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# Instructors' Perceptions of Postsecondary Classes of Students with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder Enrolled in Transition Programs

Lisa Kemp

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College of Education  
Doctorate of Education Program

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Instructors' Perceptions of Postsecondary Classes of Students  
with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder Enrolled in Transition Programs

Concordia University–Portland

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

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## **Abstract**

Throughout the United States, many school districts offer transition program services for students with disabilities. Some of the transition services include students who are learning social, academic, and vocational skills to live independently. Some students who are enrolled in transition programs may have High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HASD) and could be looking for postsecondary classes while enrolled in transition programs. The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to explore how instructors perceive the postsecondary classes of students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Three research questions that guided this intrinsic case study: (a) How do instructors perceive postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?; (b) What benefits do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?; and (c) What challenges do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs? Triangulation within this study includes six one-on-one interviews, six qualitative survey questions, and member checking. Five of the instructors' perceptions indicated postsecondary classes do exist for students with HASD students while enrolled in transition programs. Only one out of the six participants displayed uncertain perceptions regarding postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Crucial findings from this intrinsic case study could help postsecondary institutions and transition programs improve postsecondary programming for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

*Keywords:* high functioning autism spectrum disorder, perceptions, postsecondary classes, transition program

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my son Alexander. You have been an inspiration since the day you were born. Thank you for this rewarding and wonderful journey. This dissertation is also dedicated to the hundreds of families raising a son or daughter with high functioning autism spectrum disorder.

## **Acknowledgements**

To my faculty chair, Dr. Christopher Maddox, who guided me every step of the way. Thank you for your unbridled patience to help me persevere. You have inspired me to become a better learner and student. I hope to inspire other students as you have inspired me. To Dr. Karen Ellefsen and Dr. Patricia Garcia, your helpful critiques and support of my proposal helped me to become a better writer and achieve my dream of obtaining my doctorate. To all of those at Concordia University Portland, thank you for all your technical support and guidance during my years as a doctoral candidate.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The number of cases of individuals with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HASD) has increased over the years; with an increase in prevalence of those with HASD, transition programs and postsecondary institutions may expect an increase of enrollment of HASD students (Kogan et al., 2009; Zablotzky, Black, Maenner, Schieve, & Blumberg, 2015). Transition programs serve students ages 18 to 21 with different learning disabilities to help prepare them for employment, independence, and to participate in the community (Szidon, Ruppard, & Smith, 2015). With a possible increase of those with HASD, more students could be looking for postsecondary classes while enrolled in transition programs. The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to explore instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes of students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. The first chapter will include the relevance of transition programs, as well as provide a problem statement and a purpose of the study as it relates to students with HASD.

### **Background and Conceptual Framework**

There are many school districts in the United States that offer transition programs for students with disabilities. Transition programs provide a number of different services that could include skill building, self-advocacy, and employment. (Gothberg, Peterson, Peak, & Sedaghat, 2015; Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011; Szidon et al., 2015). If these program classes did not exist for students with disabilities, it could be difficult for these students to become successful, independent adults (Burgess & Cimera, 2014). One of the disabilities affecting adults is HASD (Cimera, Burgess, & Wiley, 2013). With an increase in prevalence of those with HASD, transition programs and postsecondary institutions could expect an increase of enrollment of students with HASD (Kogan et al., 2009; Zablotzky et al., 2015).

The postsecondary classes that are extended to students could vary depending on the transition program (Pearman, Elliott, & Aborn, 2004). Not all transition programs offer similar postsecondary classes due to the number of adults with varying abilities (Everson & Moon, 1987). Some students with HASD enrolled in transition programs could have the aptitude to meet the demands of postsecondary classes; if there are students with HASD who are looking for additional postsecondary classes, the instructors' biases could elucidate that postsecondary classes extended to HASD students are limited (Adreon & Durocher, 2007).

The theories presented by Gardner (1983), Cross (1981), and Schlossberg (1981), and how they directly relate to this study, will be explored in Chapter 2. Although these theorists did not implement formal programing for HASD students, some aspects of their theories have been implemented in transition programs. Gardner (1983) introduced the theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) where human intelligence is not just a reflected in Intelligence Quotient (IQ); human intelligence uses a much wider set of competences and asserts that an individual could demonstrate a particular aptitude but not necessarily demonstrate a comparable ability. The conceptual framework developed by Cross (1981) and Schlossberg (1981) constructed a theory-based research design of transition. The theory-based model created by Cross (1971) is called the Life Cycle Phase, and demonstrated the progression of adult development depicting the transitional years that highlight impact performance. The theory developed by Schlossberg is a model for analyzing human transition adaptations of transitions that would define life-changing events that may include high school graduation, professional careers, and marriage.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Transition programs assist students in social, academic, and vocational skills to become productive members of society (Gothberg, Peterson, Peak, & Sedaghat, 2015; Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011; Szidon et al., 2015). Some students who enroll in transition programs have varying abilities of basic skills in acquisition and knowledge; however, other students diagnosed with HASD may have a higher intellect and could be looking for classes at the postsecondary level. Transition programs focus on helping students develop self-advocacy and social skills to live independently (Kohler & Field, 2003). Transition programs could be depriving HASD students of limited postsecondary classes. The problem is teachers in transition programs may not properly address the students' academic abilities of HASD students who may be looking opportunities to enroll in postsecondary classes.

## **Purpose of the Study**

There are some students in transition programs with varying abilities; some students are learning basic skills in cooking, cleaning, social skills, and finances while other students have mastered such skills. Some students who may have mastered such skills could have HASD and could be looking for additional postsecondary classes that extend beyond independent living and social skills; these students may want to know what colleges and universities could offer them. The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to explore how instructors perceive postsecondary classes for students with HASD who are enrolled in transition programs.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions of this study:

1. How do instructors perceive postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?

2. What benefits do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?
3. What challenges do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?

### **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

Qualitative research is used to obtain a better understanding of a problem (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Latham, 2016). It is also used to uncover a deeper meaning of possible truths behind certain theories (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Latham, 2016). According to Yin (2018), an intrinsic case study involves exploration or investigation of a particular phenomenon. To determine the validity of inquiry of this qualitative study, I have chosen to triangulate the data to help answer three research questions. I triangulated the data using six one-on-one open-ended interview questions, eight open-ended survey questions, and member checking. By triangulating the data, I was able to cross validate the data to help answer the main research question. The relevance of this intrinsic case study is to understand instructors' perceptions who teach transition program students with HASD. This intrinsic case study could offer an audience a general comprehension and understanding in order to gain greater insight of the study (Stack, 2010).

According to Yin (2018), most case studies are investigational studies that rely on statistical instruments and analysis. I used an intrinsic case study to examine a specific population. A quantitative or mixed could have been used to reveal causal links in social or hard sciences. Using grounded theory was considered as a qualitative method but I do not need to prove an existing theory or the discovery of emergent data patterns and do not require statistical procedures for my data analysis.

The reason for the interviews needed in this intrinsic case study is to gather a detailed description of instructors' perceptions to answer the main research question (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). Responses from eight qualitative questions using Qualtrics could offer additional data to confirm credibility. The data from one-on-one interviews and qualitative survey responses could reveal a broader range of personal feelings, perceptions, and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2013).

This intrinsic case study could be crucial to reform educational practices with transition programs and postsecondary institutions for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. According to Levinson and Ohler (1998), with the prevalence of HASD on the rise postsecondary colleges and transition programs could help students with HASD increase their possibilities of obtaining a postsecondary education. To increase postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs, educational professionals working in postsecondary and transition program environments could collaborate with other postsecondary intuitions that may have established successful postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. This intrinsic case study could produce findings to reform current practices at postsecondary colleges and transition programs for all students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Andragogical Learning:* Assumptions and principles that have been applied to adult learning claiming and claims adult learners learn differently than children (Knowles, 1984).

*Asperger's Syndrome:* Appearing on the high end of the autism spectrum. Will possess restricted range of interests, repetitive behaviors, and delayed motor development, and a high-specialized field of interest (Jackel, 1994).

*Attention Deficit Disorder:* The inability to stay on task due to hyper bursts of impulsivity (Hallowell & Ratey, 2011).

*Autism Spectrum Disorder:* Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction with restrictive patterns, interests, and delayed language development (Burgess & Cimera, 2014).

*Comorbidities:* When two more disorders are concurrent with a primary diagnosis (Swanson, Estroff, Swartz, Borum, Lachicotte, Zimmer, & Wagner, 1997).

*High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder:* Individuals that are diagnosed with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HASD) may exhibit deficits in communication, expressing oneself properly, social interaction, and emotion recognition (Rutherford, Baron-Cohen, & Wheelwright, 2002).

*Instructors:* College instructors who may not always have a teaching license but are able to teach at the college level due to a graduate degree or professional certification in the field they are teaching (Saxon, 2017).

*Intellectual Disability:* A disorder that affects intellectual and adaptive functioning. Deficits in intellectual function would include problem solving, planning, abstract thinking, and judgment. Deficits include communication, social participation and independent living affecting home, school, work, and community (Vos, De Cock, Petry, Van, & Maes, 2010).

*Postsecondary Classes:* College courses offered to students with disabilities after leaving high school and enroll transition program.

