current Social Security Law does not address employment opportunities that are integrated and in the community settings (Hoffman, 2013). Therefore, employers of sheltered workshops pay subminimum wages to



individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the Department of Labor (DOL) Wage and Hour Division was given the authority to issue certificates to employers who allowed employers to pay less than the average wage if a worker's disability interfered with their productivity or earning capacity on the job. Consequently, these individuals with disabilities remain dependent on public benefits and subsidies because their employers pay less than the minimum wage and do not provide benefits (NDRN, 2012).

The workplace is not to be in a segregated setting. The NDRN (2012) advocated for customized employment instead of sheltered workshops. The model for customized employment determined the strengths and interests of the individual with a disability, and the needs of the employer. The employer's customized job addressed actual tasks that needed completion in the workplace. These employers also individually negotiated and developed reasonable accommodations and support necessary for an individual to perform their job. Obviously, these companies respected employees with disabilities skills, preferences, and interests.

The NDRN continued to argue that sheltered workshops lead to no end. The NDRN (2012) claimed that:

1. Job training should not take 10 to 20 years to get a job, especially if the job does not match the preferences, skills, and interests of the individual with disabilities.
2. There are limited contracts and types of jobs at sheltered workshops. Individuals with intellectual and other disabilities spend their day doing small challenge work such as sorting, collating, labeling, folding, mailing, sewing, subassembly, heat sealing, hand packaging which are bulk services for businesses (Migliore, Grossi, Mank, & Rogan, 2008).
3. Most of the job experiences entail bench work and do not promote self-determination, self-direction or skill development.
4. Sometimes the environment that these individuals work in does not take into consideration the persons' disabilities. For example, an individual with ASD could have a difficult time working in the crowded and busy room or an individual with hearing impairment placed in loud and dusty industrial setting.
5. Sheltered workshops usually keep their best employee when these employees would match a job in competitive employment.

Although individuals with disabilities are starting to work in new competitive employment sites; there continue to be more segregated settings. The NDRN (2012) calculated that for every one person disability working in competitive employment, there are three other persons with disabilities working in a sheltered workshop. However, Novak (2015) reported that there had been some changes in the federal Medicaid rules that created financial incentives for states to rebalance their long-term support service systems towards entrepreneurship or competitive workplaces. Although Rinaldi (2014) showed successful outcomes of competitive workplace



partnerships with individuals with disabilities in the community, there continues to be a gap in employment for adults with disabilities. Rinaldi (2014) also indicated that several sheltered workshops and facility-based day programs in numerous states and communities unnecessarily segregated individuals with disabilities which violated of the ADA. Since 2011 the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has been enforcing the ADA's mandate in the *Olmstead* case. For example, the DOJ (2014) discovered that thousands of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities were spending the majority of their day receiving segregated services. And these individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities were found to have the capability to perform at an integrated work site in the community. As result of DOJ's discovery, Rhode Island has a ten-year agreement to provide (a) supported employment jobs for approximately 2,000 transition-age youths and adults and (b) prepared career preparation experience—mentoring, job site visits, and internships for integrated employment at competitive wages (Novak, 2015).

Our Company Would like to Offer you a Job

The idea of hiring an individual with disabilities is widely tolerated but nationally not accepted by all community members. Unfortunately, young people with disabilities who received



the government supported employment services are earning a minimum wage and only 20 to 25 hours a week of employment. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is legislation that was specifically designed to help intellectual, and development disabilities job seekers access employment, education, training, and supportive services. Under this bill, states have 10 years to resolve the following four ADA violations:

1. Individuals with disabilities will receive assistance with finding jobs in communities that provided minimum wages and offered the maximum number of hours consistent with the employee's abilities.
2. Individuals with disabilities will receive recreational and educational support for non-work activities in the community.
3. High school students with intellectual or developmental disabilities will prepare for competitive employment through internships and mentoring programs.
4. The public funds would shift from sheltered settings to services in integrated settings (McLain & Walus, 2015).