### **Assumptions, Delimitation, and Limitations**

Assumptions are necessary to allow for open interpretation along with the established criteria of the recruitment process (Berg & Lune, 2012). As the researcher, I had the assumption

that all participants will answer truthfully and honestly. As the researcher, I presumed all my participants to be forthcoming when delineating their experiences. The sample population of this study, where inferences can be made, could present genuine views and responses of their personal experiences of postsecondary classes. I provided the participants' interviews and survey questions. The participants are relevant due to their teaching experiences and association with transition program services.

According to Creswell (2013), delimitations include characteristics that could limit the scope of a study. A delimitation of this intrinsic case study is its geographical location. The instructors teaching experiences at this study site are not necessarily applicable in other states. In fact, there are other geographic locations that may offer different programming options for students enrolled in transition programs with HASD. In all case studies, there are certain limitations that are unavoidable (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). The results from an intrinsic case study could be limited due to the population sample of those who were interviewed. Not all of colleges are indicative with other postsecondary colleges; other colleges may have additional postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. The sample size of those who participated in the study contains six one-on-one interviews and qualitative surveys.

### **Summary**

Transition programs are learning environments conducive for students with varying learning abilities. Despite all the learning opportunities in transition programs, students with HASD could be looking for additional postsecondary experiences relevant to their interests and abilities. A postsecondary opportunity, such as an academic class or workshop, could improve students' interests in obtaining a college degree and greater ability to relate socially with their peers especially for those without HASD. Within Chapter 2, I provide a literature search

strategy, conceptual framework of three education theorists, and discuss a review of literature. In Chapter 3, I present a methodology and procedure used to develop an intrinsic case study, data collection, and analysis. In Chapter 4, I present my findings relative to my main research question. In Chapter 5, I provide a final summary and recommendations for future research for students enrolled in transition programs with HASD.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

When students with disabilities complete grade 12 of high school, educators may recommend that students enter a three-year transition program; these programs serve students ages 18 to 21 with different learning disabilities (Hendricks & Wehman, 2009). The primary goals for students enrolled in transition programs are to gain employment skills, master independent living skills, participate in postsecondary academic classes, and learn social skills (Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Cory, 2007; Dipeolu, Storlie, & Johnson, 2014; Spain & Blainey, 2015; Szidon et al., 2015; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Reid, 1997; Wehman, Schall, Carr, Target, West, & Cifu, 2014). The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to explore how instructors perceive postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs.

Within Chapter 2 a review of research related to students diagnosed with HASD during transition years include community involvement, community living, and independent living (Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Cory, 2007; Dipeolu, Storlie, & Johnson, 2014; Spain & Blainey, 2015; Szidon et al., 2015; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Reid, 1997; Wehman, Schall, Carr, Target, West, & Cifu, 2014). In Chapter 2, I present a literature search strategy and a conceptual framework of three theorists: Howard Gardner (1983), K. Patricia Cross (1981), and Nancy Schlossberg (1981). Within Chapter 2, I also present a review of literature regarding the historical background of transition programs, challenges students face with HASD while enrolled in college, postsecondary supports for students with HASD, self-determination, employment outcomes, avoiding litigation and liability lawsuits, and a summary.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

For this study, I researched literature relating to transition programs from high school age to adulthood by conducting electronic searches. The database search took place at Concordia

University library using ERIC, ProQuest, and SAGE. The following terms were used in the search: *transition programs, autism spectrum disorder, transition programs effectiveness, postsecondary outcomes, self-determination of students with high functioning autism spectrum disorder, college readiness for students with high functioning autism spectrum disorder, autism spectrum self-determination, autism spectrum self-advocacy, high functioning autism spectrum employment, and current disability issues in postsecondary*. Next, I conducted additional searches that only focused on students with high function *learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and Asperger's Syndrome*.

I examined themes by selecting the authors' work using Google Scholar and Google for journal articles that were available via the Internet for emergent data that presented additional pattern and themes that could be incorporated in the literature view. The journal articles that were selected encompassed respective criteria. All articles had to be peer reviewed and published in professional journals in the past five years. Titles pertaining to qualitative and quantitative data encompassed students that were in a transition program with HASD.

### **Conceptual Framework**

According to Eaves and Ho (2008), adult students with HASD enrolled in transition programs are an extension of the K–12 public school system. Students enrolled in a transition program are individuals who have physical, mental, or psychological disabilities that may affect the students' social, intellectual, behavioral, and emotional state of being (Adreon & Durocher 2007; Black, 2011; Hendricks & Wehman, 2009; Roux, Shattuck, Cooper, Anderson, Wagner & Narendorf, 2013). The theorists I have included in my conceptual framework include: Gardner (1983), Cross (1981), and Schlossberg (1981). What I seek to understand from these three

theorists is how their theories should be applied towards transition programs to help students during their transition years while enrolled in a transition program.

Gardner (1983) is a developmental psychologist best known for theories of multiple intelligences. Gardner currently is an adjunct professor of psychology at Harvard University and senior director of Harvard Project Zero (Gardner & Laskin, 2011). Gardner introduced the theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) where human intelligence is not just a reflected in Intelligence Quotient (IQ); instead, human intelligence uses a much wider set of competences. Gardner asserts that an individual will demonstrate a particular aptitude but will not necessarily demonstrate a comparable ability; for example, a meteorologist, landscape artist, and zoologist may demonstrate high levels of naturalistic intelligence but may demonstrate low levels in linguistic ability to write a speech or book (Gardner; 1983; Gardner & Moran, 2006).

Using several different constructs, Gardner (1983) arrived at eight different distinct intelligences: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence. For example, an individual who may learn linguistically will learn from reading, playing word games, and could create stories (Gardner; 1983). An individual who learns mathematically could think conceptually and learn by exploring patterns and relationships (Gardner & Moran, 2006).

Gardner (2003) presents two different challenges when it comes to the learning style of students; the first problem is that many educators do not establish appropriate learning styles for their students. Educators do not typically retrieve the origination of a students' learning style nor do they always define, acknowledge or evaluate a learning style (Gardner; 2003). The second challenge is that some educational researchers will create assessments that could determine

students' learning style; however, due to the evidence from the assessments, some educators will not implement teaching strategies that match the students' learning style. If teachers do not teach according to the learning styles of the students, some students could miss out in learning opportunities (Gardner, 2003).

For educators to access students' learning potential, Gardner created three primary lessons for educators (Gardner, 2011). The first lesson for educators is to individualize teaching—teachers should learn as much as possible about their students; make sure students are relaxed with a strategy that is given to them, so they are able to learn effectively. The second lesson for educators is to pluralize teaching; teachers should utilize learning materials through art, stories, and role-play. The third lesson for teachers is the phrase *students' learning style* should be replaced by *students' learning potential*. Teachers should develop a better understanding of a students' profile of intelligence; according to Gardner (2011), if this were achieved, it would improve students' odds in their ability to learn.

Cross (1981) is an educational researcher who has explored higher learning of adult education, a professor of Higher Education Emerita University of California Berkley, and author of books on classroom education and assessment. Cross described how there are many different *Life Cycle Phases* in adult transition between ages 18 to 65; outlined by Cross are specific developmental stages that target certain milestones taking place in an adult life and they include: *Phase and Age*, *Marker Events*, *Psychic Tasks*, and *Characteristic Stance*. The *Phase and Age* stage depicts the ages of events that take place during a life cycle phase; the *Marker Events* are typical events that could take place depending on the individuals' age; *Psychic Tasks* is an explanation of what adults need to learn in each phase, and *Character Stance* is a description of how adults learn new information (Cross, 1981).

One of the first events that could take place is age 18 to 22 (Cross, 1981). The Marker of Events would include leaving their childhood home to live independently, begin college, begin a fulltime job, or select a spouse. During Psychic Tasks, the young adult may want to self-govern, become freethinking, and establish their sexual orientation. During Characteristic Stance, individuals will decide if they want to remain close to family members (Cross, 1981). The milestones Cross suggested are not necessarily sequential; these phases of life could depend on matured competence and self-management of care.

Another event that could take place is age 23 to 28 (Cross, 1981). Throughout Marker of Events, adults will think about marriage or be married, finance a mortgage, become a parent, become a member of community activities, or return to college (Cross, 1981). During a Psychic Task phase, adults will view themselves as an adult, find a mentor, and become a mentor for young professionals; throughout the Characteristic Stance, adults will start thinking professional goals, and begin to start investing for their future (Cross, 1981). There are additional Life Cycle Phases beginning at the age of 29 and ending at 65 but since the transition begin at 17 or 18 to age 21 or 22, the phase and event markers delineated by Cross (1981) do apply to my research.

According Barkley, Cross, and Major (2014), classroom assessments articulate scholarship to improve learning outcomes for students and their instructors. Cross and Angelo (1993) created Classroom Assessments Techniques (CATs). Students report if their instructors yield effective teaching practices (Angelo & Cross, 1993). One of the examples Cross (1989) used involves a CAT example called the Minute Paper; the instructor will ask students to typify transformational learning and reflection; examples would include to list one significant learning experience during class and if students have any pending questions to discuss during the next session of class (Angelo & Cross, 1993). The immediate feedback grants educators an

opportunity to acquire students' progress; self-assessments also provide students' independent learning, so they may develop skills necessary for andragogical learning (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

Schlossberg (2017) is a Professor Emerita with the University of Maryland and has written many books theorizing of how to manage transition more effectively. Schlossberg's knowledge of adult transition includes four different elements representing adult transition: the attribution of pretransition and posttransition, characteristics resulting from a certain transition, individual characteristics of the person experiencing a transition, and adaptation (Schlossberg, 1981). During attribution of pretransition and posttransition, adults will endure positive or negative changes in their life; some of the changes would include marriage, death, and divorce that ultimately affect the direction of transition (Schlossberg, 1981).

There are internal and external influences that affect individuals' transition; some of the external transitions would include a situation that an individual would not be able to control (Schlossberg, 1984). An example would include an employee who is fired due to poor performance (Schlossberg, 1984). An internal change would be a situation that individuals would be able to control such as an employee who resigns due to accepting a different position (Schlossberg, 1984).

According to Schlossberg (1984), not all transitions are planned even though there are significant events in an individuals' life that is motivated by age like marriage, retirement, and having children. Some of these transitions could be sudden, gradual, permanent, or temporary. Stress from a transition would also be factored as a pretransition or posttransition; there are individuals who would feel more stress during a transition than others (Schlossberg, 1981).

During characteristic stance resulting from a certain transition, there are three environmental factors that affect characteristics from a certain transition (Schlossberg, 1984). These environmental factors include interpersonal supports, institutional supports, and physical setting; some of the interpersonal supports would include friends, family, and from personal relationships (Schlossberg, 1984). Some examples of institutional supports would include state and county agencies that provide assistance or a service in a physical setting in a rural or urban location of employment or residence (Schlossberg, 1984). Some of the individual characteristics of the persons experiencing a transition would include psychosocial competencies of individual thoughts and behavior about sexual orientation, race, state of health, or socioeconomic status (Schlossberg, 1981). For example, there are behavioral attributes that coincide with socioeconomic status; the behavioral attributes outcomes for those with a lower economic status and include greater health risks due to stress of a restricted income (Schlossberg, 1984).

During adaptation, an individual will develop a certain response during a current or past experience (Schlossberg, 1981). For example, a current experience would include becoming a new parent or buying a new car (Schlossberg, 1984). A past experience would include life graduating from college or having been widowed (Schlossberg, 1984). All four elements create an outcome where an adult would either fail or adapt during a transition; her theory contains a list of internal support systems of pretransition and posttransition environments that include intimate relationships, family unit, networks of friends, institutional supports, and physical setting (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg, 2011).

According to Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012), the *four S's* Transition Theory is comprised of four different transition characteristics and they include: situation, support, self, and strategies. Applying the four S's in a transition program for students are

extremely important; the four S's was designed to represent the complexities that adults could endure when coping with a transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). During the situation variable, the adult may be unprepared to handle a social situation or community activity depending on the adult's ability to communicate effectively; there is also a sense of whether or not the individual is able to effectively cope with an outcome of a situation (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). The self-variable would include if demographic and personal attributes impact individuals' outlook life when it comes to their physical state of being, current stage of life, economic status, nationality, and gender; the other self-variable would include the individuals' psychological state on whether they are driven by their ego, their outlook on life, moral code, and obligation (Anderson, et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). During the support variable, an individual undergoing a transition in need of support could count on another individual from an intimate relationship, family, close friends, and community connections; throughout the strategies variable, the strategies variable is categorized in three different classifications; the classifications include the individuals that can amend their circumstances, individuals that can take charge, understand the explanation of the problem, and can handle the strain from the aftereffects (Anderson, et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011).

All three theorists provide a conceptual baseline for students that are ready to make significant transitions in their life; education is no exception. According to Gardner (2011), multiple-intelligences should not be singled out or explored in isolation. Adult students with HASD will process information differently than those without HASD (Bandura, 1977). A student with HASD may have cognitive limitations where they are unable to process auditory information but have the ability to process visual and spatial information (Pring, 2010). According to Gardner, all students are capable of learning at a personalized level. *A Life Cycle*

*Phase* created by Cross (1981) and *Characteristics of Transition* created by Schlossberg (1981) are significant for students attending a transition program. Students attending a transition program will learn independent living, social skills, and vocational skills while attending a transition program, which is significant due to the fact that *Transition* is a part of life but a challenge for those with HASD; successful transition throughout life is essential for individuals wanting a life of quality (Baum & Edwards, 2014).

### **Review of Literature**

A transition program is comprised of students with varying disabilities that include Intellectual Disabilities (ID), and HASD (Cimera, Burgess, & Wiley, 2013; Hendricks & Wehman, 2009; Jang, Matson, Williams, Tureck, Goldin, & Cervantes, 2013). A framework of a transition program may help students with HASD become successful as they transition to a postsecondary while entering adulthood (Hendricks et al., 2009). The following topics discussed in Chapter 2 include: (a) historical background, (b) challenges HASD students face in postsecondary, (c) postsecondary supports for HASD students, (d) self-determination, (e) employment outcomes, (f) avoiding litigation and lawsuits, and (g) summary. Many of the authors incorporated in Chapter 2 include qualitative case studies on HASD students in academic transitions (Creswell, 2013; Lee, McCoy, Zucker, & Mathur, 2014; Levinson & Ohler, 1998) and academic strategies for students with HASD (Wenzel & Rowley, 2010). Some of the quantitative studies include students with disabilities attending a postsecondary institution (Horn & Berktold, 1999; Kohler, 1996; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Lewis, Farris, & Green, 1999) as well as student and institutional perspectives of students with disabilities (Baric, Hellberg, Kjellberg & Hemmingsson, 2016; Papay & Griffin, 2013; Rothstein, 1991).

## **Historical Background in the Creation of Transition Programs**

In the 1960s, the American way of life was to make sure that every United States citizen had the opportunity to take advantage of what the U.S. had to offer; this included employment, education, and voting rights (Rubin & Roessler, 2001). One act enacted in 1964 called the Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendment to the Social Security Act (Kennedy, 1964) by the then President John F. Kennedy. This act was enacted for state and federal governments and private foundations search for causal links of mental illness and eradicate mental retardation. It was not until 1983 that the Education for All Handicapped Children Act made it mandatory for public school districts to create transition programs for young students with disabilities (Rubin & Roessler, 2001). According to Stodden and Whelley (2004), groundbreaking policies have been applied to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1973, Section of the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1983, and Americans Disability Act (ADA) of 1990 identified there are students who have completed grade 12 but require additional preparation in independent living, vocational training, postsecondary experience, employment support, and community participation.

In 2004, President George W. Bush signed a law to reinforce transition services that provide students with appropriate education services and require state assessments. (Lowe, Reynolds, & Applequist, 2008). Since the 1960s, all of the disability Acts may have positively impacted and improved education services for all students with disabilities at the grade level, secondary level, and postsecondary level. But there still needs to be a greater understanding of adult transition program preparation, service approaches, and the coordination of supports to improve the theoretical models of transition services for potential college bound students (Kohler & Field, 2003).

## **Transition Planning and Programming**

Students with HASD entering adulthood may need specialized secondary transition services, exposure to postsecondary education programs, employment support, vocational training, family support, and residential services (Cimera et al., 2013; Joshi & Bouck, 2016; Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Those working in a transition program and in adult services are unlikely to be prepared for the unanticipated numbers for students needing transition services. Educators need to prepare for the influx of students needing transition program services (Eaves & Ho, 2008; Pearman, Elliott, & Aborn, 2004).

Students with disabilities have been discriminated against in the past due to their disabilities; the injustices have existed resulting in social ignorance and over the years with little legislation support; the current transition and adult service systems are unlikely to be prepared for the unanticipated numbers and need to take steps to prepare (Eaves & Ho, 2008; Pearman, Elliott, & Aborn, 2004). A reason for the possible influx of students pursuing a post-secondary degree with learning disabilities could be related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; this Act requires that all colleges receiving federal funds must provide programming and services to individuals with disabilities (Brinckerhoff, 1995).

Preparing students to enter a transition program with HASD should begin much before their grade 12 year (Ciccantelli, 2011; Thurlaw, Ysseldyke, & Reid, 1997). According to Brinckerhoff (1995), there should be a timetable of a transition plan for HASD students. Beginning at the age of 15, students' involvement during an Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting should identify areas of improvement, allow for simple career considerations, and assist in identifying their education goals (Brinckerhoff, 1995). At age 16, students are encouraged to develop a thorough understanding of their learning disability and how it will impact their

education and career options (Brinckerhoff, 1995). Students should also focus on comprehending their diagnosis to construct education accommodations for testing, focus on career options, and contemplation of a part time job (Brinckerhoff, 1995). By age 17, students should be actively selecting colleges with appropriate programs, support services, and schedule informational interviews with prospective employers (Brinckerhoff, 1995). By age 18, students should begin to formulate realistic education and employment classes (Brinckerhoff, 1995).