Business Learning Foundations For Success

Businesses with management who buy into the idea of a diversified workplace need a learning foundation to facilitate the transformation of all employees. Also, business management needs to possess personal reflection, leadership, and collaboration skills for facilitation of workplace diversity. Such a program could be possible with the following learning foundations: (a) transformation theory, (b) colearning theory, (c) coaching, and (d) mutual respect. I combined educational and business frameworks to provide a

foundation or a method of thinking for the implementation of increasing employment of individuals with disabilities.

Transformation of the Business

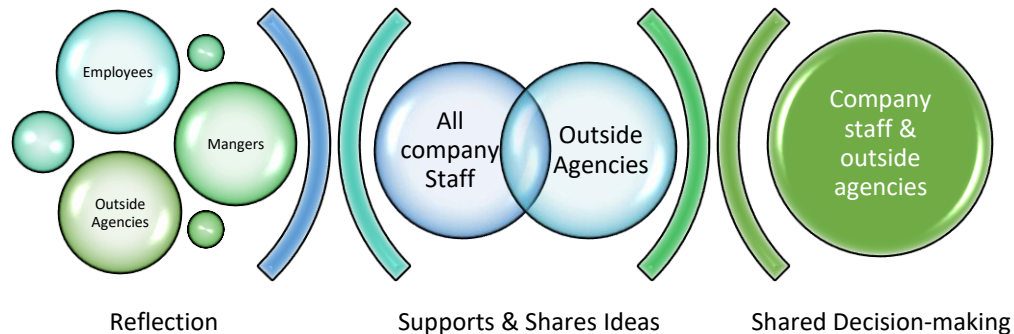
Transformation does not occur instantly. Every employee goes through an individual transformation while adjusting to changes within the workplace. There can be a coach who guided the employees with diversity training and a support system within the business that allows all employees to adjust to a more diverse workplace at the employees' own pace. For example, the H.R. department personnel might provide employees with or without disabilities an opportunity to reflect upon this new information. And the H.R. department of businesses might have internal supports available to their employees as they move through these reflective transitions.



Colearning Experiences at all Levels

Colearning environments equalize power relationships within a business. At first, all managers within a business reflect upon their observations and listen to all employees and outside agency supports. After quiet observation, all employees with or without disabilities, managers, and outside agency supports and share ideas on how to improve work relationships and company productivity. The managers reframe from staged sessions. Instead, these sessions occur naturally throughout the workday. Then over time, a relationship builds between management and employees with or without disabilities

where all share decision-making. (See below for colearning ideas for businesses).

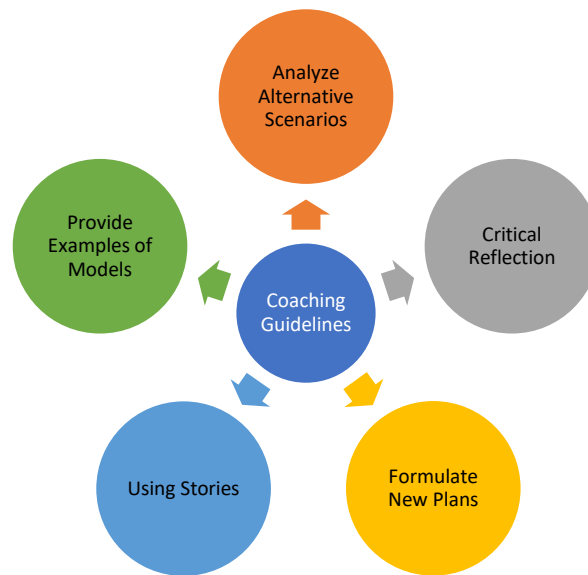


Coaching

After businesses hire young adults with disabilities, companies could want more instructions from different coaching sources—a university, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and other support personnel—occupational, physical, communication, or vision therapists. These guidelines from various sources would be similar to what an employee with or without disabilities needs. The coach guides the employer and employees through disorienting dilemmas by

- ✚ helping the employees think through their dilemmas by encouraging critical reflection to help identify frames of reference;
- ✚ using stories or asking for examples from the employees that illustrate how the current predicament is not remarkable and that there is no need to feel isolated;
- ✚ helping the individual analyze a variety of interpretations and alternative scenarios, the potential roles, and relationships;
- ✚ assisting the employees to formulate plans to deal with new realities, especially while trying out new responsibilities and building new relationships; and
- ✚ providing examples of models for functioning within the perspective or provide opportunities for role play (Cox, 2015).

These guidelines fall into no particular order.



Coaching guidelines for businesses

Mutual Respect for All

Relationships need to be build up over time to achieve trust between the employer, employees with or without disabilities, and outside agency supports. There also needs to be a shared focus on ‘working with’ instead of ‘doing for’ (Rutherford et al., 2011). The companies involved in a business transformation should be willing to take risks and to push the boundaries of bureaucratic and traditional practices. Business organizations who participate in social transformation projects demonstrate a sense of innate worth and dignity of all people.

Myths about Hiring an Individual with a Disability

Some business managers continue to have outdated perceptions about hiring individuals with disabilities. A study by Kaye et al. (2011) explored why some employers do not employ individuals with disabilities. These researchers distributed questionnaires to human resource professionals and managers working at ADA-recalcitrant organizations, and a total of 463 respondents completed the survey. According to their study data, some of the respondents did not hire individuals with disabilities because they were concerned about the

- cost of accommodations;
- lack of awareness as to how to manage workers with disabilities and their accommodation needs; and

- fear of being stuck being stuck with a worker who cannot be disciplined or fired due to fear of a possible lawsuit.

However, 70% of the respondents were concerned about (a) procedures to assess an applicant's ability to perform job tasks, (b) the extra supervisory time, (c) the equality of skills performance to a person without disabilities, and (d) professional limitations on how to interview an applicant with disabilities.



A more recent literature review done by Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis (2013) showed that the acceptance of individuals with disabilities in workplace influenced the characteristics of the coworkers, of the individuals with disabilities, and of the employer or organization. Their literature review provided a possible characteristic explanation as to why 70% of the respondents in the Kaye et al. (2011) study showed concerns about hiring individuals with disabilities. In fact, Vornholt et al. (2013) literature review showed how gender, age, and education influenced coworkers' attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. For example, co-workers with lower levels of education and older males were more negative about working with individuals with disabilities. At the same time, the co-workers who were highly educated and younger females did not exhibit as much social distance from individuals with disabilities. However, there needs to be more empirical research in this area to be conclusive. Overall, the competency of the individual with disabilities and the lack of knowledge about the individuals' disability appeared to be a barrier for employment, but there was a positive paradigm shift as

managers and co-workers became educated through training (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2015; Vornholt et al., 2013).

Myth Busters

Researchers have been asking why businesses continue not to hire or start to hire individuals with disabilities. Erickson et al. (2014) investigated how employers of companies perceived the hiring individuals with disabilities and whether or not their policies and procedures were working for these companies. Specifically, these researchers conducted a survey study in 2011 of employer views on employment barriers for individuals with disabilities and compared that data to a previous Cornell/SHRM study completed in 1998. Erickson et al. (2014) reported that:

1. A few companies included individuals with disabilities in their diversity and inclusion plans that required: (a) subcontractors to follow disability nondiscrimination requirements, (b) relationship development with community organizations, (c) providing training on disability awareness and nondiscrimination, (d) a procedure for establishing a grievance for reasonable accommodations, (e) allowances for enough time left for an extended period, (f) a specific person or office that designated accommodations, (g) flexible work arrangements, and (h) a return to work/disability management program.
2. Fewer employers reported organizational barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities.
3. The cost of accommodations for individuals with disabilities remained a concern for companies.
4. Fewer employers continued to be concerned about attitudes/stereotypes, supervisor knowledge of accommodations, cost of training, or supervision were a barrier to employment of individuals with disabilities.
5. While the process of experience or training continued to be a high concern for some employers; fewer employers than those 15 years ago saw lack of related experience or training among individuals with disabilities as an issue.