The need for early preparation of transition services should take place during students' high school years (Ciccantelli, 2011; Thurlaw et al., 1997). According to Cimera et al. (2013) and Hendricks and Wehman (2009), a complexity of issues for students with HASD could threaten students' success before pursuing a postsecondary degree or live independently. To procure a successful transition, a timetable is presented before pursuing a postsecondary education or to live independently (Thurlaw et al., 1997). The research conducted by Thurlaw et al. (1997) included documentation from state departments and examined implications of students with disabilities for educators to build a solid transition program during students' postsecondary years.

Not only is transition taking place at school, but it is also taking place within the home (Baric et al., 2016). At age 18, students will begin a first year of transition programming and he or she may want to move out of their childhood home explore residential alternatives; some residential alternatives would be a group home or a residential community (Baric, et al., 2016). If students display some independent living skills and are ready to live on their own during their time as transition students, they will search for appropriate living opportunities (Pearman, Elliott, & Aborn, 2004). Also, families need to know as much as possible about residential settings, so they are able to provide proper support (Hendricks & Wehman, 2009). However, working

towards becoming self-sufficient and to become financially independent are skills students try to master in a transition program (Papay & Griffin, 2013). The prevalence of those diagnosed with HASD is on the rise (Kogan et al., 2009). Children that are diagnosed with HASD will eventually reach adulthood (Gelbar, Smith, & Reichow, 2014; Matson & Kozlowski, 2011). If the prevalence in HASD is on the rise, more students will need effective transition programming (Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

### **Phases of Transition Programs**

The five different phases of transition programming are: assessment, planning, training, placement, and follow-up (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Based on a student's assessment, test scores could determine intelligence, abilities, independent living skills, and interests (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). In the planning stage, based upon student's assessments educators and outside agencies will develop goals and objectives and implement them into a student's IEP (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). After the planning stage, training will take place; the transition team will assign student case managers, counselors, and members of the community that could include a vocational rehabilitation specialist, psychologist, and education assistant to properly work with the students (Baric et al., 2016; Levinson & Ohler, 1998). The placement of students may include a residential living arrangement, independent living, a postsecondary option (e.g., community college, university, private college, or technical college) and employment; the interests of students will vary depending on the student's abilities (Joshi & Bouck, 2016; Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

The final phase of a transition program is follow-up; student's needs could change during the school year; termination of established services could be added or omitted (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). If services are added, students need additional supports from education assistants

or from outside agencies; if services were omitted, students may feel very secure in their abilities and would no longer need additional assistance from outside agencies (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). It is also essential that students' parents combine their efforts with community agencies, educators, case managers, and other service providers to help their child become successful in all phases of a transition program (Attwood, 1998; Kohler & Field, 2003). All transition models should incorporate a parents' perspectives when implementing future goals and objectives (Kohler & Field, 2003).

The need for early preparation of transition services should take place during students' high school years (Ciccantelli, 2011). According to Cimera et al. (2013) and Hendricks and Wehman (2009), due to the complexity of issues that pose a threat to students' success before pursuing a postsecondary education following a transition timetable presented by Thurlaw et al. (1997) would be beneficial for students with HASD. In essence, it is also for integral for educators to build solid transition programs during students' secondary years of high school (Brinckerhoff, 1995).

### **From a Transition Program to College**

According to Orsmond, Krauss, and Seltzer (2004), typical college students usually begin their process of narrowing down their college choices during the summer before becoming a senior. Students with HASD may not necessarily be ready for college especially if a student just graduated from a transition program (Schuler, Burton, & Yater, 2003). When students with HASD are ready for college, it is beneficial for students to meet with the college's disability department and meet individually with their professors to prepare for their first year of college (Muller et al., 2003). Students with HASD may require modifications during their first year of college to make for a positive postsecondary experience (Baric et al., 2016). A key component

for positive outcomes for students with disabilities at the postsecondary level is to self-disclose their disability to the administration office (Gill, 2007). However, this could be somewhat of a difficult task, considering advocating for his or her rights can be daunting experiencing; in fact, many students with HASD need to master self-advocacy and self-determination skills before enrolling in a postsecondary institution (Dijkuis, Ziermans, Rijn, Staal, & Swaab, 2016; Field & Hoffman, 2012; Joshi & Bouck, 2016; Stodden & Mruzek, 2010).

Students with HASD will face a variety of different obstacles during their postsecondary years and should properly prepare for the demands of college life (Gill, 2007). If students with HASD are unprepared for academic rigors and college life, enrolling in a transition program could be a suitable alternative to prepare for a postsecondary education experience; the more prepared an HASD is for college or work greater the chance for success (Dipeolu et al., 2014; Grandin & Duffy, 2008). After a student with HASD receives a diploma from a transition program, attending college part time would be a viable option (Lewis et al., 1999). This could lessen the volume of schoolwork allowing students' schedules open to other activities during the school year (Horn & Berktold, 1999).

### **Challenges HASD Students Face in College**

There are many different challenges that students with HASD are confronted with while attending college that include social skills, academics, and finding support for mental health (Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Cory, 2007; Dipeolu et al., 2014; Thurlow et al., 1997). A study was conducted to examine the characteristics of HASD students' readiness for college; Krell (2010) concluded that students with HASD lack self-knowledge, self-determination, and social skills. The author Krell (2010) also concluded that students with HASD will face additional challenges during college and will need non-traditional supports.

According to Levinson and Ohler (1998), there are components in a transition program that could make it easier for a smoother transition from high school (i.e., vocational evaluation, job shadowing, and academic counseling). Students transferring from transition programs immediately to college may need additional accommodations from faculty, staff, and students to help HASD students become successful during their college years, (Adreon & Durocher, 2007). In Baric et al. (2016), a qualitative analysis for students with Asperger's and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was conducted by grouping individual responses based on students' experiences. The analysis concluded students with Asperger's lack social connectedness from typical age peers (Baric et al., 2016). They also found many typical age peers are not open in having friendships with HASD students (Baric et al., 2016). If typical age peers would be interested with HASD peers, it could help create social opportunities and improve their postsecondary education outcomes (Gelbar et al., 2014). Postsecondary institutions should implement social programs to promote greater academic and social success at the postsecondary level for students HASD (Joshi & Bouck, 2016; Papay & Griffin, 2013; Shmulsky, Gobbo, & Donahue, 2015; Retherford & Schreiber, 2015).

Students diagnosed with HASD are more likely to receive failing grades due to poor organization and planning skills; students diagnosed with HASD or Asperger's do not reflect a deficiency of intelligence (Baric et al., 2016; Eaves & Ho, 2008). Additional academic support for students with HASD is very similar to those with learning disabilities; some of the academic supports include additional time for exams, course substitutions, oral exams, or the use of a recording device to record lectures (Adreon & Durocher, 2007). Students with HASD may request additional time for tests or additional notes supplied by their instructors (Cimera et al., 2013).

According to VanBergeijk, Klin, and Volkmar (2008) and Turcotte, Côté, Coulombe, Richard, Larivière & Couture (2015), students may present additional comorbidities with HASD. Some students may have a primary diagnosis of HASD with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), or General Anxiety Disorder (GAD), (Ghaziuddin, Weidmer-Mikhail, & Ghaziuddin, 1998). For students residing on campus grounds, it is important for a rehabilitation department to be aware that some students with HASD may have additional psychological diagnosis; the comorbidities of students with HASD can accelerate their anxieties due to unpredictable events during the school day (Larivière and Couture, 2015), VanBergeijk et al., 2008).

Several authors presented evidence based research of students with HASD that include Larivière and Couture (2015), Retherford and Schreiber (2015), Turcotte et al., (2015), and Joshi and Bouck (2016). In Larivière and Couture conducted a systematic review of two quasi-experimental comparative trials and three single arm interventions. According to Larivière and Couture, they found that social skills interventions for adults with HASD assist in understanding social functioning, social knowledge, and reduce the feelings of isolation of those with psychological comorbidities.

In Retherford and Schreiber (2015), high school students and high school graduates attended a weeklong college campus experience. According to Retherford and Schreiber, students participated in instructional classes, self-reflection, self-advocacy, fitness, recreation, and living on campus. State funds allowed principle investigators to conduct their research that took place for one week over the course of seven years. After each week of camp was completed, staff members asked parents and students to evaluate the program after one week and after one month. Out of 52 surveys, 34 revealed parents and students found camp beneficial. Questions of

whether the program would have been successful if the camp did not take place on a college campus continue to loom. However, ongoing contact with students' parents and student alumni report positive experiences during college years. Although this program created positive experiences for students during camp, 36% of the survey responses went unanswered.

In Turcotte et al., (2015), a multiple case study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with a sample size of 10 participants with HASD. The study found that four different themes emerged from HASD caregivers and two representatives from community organizations. The four different themes that were found included: (a) access to services, (b) orientation to integrated life, (c) engagement in meaningful activities, and (d) gap services before reaching independent living. The researchers found that preparing families could help parents' students to become more successful in social situations.