Is Hiring Individuals with Disabilities Applicable to Different Industries?

Due to the different types of industry, company managers had different concerns about hiring individuals with disabilities. However, researchers asserted that coworkers and supervisors who had previously worked and hired individuals with disabilities had fewer concerns on the job as compared to other workers and supervisors who had not worked with individuals with disabilities. Houtenville and Kalargyrou (2015) investigated perspectives of companies in the hospitality industry in comparison with employers of

other industries about employing individuals with disabilities. These researchers used data analysis from a 2008 ODEP survey of Employer Perspectives on the Employment of Young people with disabilities that asked a sample of 3,797 companies about recruiting, hiring, retention, and advancement issues. Houtenville and Kalargyrou (2015), Domzal, Houtenville, and Sharma (2008), and Diksa and Roger (1996) confirmed that service-producing companies would be more likely to hire individuals with disabilities than goods-producing companies. At the same time, the employers in service-producing companies such as leisure and hospitality were more likely to identify the customers' attitudes towards frontline employees with disabilities as a challenge for hiring individuals with disabilities. In contrast, Kou and Kalargyrou (2014) studied how customers at a restaurant served by individuals with disabilities perceived their dining experience.

Businesses considered customer attitudes and workplace accommodations. Each business type had a different perception. Meinert (2012) showed that 56% of companies end up paying nothing towards accommodations, and if companies do pay for accommodations, it is usually a one-time expenditure of US \$500. However, not all industries reported the same perception about the cost of compensation for employees with disabilities. The construction, manufacturing, transportation, and warehousing industries were most concerned about workers' compensation



costs. According to Kalargyrou (2014), a Walgreen's warehouse supervisor reported that employees with disabilities had lower injury and turnover rates than other employees without disabilities. Some researchers and scholars have provided successful examples of workplace scenarios where a company has hired a person with a disability. I listed a few

fears and solutions for businesses (Peck and Kirkbride, 2001). The customers showed moderately active purchase intention for restaurants that employed a significant amount of service staff with disabilities, but patrons chose this type of dining experience with family and friends instead of business or romantic occasions.

Fear of Additional Supervision and Loss of Productivity

Companies are concerned about particular attention devoted to persons with disabilities and about the competitive nature of workplace productivity.

Additional Supervision

A company hired an employee with a developmental disability as a greeter. The company told the vocation rehabilitation agency that they would do all the training.

Unfortunately, the company provided minimal training, and the employee started to be unsuccessful at her job. After meetings with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the company allowed the VR specialist to provide structured training for the employee with a developmental disability. Peck and Kirkbride reported that this employee continued to work for this company for seven years or more.



Productivity of Employee

A company hired an employee with deafness to type for a data entry department. The employee with deafness productivity standards was the same as other employees without disabilities. This employee with deafness was not distracted by other workers and produced better than other employees without deafness.

The Fear of Being Stuck Forever.

Companies want to have the options of hiring qualified employees and of terminating employees when they are not performing duties of the job.

The Right to Terminate an Employee with Disabilities

An individual with a developmental disability worked in a cafeteria. The employee worked as a dishwasher and did general cleaning. The employee received job coaching for two weeks. After the job coach left, the employee had difficulty keeping up with the job schedule. The employer provided a schedule to assist the employee with knowing what the duties were of the job. The employee with developmental disability kept up with the job duties after the employer's intervention for a couple of months. Unfortunately, the employee started to show up late for work, and the employer conferenced with the

employee about arriving on time for work. The employee continued to arrive late for a couple of months and then was terminated by the employer.

Most individuals with a disability do not want to be marginalized by their employers. If an employer were to terminate an employee without a disability for the same behavior, then the employer should do the same for an employee with a disability.

The Fear of Damaged Goods

Companies do not want to be involved with potential risks where they can lose profitability. The employer needs to know that the employee will be an asset to their company. As mentioned earlier, the employee with deafness was an asset to a data entry business because the employee was not distracted noise and other employee conversations. Another scenario to consider would be to hire an individual with developmental disabilities who has limited reading skills to work in an office setting to shred highly sensitive documents. Instead of considering the limitations of an individual with a disability as damaged goods, companies have an opportunity to provide jobs to individuals with disabilities because these individuals have assets and abilities that other employees without disabilities do not possess.



Further Evidence for Hiring Individuals with Disabilities

Youth with disabilities who attend paid on-site workplace experience before they graduate from high school have a better chance at being employed post-school. Many corporations are participating in programs to provide paid work internships throughout the United States. This section will highlight a few of those programs.

Marriott Corporation.

The Marriott Foundation for Young people with disabilities established the program Bridges in 1989. Bridges have served nearly 20,000 youth with disabilities across these cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Oakland, and San Francisco (Simonsen, Fabian, & Luecking, 2015). Each state has different funding models that combine local, state, federal, and private funding. The Bridges program implements standardized interventions with a national office. The Marriott Corporation provided the staff oversight, mandatory training to human resources and managers, supervisory guidance, and policies and procedures for the program and staff performance. Bridges accept approximately 20 students into each of their designated city programs. Each student is tracked within a data management system after completing the two-year Bridges program (Simonsen et al., 2015).

Benefits discovered by corporations. The Marriott Corporation found that the turn-over rate had dropped from 50% to 32% after they started to hire adults with disabilities. Walmart experienced a similar low turn-over rate and a lower rate of injuries (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2015). Another corporation, Walgreens, has employees with disabilities and employees without disability work alongside each other and receive the same pay scale. Forty percent of the Walgreens workforce were young people with disabilities. Walgreens even adapted the South Carolina factory to make it more handicapped accessible, which has benefited both employees with or without disabilities (NDRN, 2012). Some of the Walgreens' adaptations at their South Carolina plant were adjustable workstations and clear icon-driven touch screen computers. They also created picture signs that showed individuals with physical, cognitive, intellectual, and mental disabilities how to perform various jobs. Walgreens did not keep their diversity in the workplace a secret from other companies. Instead, Walgreens shared their program processes with other retailers (NDRN, 2012).

Social Enterprise Business. Social enterprises are non-profit organizations that can be used to increase employment opportunities for young people with disabilities. The main goal of a social enterprise is to maintain profitability and have a social impact. The nonprofit board of directors governed these social enterprises. I will provide a brief



overview of two social enterprises: Hudson Community Enterprises (HCE) and the Center for Head Injury Services (CHIS). Katz (2014), the author of this article on CHIS, worked for the Kessler Foundation. The Kessler Foundation invested \$487,700 in seed funding to HCE and provided an additional no-interest loan of \$250,000.

Hudson Community Enterprises. HCE in Jersey City, New Jersey, operates a group of social enterprises that contracts out to other businesses and performs the following jobs: (a) digital mail management, (b) document imaging, and (c) document shredding. In 1957, HCE started that focused on job preparation for individuals with disabilities. their business model focus to an developed social enterprises that individuals with disabilities started up a shredding company, because a shredding company potential and employment for a people with disabilities. As the grew, HCE's customers began to scanning documents. In the year two companies, Metro Scanning. The Metro Scanning



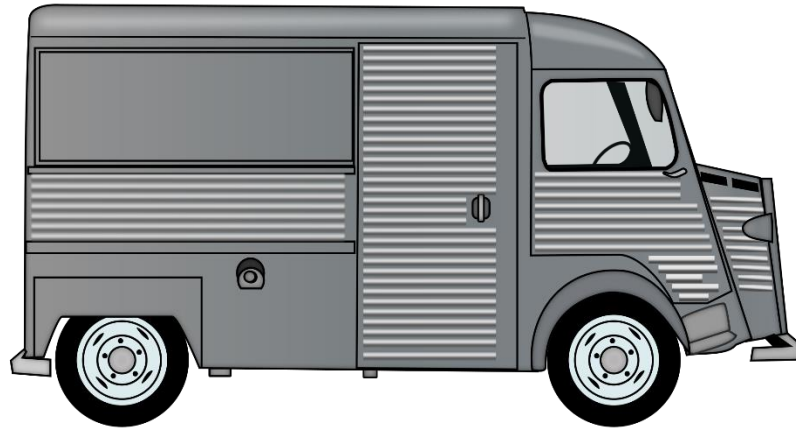
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employees to have graduated from a nine-week document imaging specialist training; such training required a seventh-grade reading level and a satisfactory job performance.