A data analysis of predictor variables was conducted for students with learning disabilities (Joshi & Bouck, 2016). Although this data did not specify students' disabilities, it is possible some of the students who participated in the study could have HASD due to the sample size of over 250,000 students; one in 42 are diagnosed with having some form of autism between the ages of three and 17 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). The data analysis used a National Longitudinal Transitions Study-2 (NLTS2) to investigate connections of postsecondary education–related transition services and postsecondary education participation of students with learning disabilities. A logistics analysis concluded that classroom instruction of postsecondary education–related transition services during core curriculum classes was similar to the instruction of a postsecondary classroom. Frequency distributions also found there are more students with learning disabilities who attend a 2-year college versus a 4-year college. The results suggest that students with disabilities should be integrated in core curriculum classes

amongst their peers before completing high school that could help students make an easier transition while attending a postsecondary institution (Joshi & Bouck, 2016). Many students who may have learning disabilities may not necessarily be ready to attend a postsecondary institution after graduating from high school. According to Kohler (1996) and Kohler and Field (2003) transition programs for students could produce favorable postsecondary outcomes. However, if students with disabilities have developed appropriate self-advocacy skills before completing high school, students could have desirable postsecondary outcomes (Brinckerhoff, 1995). Some self-advocacy skills could include a solid understanding of their disabilities, legal rights, and expectations of faculty and campus staff (Brinckerhoff, 1995).

### **Postsecondary Supports for Students with HASD**

Students with HASD are no longer covered under IDEA (2004) but protected under Title II and Title III of ADA Section 504 (1990). Under these laws, students with HASD entering college must be able to advocate their own needs and should request certain classroom accommodations (Hurewitz & Berger, 2008). Outside the classroom there are appropriate supports for students with HASD that could help them become successful that may include seeking assistance from rehabilitation counselors or requesting classroom accommodations (Ciccantelli, 2011).

One of the key transition methods used in a postsecondary institution for students with HASD are to acquire a rehabilitation counselor (Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp, Harrison, & Krell, 2012; Pérusse, 2012). According to Kleinert et al. (2012); Madus, Kowitt and Lalor (2012); Papay and Griffin, (2013), HASD students should be encouraged to participate in activities outside the classroom. It is beneficial for students with HASD to join one or two extracurricular activities that could lower stress and improve social skills (Dipeolu et al., 2014;

Retherford & Schreiber, 2015). Some of the activities include gaming and animation clubs; it will help students with HASD to assist with social inadequacies (Dipeolu et al., 2014; Retherford & Schreiber, 2015). One of the important aspects for HASD students is peer mentorship; providing a peer mentor is a key method inside and outside of class (Kleinert, et al., 2012). Typical college level students can assist disabled students around college campus, help organize schedules, and motivate students to engage in social activities. Students who are typically developed may also help students with assignments during class or translate a lecture given by professors (Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Zager & Alpern, 2010).

A rehabilitation counselor should be assigned to HASD students that could ultimately help them reach their academic goals (Kleinert et al., 2012; Madus, et al., 2012). According to Wehman, Schall, Carr, Targett, West, and Cifu (2014) poor academic outcomes are common for students with HASD; assigning a rehabilitation counselor can help students with HASD achieve their academic objectives. Not only is it important for counselors to guide HASD students academically but counselors can teach HASD students social cues from their college peers; positive influences with staff and peers could help students with HASD increase their odds of obtaining a postsecondary degree (Retherford & Schreiber, 2015; Stodden & Mruzek, 2010).

### **Self-Advocacy for Students With HASD Students**

Students with HASD are not completely familiar with self-advocacy skills (Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering, & Kohler, 2009). Some individuals with a learning disability will not have a clear understanding what skills are needed to fully advocate for themselves (Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Retherford & Schreiber, 2015; Stodden & Mruzek, 2010; Stodden & Whelley, 2004; Test et al., 2009). According to Brinckerhoff (1995), there are components of self-advocacy that could help during their years in college. Some of the

components include comprehension of disability, knowledge of legal rights under IDEA, ADA consisting of self-advocacy basics, determination of reasonable classroom accommodations, insight of independence versus dependence, learning to negotiate, and putting self-advocacy to work. According to Brinckerhoff (1995), one of the first components of self-advocacy is the comprehension one's disability. However, there are students who may not disclose their disability due to predetermined biases from instructors, advisers, and peers (Fleming, Plotner, & Oertle, 2017). A study was conducted to examine predicting factors that may affect students' academic success (Fleming, Plotner, & Oertle, 2017). There were 300 hundred students who participated in the study from different universities. The results from interviews and surveys found students who are proficient using self-advocacy skills may have a higher grade point average. The more an individual understands their disability the better they will become at communicating their weaknesses and strengths using. A weakness may include limited skills in writing essays but strengths in taking multiple-choice exams (Brinckerhoff, 1995).

Under IDEA (2004) and ADA (1990) are federal mandated regulations that protect the rights of individuals with a physical or mental disability (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). IDEA (2004) and ADA (1990) do not protect those diagnosed with mental impairments or physical disabilities entering a postsecondary institution unless the institution is enrolled in Federal funded programs receiving funds from the U. S. Department of Education (Dipeolu, et al., 2014; Hurewitz & Berger, 2008; Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). The students who qualify under IDEA (2004) and ADA (1990) will receive services until the age of 21 if students are enrolled in the public-school system. It is also critical for students with disabilities to understand their legal rights before or during their enrollment in a postsecondary institution; postsecondary institutions do not receive federal funded programming for students who may have HASD (Test et al., 2005).

According to Brinckerhoff (1995), students must possess basic self-advocacy skills to make sure their needs are communicated with university professionals. Some of the self-advocacy skills include the ability to communicate their needs or to make classroom accommodations (Brinckerhoff, 1995). Some students could have desirable postsecondary outcomes if they have a solid understanding of their disabilities, legal rights, and expectations by campus staff; some of the accommodations in a classroom would include extra time to complete a reading assignment, proof reader assistance, permission to record lecture, sit in front of the classroom, and ask for a syllabus before the first day of class (Brinckerhoff, 1995). If students are able to advocate specific accommodations, their outcomes for success could be higher (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Retherford, & Schreiber, 2015; Spain & Blainey, 2015).

Students may not recognize the difference between independence versus dependence (Brinckerhoff, 1995). Students' parents will most often advocate for their children while enrolled in a postsecondary institution. However, if parents are too involved in advocating for their children, it could cause additional dilemmas for their children as well as with staff and faculty (Evans et al., 1998). It is imperative for students with learning disabilities to demonstrate self-governance and take the proper steps to function independently from their parents (Evans et al., 1998).

According to Test et al. (2005), even though students should demonstrate self-advocacy skills during their high school years, they may not apply self-advocacy strategies during their first years in college (Pearman, Elliott, & Aborn, 2004). According to Fleming, Plotner, and Oertle (2017), students who may not disclose their disability due to predetermined biases from instructors, advisers, and peers. However, some students could have positive outcomes of

academic success if they applied self-advocacy skills. A strategy that could improve self-advocacy skills may include group assignments in which students provide negative and positive feedback amongst their peers (Stewart & Sutton, 2017). This feedback could produce effective communication skills, negotiation skills, and examine viewpoints (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Stewart & Sutton 2017). If faculty can assist students' with this skill set, improved self-advocacy skills could garner greater success during college thus producing greater academic success (Fleming, Plotner, & Oertle, 2017; Getzel & Thoma, 2008)

### **Employment Outcomes**

According to Burgess and Cimera (2014), 36% of individuals with HASD have received employment through a vocational service in the past 10 years from 2001-2010. With the assistance of a vocational rehabilitation, the mean employment rate for adults with HASD in Delaware, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wyoming, was 50% and in In Arkansas, Main Nevada, and Wyoming, employment were below 25% (Burgess & Cimera, 2014). There are educational and vocational aspirations that are go unfulfilled (Grandin & Duffy, 2008; Shattuck, Narendorf, Cooper, Sterzing, Wagner, & Taylor, 2012). Students with HASD have had difficulties obtaining employment or remaining employed; those who are employed work fewer hours, making less per hour, and do not receive benefits compared to those who without a disability (Lee & Carter, 2012). Many adults with HASD who are employed had performed menial positions in replacing dirty glasses with clean glasses; future research for those enrolled in a transition program should be analyzed regarding transition program services that promote successful program outcomes (Taylor & Seltzer, 2011).

### **Avoiding Litigation and Liability Lawsuits**

There are four major steps that postsecondary institutions should incorporate to reduce litigation or liability lawsuits and they include: policy development, education, confidentiality, and barrier free issues (Rothstein, 1991). Policy development should be a well thought process to protect the rights of students and faculty with disabilities (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). All academic policies should include a definition of disabilities, eligibility requirements, and accommodations; all colleges should also provide a designated department to coordinate accommodations and grievances for students and staff (Rothstein, 1991). Given there are certain departments that bring unique circumstances; additional policies may need to be implemented; all colleges should provide ongoing training for staff a faculty regarding current trends to facilitate those that are disabled (Rothstein, 1991). According to Rothstein (1991) and Kaplin and Lee (2014), staff members or students should have the right to privacy when disclosing information regarding their disabilities; all college institutions must present confidentiality agreements to ensure that students' information is safe and secure. Some of the individuals who could offer confidentiality agreements include: admission officers, deans, resident advisors, registrars, and student health center personnel; when it comes to barrier-free Issues, it is vital all renovated buildings adhere to a barrier-free design (Rothstein, 1991). For example, colleges should follow new construction to equip students that may be blind, deaf, or wheel chair bound (Rothstein, 1991).