In 2008, HCE launched another social enterprise called Metro Digital Mail Management (MDMM). The MDMM company used high-speed scanners to open envelopes, capture images, classify data and store contents on a secure portal. Due to market demand, MDMM expanded their social enterprise business by adding a microfiche laboratory in 2012. Eighty-one percent of HCE's workforce are individuals with disabilities. The entry-level pay is between \$8.50 to \$10.50 per hour with productivity incentives that can raise the wage to \$14.00 per hour. Full-time employees received full benefits, and part-time employees received state-mandated benefits. In 2013, HCE grossed \$4.3 million and was able to account for 32% of overall income which means that HCE is financially self-sustaining.

The Center for Head Injury Services (CHIS). The CHIS is located in St. Louis, MO. CHIS provided vocational placement for individuals with head injuries and other neurological impairments. The U.S. economic downturn caused CHIS to diversify occupational services into the culinary field. Destination Desserts (DD) employees with head injuries and other neurological impairments baked cookies and delivered them hot and fresh as a nightly snack to the college students. The job skills for a bakery required mixing, baking, ordering, shipping, and cashiering skills, which allowed DD to accommodate different skill levels.

In 2012, DD received a planning grant from Kessler Foundation for \$50,000. DD started to sell cookies, cupcakes, and brownies from a food truck at events and office parks throughout St. Louis and discontinued product delivery. During the test phase of the DD business, the company grossed \$30,000 in revenue. Kessler Foundation rewarded the Destination Desserts' success with a \$500,000 grant. With this grant, DD purchased and renovated a 14-foot box truck to CHIS's specifications. They opened their mobile bakery business in May of 2013. The DD bakery served fruit smoothies, coffee, latte, cupcakes, breakfast pastries, and cookies.



DD trained all employees in food handling and safety, essential recipe production, and product finishing. The employees rotate between the following workstations: measuring, mixing, baking, glazing, decorating, packaging, cleanup, and sanitation. Each employee learns customer service skills by working directly with the public as trainees on the food truck. The employees earned an entry-level pay of \$7.35 per hour. As of 2013 Destination Desserts was financially self-sustaining because DD projected to gross \$100,000, and their net revenue was projected to be \$30,000.

Utah Resources for Competitive Workplaces for Individuals with Disabilities

Utah has the lowest number of young people with disabilities unemployed. Comparatively, West Virginia has the highest number of young people with disabilities unemployed. The state of West Virginia has an unemployment rate of 19.5% for young people with disabilities whereas the state of Utah has an unemployment rate of 9.9% for young people with disabilities (Kraus, 2017). In Utah, 40.8% of young people with disabilities worked with other individuals with disabilities, and 77.1% of young people with disabilities worked with individuals without disabilities (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2016). These positive statistics did not occur overnight. Community members in Utah advocated for government programs and businesses to establish a diversified workforce that included young people with disabilities.

Utah's Model Employer Government Activities



In 2007, former Governor Jon Huntsman issued an Executive Order, *Designating the Intent of Utah State Government to Be the Model Employer for People with Disabilities* (EO 2007-0013, 2007). The EO 2007-0013 required that the Utah Department of Human Resources (UDHR) to do more, and they (a) conducted an outreach campaign for young people with disabilities, (b) surveyed hard-to-fill positions, (c) recruited young people with disabilities to fill these areas,

and (d) created a task force to explore additional strategies to increase the employment of young people with disabilities within state government. To expedite the former Governor Jon Huntsman's EO 2007-0013, Governor Gary R. Herbert signed House Bill 17 which established the Alternative State Application Process (ASAP). Under the direction of the UDHR, the bill required the agency to establish rules and policies for the facilitating of the executive branch agencies to identify qualified candidates with disabilities (House Bill 17, 2012). Governor Herbert did not sign the H.B 17 until 2012 because the H.B. 17 went through legislature review. The program, ASAP actually started-up in 2011. The ASAP program provided opportunities for qualified candidates with disabilities to fill vacant positions for a six-month trial examination period. When the examination period finished, then the worker with disabilities was placed in the position and provided with the state's customary probation period.

Utah businesses are opening doors for work. Many Utah businesses modeled recruiting, hiring, accommodating, and advancing young people with disabilities. Some of these businesses participated in the *Think Beyond the Label* campaign to promote hiring and retaining of employees with disabilities. Some of the Utah businesses that are part of the *Think Beyond the Label* are Goldman Sachs, Salt Lake City, Utah World Trade Center, UPS, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, Work Ability, and the Salt Lake Chamber-Utah Business Employer Team (Website Utah.gov Services, 2010) (See table on page 222). Recently, a Howdy Homemade Ice Cream opened to employ adults with disabilities.

Howdy homemade ice cream. On September 2, 2017, the Nielson family opened a franchise that employs adults with special needs. Chris Nielson, the father of a young adult son with a disability and a general contractor by trade, reached out to Tom Landis,

the owner of an ice cream restaurant in Dallas, Texas, who employed adults with disabilities. Tom Landis, the owner of the franchise Howdy Homemade, shared how the restaurant business has “quick turnover and low employee morale” (Wilde, 2017, p. C1).



Tom Landis also explained that business could not be primarily about the “feel good aspects” because “there are people out there who believe a business that mostly employs adults with disabilities is unachievable. Instead, the employees and I at Howdy Homemade have to do better” (Fox News, July 2016). Chris Nielson added,

Our main goal and hope are that people recognize exactly what our employees can do instead of what they can't do. I think when a disability or a special need comes up, often our mind starts running on to what are the limitations or the disabilities instead of thinking about (how) someone with ASD, they have great retention skills, and someone with Down syndrome, they're just naturally the happiest and loving people that you come across (Wilde, 2017, p C1).

Therefore, individuals with disabilities can perform just as well as individuals without disabilities in the workplace when introduced to tasks that highlight their strengths.

Resources for Businesses Owners Who Are Open to Hiring Individuals with Disabilities

Organization	Description	Contact information
Think Beyond the Label	Promotes hiring and training of young people with disabilities	801-887-9388 or at cruddell@utah.gov
Disability Friendly Business	A business completes accessibility assessment and commits to training employees	Local Chamber of Commerce or Governor's Committee on Employment of Young people with disabilities at 801-887-9392
Utah's Business Relations Team	Provides consultation, training to businesses at no cost	PWDNET Business Relations Team at (801) 887-9538 or at leahlobato@utah.gov .
The Utah Targeted Tax Credit – TC-40	Given to a business that hires individuals with severe disabilities	801- 538-4498 or at tljones@utah.gov .
SSDI Work Incentives	Special rules make it possible for young people with disabilities receiving SSDI or SSI to work and still receive a monthly payment. Different rules apply to each program.	1-800 -772-1213 or at https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-work-ussi.htm

Note: SSDI provides benefits to individuals with disabilities who are insured by worker contributions to the Social Security trust fund. SSI program makes cash assistance payments to individuals who are aged, blind or have a disability. The program is based on family need and considers both income and resources.