### **Summary**

According to Hurewitz and Berger (2008), students with HASD attending college should request academic accommodations in order to meet the academic demands of a postsecondary institution (Dipeolu et al., 2014). Accommodations will guarantee academic for students with disabilities however, since IDEA's inception in 1973, more colleges have been conducive for students with mental and physical disabilities (Hurewitz & Berger, 2008). According to

Rothstein (1991) the number students attending college has increased over the years that have physical disabilities. In fact, there are more students who attend a two-year college versus a four-year college (Horn & Berktold, 1999).

Residential advisors should be aware of the psychological factors associated with an HASD students residing on college campus (Nevill, & White, 2011; Li, Wu, & Ong, 2014). Typical students on campus could learn to develop positive attitudes towards students with HASD and help integrate HASD into the college community and campus life (Nevill, & White, 2011). According Levinson and Ohler (1998), in order for HASD students to gain successful employment outcomes, educators in transition programs will partner with vocational rehabilitation. Students with HASD may lack the maturity for professional job placement; students will need vocational advice and training during their transition program years (Nuehring & Sitling, 2003).

Several authors have presented evidence-based research of students with HASD. Some of the evidence-based research include Lariviere and Couture (2015), Retherford and Schreiber (2015), Turcotte et al., (2015), and Joshi and Bouck (2016). The research presented could help students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs that could include specialized programming for students with HASD. Postsecondary institutions could educate staff to improve their knowledge and insight of students with HASD while enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

Since its inception of transition programs of the 1980s, improvements have been made under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1973, Section of the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1983, and Americans Disability Act (ADA) of 1990. Kohler (1996) and Kohler and Field (2003) present a taxonomy for transition programs for students that could be produce favorable outcomes for students that include individualized

student-based programming, collaboration with educators and parents, a utilization of community resources, structured programming, and student development that include. It is also necessary all transition programs help students enhance life skills, career and vocation opportunities, employment experience, and student evaluations (Kohler & Field, 2003).

Transitional planning outlined in IDEA may help students build college readiness specifically for students with HASD. If students are not ready, a transition program may help students prepare to be a part of college life (Halpern, 1991). Additional examination of transition services is vital to understand college readiness for transition students with disabilities (Kohler, 1993). It also important for students enrolled in a transition program is offered a range of postsecondary education classes that typify students' talents, abilities, and interests.

Improvements have been applied to the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) since its inception to help improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. Some of the improvements at the postsecondary level include effective teaching methods, opportunities in life long distance learning, additional training for educators, education accessibilities, and key transition methods for students with disabilities (Madus et al., 2012). Within Chapter 3, I provide an introduction of the methodology of the proposal and presented information about the participants.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

According to Kogan et al. (2009) and Zablotsky et al. (2015), transition programs and postsecondary institutions could expect an increase of enrollment of students with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HASD). The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to explore how instructors perceive postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. As the researcher, I conducted six one-on-one interviews, provided qualitative surveys using Qualtrics, and member checked to determine if there are limited postsecondary classes for students with HASD who are enrolled in transition programs.

According to Yin (2018), there are three primary case study designs: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and collective case study. An intrinsic case study is when there is a specific circumstance taking place and researchers want to learn more about the unique phenomenon from a particular case (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). An instrumental case study focuses on complex factors and exploration of a study instead of the actual case (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). A case study can increase a researcher's understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). The data for this intrinsic case study could reveal if transition programs should offer additional postsecondary classes for students with HASD.

Some students who attend transition programs denote basic skills in acquisition in independent living, social skills, and employment but are not ready for college level courses (Ciccantelli, 2011; Retherford & Schreiber, 2015; Stodden & Mruzek, 2010). Still other students who are ready for college level courses may have an opportunity to enroll in a postsecondary class during their transition program years but may desire additional postsecondary classes that meet students' skills, interest, and abilities. The problem is teachers in transition programs may

not properly address the students' academic abilities with HASD who may be looking for additional postsecondary classes.

I have chosen an intrinsic case study to effectively answer the main research question to better understand instructors' experiences who teach students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. The participants may provide insight to the barriers that inhibit quality postsecondary counseling for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. This intrinsic case study could guide education professionals such as postsecondary administrators, secondary administrators, and community service providers to better serve transition program students with HASD. Within Chapter 3 are the research questions rationale, research design rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, procedures for participation recruitment, participation selection, instrumentation, criteria for the participating individuals, presentation of the methodology, data collection, postulate trustworthiness, and a final summary.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were utilized within this study:

1. How do instructors perceive postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?
2. What benefits do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?
3. What challenges do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, I play a vital role in documenting my participants' experiences. To achieve this, I need to make sure I do not incorporate any personal biases that would interfere

with my participants' responses. When researchers have determined and acknowledged their intentions with one subject, they must grant the remaining subjects the same amount civility and honesty with the absence of bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2017; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), an intrinsic case study allows for exploration to understand complex issues. Questions of exploration would include ontological, epistemological, and methodical questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

As the researcher, I developed five one-on-one interview questions and eight qualitative survey questions. The six one-on-one interviews participants also completed the qualitative surveys using Qualtrics. Once I determine and acknowledge my intentions with one participant, I must grant the remaining participants the same amount civility and honesty while maintaining professionalism and a scholarly presence towards my participants' responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2017). For this intrinsic case study, I bring a certain amount of experience to the study; my knowledge of the individuals with HASD is based on (a) parenting a child with HASD, (b) working as an education assistant in the primary, secondary, and postsecondary education environments, and (c) having read extensive literature reviews regarding HASD students enrolled in secondary and postsecondary education environments and transition programs.

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

The total population at this site included 13 participants. All 13 participants work for a Midwest college and teach HASD students who are enrolled in transition programs. I recruited six instructors to be part of the study. The study included three female instructors and three male instructors who have worked for the college for more than five years. I am a parent of student with HASD who has volunteered in one of the college's postsecondary classes. As a volunteer

for one of the postsecondary classes, I had the opportunity to meet other instructors who teach students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

According to Berg and Lune (2012) and Latham (2016) triangulation is a collection of data using different sources to increase the validity and reliability to answer the main research question. The sampling will involve triangulation, which includes interview questions of instructors (see Appendix B), eight survey questions using a Qualtrics Survey (see Appendix C), and member checking. Member checking is a technique used to verify accurate responses from those who have been interviewed for a case study (Creswell, 2013; Latham, 2016). Using triangulation, I may uncover a deeper meaning of the data from multiple perspectives that could strengthen the reliability and internal validity (Creswell, 2013; Latham, 2016). I searched for emergent themes using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Administrating a three-coding process could help me eliminate overlaps between approaches from six one-on-one interviews and eight survey responses. The analysis from the one-on-one interviews and Qualtrics survey responses may present a consistency across data sources of my participants' beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints regarding postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. By applying triangulation, I produced findings relative to the three research questions; although, it is possible this intrinsic study could produce findings that could be allocated to a broader theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Latham, 2016).

### **Participant Selection Logic**

This intrinsic case study involved six participants to complete a one-on-one interview and Qualtrics Survey. Those who participated in the one-on-one interview also participated in a Qualtrics survey. The reason for using a small sample of six participants in the one-on-one interview and qualitative survey is to eliminate the possibility of overlapping themes and the

opportunity to delineate their viewpoints and personal beliefs (Dochtermann & Jenkins, 2010). As the researcher, the participants' race, gender, and age was not a selection factor when participants volunteer to be a part of the study.

Out of the 13 instructors, I chose the first six instructors who have contacted me by email. When I received a sufficient number of those to participate in the study, the next two individuals who contacted me served as alternates. I emailed each of the six participants an Introductory Letter to Postsecondary Instructors (see Appendix D) and Letter of Consent (see Appendix A). The Letter to Postsecondary Instructors contained my status as a doctoral candidate, a short synopsis of the study, and an estimated time to complete the one-on-one interview and survey.

### **Procedures for Participant Recruitment**

There were three steps in selecting the participants. The first step was to contact the principal in charge of all the instructors who teach transition program students at a Midwest college. During the second step, the principal emailed 13 instructors who teach transition programs students with HASD and along with my personal contact information. In the third step, I emailed the participants who were interested to be in the study and scheduled a one-on-one interview and Qualtrics survey. I also acquired two individuals to serve as alternates; I emailed those individuals a detailed letter of my role as the researcher and would appreciate their participation and willingness to serve as alternates if any scheduled participants needed to withdraw from the study. All scheduled participants and alternates were informed they could withdraw from the study at any given time.

## **Instrumentation**

The instruments needed for this intrinsic case study include self-designed interview questions (see Appendix B) and a Qualtrics Survey (see Appendix C). According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldann (2014), interviews and surveys are common instruments that can be used to discover robust findings to answer the main research. Interviews could give the researcher direct access to better understand the participants' viewpoints (Miles et al., 2014). A survey is a systematic method of gathering information with a motive of creating qualitative descriptors of attributes from a smaller population of participants (Morgan, 1997).