Summary of Unrealistic Perception of Individuals with Disabilities

Many businesses hire individuals with disabilities. In fact, some of these businesses are huge companies who have a CEO committed to accepting and implementing work programs for individuals with disabilities. Some of these companies are Ford Motor Company, IBM, Microsoft, SunTrust Bank, AT & T, Boeing, Wells Fargo, Johnson & Johnson, Federal Express, Proctor & Gamble, Honeywell, and Caterpillar. To these companies, young people with disabilities are productive and contribute to the success of the company. The public continues to remain unconvinced. Green and Brooke (2001) stated that negative stereotypes by the media had created an unrealistic perception of young people with disabilities. In the past, the media portrayed workers with disabilities as less productive than coworkers. The media also showed workers with disabilities as needing a different set of work standards, which cost the company large sums of money (Green & Brooke, 2001). Meanwhile, company leaders who have hired individuals with disabilities have realized that such a decision benefited their community and at the same time have met their business needs.

Conclusion

The myths about hiring individuals with disabilities created obstacles for diversity in the workplace. Some business changed their company culture to include diversity. These businesses find opportunities within their company where employees with disabilities perform jobs that highlight their strengths. Furthermore, the history of legislation and statues in support of individuals with disabilities working in competitive workplaces showed how state funding and economics could adversely or inversely affect the ability for businesses to employ individuals with disabilities. The learning foundations illustrated by these conceptual frameworks—transformation theory, colearning, coaching, and mutual respect—also guided employees with or without disabilities as businesses transform into a more diversified workplace. In Utah, businesses continue to organize competitive workplace employment more than sheltered workshop employment for individuals with disabilities. Also, businesses that hire individuals with disabilities provide management and employer support. In fact, the companies that hire individuals with disabilities advocate for all their employees. These businesses share models on how to diversify the workplace and make accommodations for all employees with other businesses.



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Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Questions

Teaching Methodologies, Pedagogy, and Work Experience

1. What do you think your son/daughter learned from their special education both at school and in a transition program and after they aged-out of a transition program?
2. Did there seem to be different types of teaching philosophies from high school to transition and post-transition to aging out of a transition program?
3. Do you think work experiences helped you son/daughter find employment during and after post-transition programs?
4. What type of work experience did they have?
5. Why were these experiences important?

Teachers have Limited Knowledge of Resources

6. Do you think teachers know how to locate resources in the community? Can you give a couple of examples?

Demographic Variables (gender, race/ethnicity, disability)

7. I have a few census type questions. Is your young adult son/daughter a female or male?
8. What is your race/ethnicity?
9. What classification did the IEP teams or disability services make?

Self-Determination, Communication, and Self-Care

10. Do you think communication skills and self-care skills have impacted your son/daughter?
11. How have these skills impacted their lives?
12. Does your son/daughter have adequate self-determination skills and if so what types of skills do they have?

Family Expectations and Monetary Resources

13. What expectations did you have about school programs, transition programs, and aging out programs?
14. Did any of these programs meet your expectations?
15. If yes or no, explain why or why not they did not meet your expectations?
16. Did you expect more or less monetary support from agencies or non-profit organizations and why?

**Lack of Understanding of How Transition Services implementation occurs
(sheltered/non-sheltered workshops, student-focused planning)**

17. Describe the type of program(s) or employment (without saying where/who) that your son/daughter participate in or work at in the community? Include any high school program.
18. How long has he/she worked at these facilities?

Parents as Primary Advocates

19. Do you consider yourself an advocate for your child?
20. Please describe what being an advocate is to you? Without saying specifics (name, address, persons involved), describe some of your advocacy experiences

Appendix C: Dependability Strategy

To promote trustworthiness, I evaluated the effectiveness of the interview process after each interview by using a dependability strategy that was suggested by Hollway and Jefferson (2000):

1. What did I notice? I will implement this question by constantly searching for discrepancies in data collection and data analysis. Thus, I will not ignore relevant points of view.
2. Why did I notice what I noticed? When I ask myself this question, I will be reflecting upon what I will be observing and hearing. I will use this strategy to think critically.
3. How can I interpret what I noticed? I will accomplish this reflection by spending appropriate amounts of time with participants to build rapport and trust.
4. How can I know that my interpretation is the "right" one? I will know my interpretation is correct by analyzing participant responses from the conceptual framework of CDT, reflecting upon their responses, and acknowledging limitations in the study.