All of the instruments used for this intrinsic case study could establish perceptions and outcomes of stakeholders (Guion, 2002). The reason for the instruments of this intrinsic case study is to substantiate the evidence to answer the main research question. There are five open-ended one-on-one interviews questions and eight survey questions using the Qualtrics website. Each interview took 45 minutes to complete and Qualtrics survey took 15 minutes to complete. Through three instrumental lenses, numerous aspects of emergent themes could be disseminated and established (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

## **Data Collection**

There were three different means of collecting the data. The first part of the data collection included a Qualtrics Survey. The second part of the data collection was the one-on-one interviews. A link was emailed following each of the one-on-one interviews. There were five questions for each one-on-one interview and eight survey questions. The one-on-one interviews and surveys took place in private classrooms. To ensure I did not miss details of the participants' responses, the interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. I assigned all participants a random pseudonym of A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6. During the one-on-one

interviews, I clarified my interview questions if the participants had difficulty answering the interview questions. After I received the survey responses I began my analysis of data of the one-on-one interviews by transcribing the aggregated data using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

After I transcribed the data from each of the participants, I erased each interview from my digital recording device. To ensure the resonance and accuracy of the participants' responses, I emailed each participant a copy of their transcribed interview, which is known as member checking. After all of the interviews were transcribed, I began the coding process. The coding sequence used included *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding* (Creswell, 2013). After I transcribed the data from the one-on-one interviews, I prepared the data for analysis beginning with the open codes. Using a Word program of my computer, I used a digital blue highlighter that highlighted all the possible repeated words or themes from the one-on-one interviews. In addition, I repeated this process from the one-on-one interviews during the axial coding process and organized repeated words or themes into categories. After the open and axial coding were completed, I commenced with selective coding process using a Word program of my computer; this process involved identifying six of the interview participants using A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6. For the surveys, I identified the same six participants using the same identification labels A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6. All detailed quotes that contained a word that could lead to the identity of the college or program was de-identified.

The survey questions will be constructed using Qualtrics, which is a secure, online distribution software. A Qualtrics survey assisted in the delivery and summation of survey information and did not require a coding process (The Leading Research & Experience Software,

2017). After the data was analyzed in Qualtrics, I presented the results of the survey in Chapter 4. After the open coding and axial coding process was completed, I used selective coding using a Word program of my computer. The data from this intrinsic case study included all correspondence from the participants' responses from the one-on-one interviews, Qualtrics survey responses, coding procedures, analysis, summary, and conclusion will all be stored in my computer for three years. For security purposes, the computer is protected with a password that only I know.

I maintained confidentiality of participants in the results and analysis. For example, I referred to my participants using a capital letter of the one-on-one interviews and Qualtrics survey responses as A1 thru A6. All physical notes and digital recordings from my one-on-one interviews were locked away in a storage closet located in my personal home office. After each interview was transcribed, the recording of that interview was deleted.

## **Trustworthiness**

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the questions in how the research findings are supported by the data collected (Rogelberg, 2008). This is process was used to establish whether the researcher has a preexisting bias during the study; this is due to the assumption that the research can bring a unique perspective to the study. As the researcher, I was able to judge this by studying the collected data from the original inquiry during the data collection process (Creswell, 2013).

### **Dependability**

According to Rogelberg (2008), dependability in a case study is significant because it demonstrates and establishes the study's findings. If other researchers look over the data, they too could arrive at similar findings and conclusions of the researcher's data (Rogelberg, 2008).

There are some threats to internal validity that may include the ability to determine the proper inferences from the participants, maturation, and experimental procedures (Thompson, 2006). However, the confidence of the researcher should not be affected of possible threats to internal validity (Thompson, 2006). The inferences with the possibility of errors could serve as useful to establish the generality of the construct (Creswell, 2013). Using thick rich descriptions of the participants could help the reader connect with the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The dependability could also be achieved while interviewing the participants without prior assumptions or bias (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

### **Ethical Issues**

In qualitative research, protecting the identity of participants is required (Kaiser, 2009). As the researcher, I used pseudonyms for each of the participants in the study. I did not provide participants with drafts of my findings. However, I did provide them with the opportunity to withdraw from the study during the member checking process. None made such a request. According to Creswell (2013) cautioned a researcher must be aware of the potential for exploiting the population being studied. . For this reason, the researcher must be sensitive to any power imbalances that exist (Creswell, 2013). . All participants were treated fairly and with thoughtful consideration.

### **Summary**

An intrinsic case study requires sufficient documentation of qualitative procedures and details to help answer the main research question (Creswell, 2013). In this chapter, I have presented the research problem, purpose, design, questions, and criterion for selecting my participants. The purpose study in Chapter 4 is to present the data analysis and results of the

collected data. The six participants who participated in the interviews are the same six participants who participated in the Qualtrics survey.

This study is used to explore how instructors perceive the postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. The data from the one-on-one interviews clarified possible outcomes that transition programs and postsecondary institutions could provide additional postsecondary classes of students with HASD will be described in Chapter 4. That chapter also describes the surveys that provided the researcher multiple perspectives of internal recommendations regarding postsecondary classes of students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

One of the disabilities affecting children and adults is High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HASD). With an increase in prevalence of those with HASD, transition programs and postsecondary institutions may expect an increase of enrollment of HASD students (Kogan et al., 2009; Zablotzky et al., 2015). Students with HASD could be looking for additional postsecondary opportunities such as college classes and workshops while enrolled in transition programs. Presented in Chapter 4 are the results of participants' perceptions of postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present the data analysis and results of the collected data in this study. The six participants who participated in the interviews are the same six participants who participated in the Qualtrics survey. The coding process that was used included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This chapter will include emergent themes involving exact quotes from the participants' interview responses and survey results. The results of my data are presented in two sections. The first section includes emergent themes from the one-on-one interviews; the second section includes the participants' results from an online, web-based survey.

### **Description of the Sample**

This intrinsic case study was conducted at a college in the Midwest of the United States. The college offers two-year technical degrees and general education classes that are part of the state transfer curriculum. The college has existed for more than 40 years and has become a leader in service-learning opportunities. Within the college is an alternative learning school for students with learning disabilities. The students enrolled in the alternative learning school enroll in career and technical education classes. The students with HASD, while enrolled in transition programs,

also attend career and technical classes. The six instructors who participated in the study teach career and technical education classes at the college. Some of the career and technical education classes include computer graphics, automotive repair, nursing, and computer science. In order for the instructors to participate in this study, they met the following criteria: employed with the alternative learning school for more than 5 years and instructed students with HASD while enrolled transition programs. All six participants were Caucasian; one of the participants was under the age of 40 and five of the participants were over the age of 40. There were three female instructors and three male instructors who participated in the study; two alternatives were selected if any active participants opted out of the study, which did not occur. I assigned all participants a random pseudonym of A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

The research questions for this intrinsic case study were:

1. How do instructors perceive postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?
2. What benefits do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?
3. What challenges do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?

The data from the six participants within this intrinsic case study was triangulated using five one-on-one interview questions (see Appendix B), eight Qualtrics survey questions (see Appendix C), and member checking. Qualtrics is a website where qualitative and quantitative data can be stored and analyzed. Member checking encompasses a full transcription of a participants recorded interview; the researcher returns the data to the participants to verify the

accuracy of their interview responses. I conducted an intrinsic case study that focused on instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. The one-on-one interviews and qualitative survey responses for this intrinsic case study included instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes offered to students while enrolled in transition programs. The purpose of the one-on-one interview and survey was to seek a better understanding of individuals' perceptions (Seidman, 2013). Such perceptions may provide academic solutions for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs.

During the one-on-one interviews, some questions had to be rephrased so participants fully understood the interview questions; the rephrased questions were transitory and used to clarify an interview question. The interviews and Qualtrics survey were conducted in the participant's personal classroom. During all six interviews, each classroom door was closed to keep the interview private. Some of the interviews had some disruptions. Some of the disruptions included direct phone calls of a participant's classroom phone or from their personal cellular devices. When a disruption did occur, I would pause the recording during the interview. When the participants were ready to proceed, I would press the recording button to continue with the one-on-one interview. When each interview was completed, I emailed a Qualtrics link to the participant. The participant clicked on the link and began to take the survey. Some participants had time to complete the survey before I left their classroom. Other participants did not have time to fill the survey and would get in contact with me if they had any questions. When each participant completed the survey, the data was stored in the Qualtrics website.

I used a digital recording device to tape the interviews at a single site. When all of the interviews were completed, I began the transcribing process using my computer; the transcription process took one week to complete. After the completion of the transcripts, I

emailed each participant a copy of the interview transcript to check for accuracy and clarity; this is considered member checking. After each transcription of the interviews, I deleted the data from my digital recording device.

Next, I began the open coding process. During the open code process, all of the participants' responses were read several times. According to Berg and Lune (2012) and Creswell (2013), open coding is the initial phase of the coding process of a participant's experience and perception of an interview question; the open codes appear in the first column (see Appendix E). After the open codes were completed, I began the axial coding process; axial coding consists of identifying themes within the open codes (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell, 2013) After the axial coding process was completed, I began the selective coding which consists of choosing a category to develop an interpretation from the axial codes (Berg and Lune, 2012; Creswell, 2013). All of the axial codes in the middle column (see Appendix E) of the table were read carefully to identify and synthesize the relationships from axial codes. The selective codes (see Appendix E) of the third column were carefully written to summarize a possible analysis. The research responses for the Qualtrics surveys did not need a coding process. All of the data from the surveys in Qualtrics were captured and analyzed within the website. The data from Qualtrics survey was imported onto an excel spreadsheet and then transferred onto a word document (see Appendix F). The survey responses are located in the research results section of Chapter 4.

### **Coding Analysis: Central Research Questions**

The participants' responses for research question one resulted in nine different open codes. The open codes correlated with question one, two, and four of the one-on-one interview responses. The open codes correspond with research question number one, "How do instructors

perceive postsecondary classes of students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?”

Table 1 illustrates research question one and the open, axial, and selective codes.

Table 1

*Research question number one of open, axial, and selective codes*

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
All classes are available Certain career tech classes Some classes available I believe postsecondary Postsecondary classes are	Knowledge of postsecondary classes varied	Postsecondary classes for HASD students while enrolled in transition program
Traditional courses Math, science, and core classes	Knowledge of postsecondary classes	Students with HASD enrolled in transition programs can register for any core postsecondary opportunity
I do not know Unaware of any specific classes	Unknowledgeable of postsecondary classes	Not all postsecondary classes are available to HASD students while enrolled in transition programs

The open code is located in the first column (see Appendix E). The open codes include instructors’ perceptions and they are (a) plenty of classes exist, (b) only traditional courses exists, and (c) postsecondary classes do not exist. The axial codes (see Appendix F) are in the second column. All three axial codes summarized the condition or causal links from the open codes. The three different axial codes that were summarized from nine open codes include: (a) knowledge of postsecondary classes varied, (b) knowledge of postsecondary classes, and (c) unknowledgeable

of any postsecondary classes. In the third column are three selective codes (see Appendix E). The selective codes summarize a plausible theory from the nine open codes and three axial codes. The three selective codes include: (a) postsecondary classes for HASD students in transition programs, (b) students with HASD enrolled in transition programs can register for core postsecondary classes, and (c), not all postsecondary classes are available to HASD students while enrolled in transition programs.

The participants' responses for research question two resulted in nine different open codes. . The open codes were from question one, three, and two of the one-on-one interview responses. . The open codes correspond of research question number two, "What benefits do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?" Table 2 illustrates research question two of the open, axial, and selective codes.

Table 2

*Research question number two of open, axial, and selective codes*

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
Gets them prepared Prepared for technology Prepared for the workforce Gradual step to college Depending on level of student Advocate for themselves	Perceived benefits of postsecondary classes	The benefits of a postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs
They have several options	Unlimited amount of postsecondary classes	Students with HASD enrolled in transition programs have unlimited postsecondary classes
They have limited options I do not think they are ample	Limited postsecondary classes	Students with HASD enrolled in transition programs have limited postsecondary classes

In the first column (see Appendix E) of the open code process include instructors' perceptions and they are (a) early preparation, (b) several postsecondary classes and (c) ample postsecondary classes. The axial codes (see Appendix F) are located in the third column. All three axial codes summarize the condition or causal links from the open codes. The three axial codes that were summarized from nine of the different open codes include (a) perceived benefits of postsecondary classes, (b) unlimited postsecondary classes and (c) limited postsecondary classes. In the third column are three selective codes (see Appendix E). The selective codes summarize a plausible theory from nine open codes and three axial codes. The three selective codes include (a) the benefits of postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in

transition programs, (b) students with HASD enrolled in transition programs have unlimited classes, and (c) students with HASD enrolled in transition programs have limited postsecondary classes.

The participants' responses for research question three resulted in 13 open codes. The open codes were from question one, three, four, and five of the one-on-one interview questions. The open codes corresponded with research question number three, "What challenges do instructors perceive of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs?" Table 3 illustrates research question three of the open, axial, and selective codes.

Table 3

*Research question number three of open, axial, and selective codes*

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
Administration should Survey the students after graduation	Academic changes at postsecondary level	Colleges should provide postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in programs
Industries needs to change Additional training in the workforce	Internal challenges and limitations	Industry expectation for students with HASD while in a transition program
Untrained staff Students are set up Instructors are unwilling Higher prevalence in HASD Different transition services Different transition settings Begin at transition programs Need continued support Increase communication	Post-secondary challenges Additional training for all postsecondary instructors Transition programs should provide HASD students	Colleges and transition programs need to create more classes for students with HASD Administration at the postsecondary and secondary level should provide more postsecondary education classes

In the first column (see Appendix F) of the open code process include instructors' perceptions and they are (a) success after graduation, (b) industry should come forward, and (c) begin with transition programs. Located in the second column are the axial codes (see Appendix F). All five axial codes summarize the condition or causal links from the open codes. The five different axial codes were summarized from 13 open codes and they include (a) academic changes at the postsecondary level, (b) internal challenges and limitations, (c) postsecondary challenges, (d)

additional training for all postsecondary instructors, and (e) transition programs should provide HASD students. In the third column are four selective codes (see Appendix F). The four selective codes include (a) colleges should provide postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs, (b) industry expectations for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs, (c) colleges and transition programs need to create more classes for students with HASD, and (d) administration at the postsecondary and secondary level should provide more postsecondary education classes.

### **Presentation of the Data and Results**

The results from the six interviews resulted in three emergent themes: knowledge, prepared, and different needs. All of the themes presented in this intrinsic case study are dominant themes. The dominant themes are patterns across data sets that pertain to certain phenomena (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The qualitative survey responses did not produce emergent themes; an analysis is provided in this chapter. Embedded in the participant responses were six dominant themes and they include unknowledgeable and knowledgeable, prepared, different needs, and limited.

#### **Theme 1: Unknowledgeable and Knowledgeable**

The first emergent theme of the one-on-one interviews included *unknowledgeable* and *knowledgeable*. The researcher wanted to know if participants' were unknowledgeable or knowledgeable regarding the existence of postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. The theme unknowledgeable and knowledgeable included perceptions of postsecondary classes from interview question one, "Explain what postsecondary classes are available for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?" The purpose of interview question number one is to establish participants' knowledge of

postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Participant A4 and participant A6 did not know of specific postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. Participant A4 stated,

I would have to say I'm not familiar with it and it kind of depends of how you define transition. I would not know that much about of **what other schools** might have. I would suspect we have a few and that there would be some things to them. That's I guess all I can say on that one.

Participant A6 did not specify specific postsecondary classes available to HASD students while enrolled in transition programs. Although, participant A6 stated, "I think they have come a long way with many transition programs. I have worked in three different districts and all of them have very different settings." Given A6 response, it is possible transition programs offer different educational opportunities, which could mean an auxiliary of educational opportunities depending on the level of the students who may HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Participant A6 also mentioned the state allocates their funds to help students search and maintain employment and less is spent on postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

Participant A2 and participant A3 were very knowledgeable and provided the names of postsecondary classes. Participant A2 stated, "video game design, photography, and graphics" and participant A3 stated, "English, math, and science." Participant A2 and A3 responded there are postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

Participant A1 stated, "all classes are available for transition kids but the instructors are not trained to work with them but the doors are open for high functioning autism disorder." When I asked how should instructors should be trained A1 mentioned that training has to take place on

college campuses. Participant A1 also explained that college administrators should organize mandatory training sessions for instructors and professors. Participant A5, stated,

As far as my experience goes, options for classes while these students are enrolled in transition programs, are anywhere from your traditional English Math Science Social core credits and to anything from a chef program we have an auto body program, um nursing program and graphics program.

Participant A1, A2, A3 and A5 suggest there are postsecondary classes available to students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. Although A1, A2, A3, and A5 specified the names of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs, participant A4 and A5 did not.

## **Theme 2: Prepared**

The second emergent theme from the one-on-one interviews is *prepared*. The theme prepared included perceived benefits of postsecondary classes from interview question three, “What have been the benefits of postsecondary classes that help students while enrolled in transition programs with HASD?” The purpose of interview question was to establish if participants are aware that postsecondary classes exists and provide possible benefits. The results of the one-on-one interviews included responses from participants A1, A3, and A5 that postsecondary classes exists and provided possible benefits. Participant A1 stated, “It gets them prepared, it’s an introductory preparation for them to kind of know what real-world work is going to be like. Postsecondary is about getting them ready for their jobs their careers.” When I asked A1 to elucidate how students with HASD are getting prepared the participant explained that students with HASD are learning communication and social skills. Participant A1 also explained students are also learning valuable technical skills needed to become fully employed.

Participant A3 stated, “I mean it eases into college, so college isn't such an abrupt change. Change is hard and so being able to ease into that change is very helpful.” Participant A5 stated, I believe that the number for secondary classes help them while they're enrolled since they have several different options. One of the classes I guess I can expand on a little bit of students are unfamiliar with what they might like to do after high school, during this class can explore like visited day in a chef program kind of see what that's like since the classes around on a quarterly basis as well students have an opportunity to experience a lot of different career classes and as well as with the core credit.

Participants A1, A3, and A5 feel postsecondary classes help students with HASD prepare for college while enrolled in transition programs. Participant A1 also delineated postsecondary classes help students with HASD become prepared for a job or career. Participants A2, A4, and A6 feel students with HASD enrolled in transition programs assist students in obtaining essential life skills to live independently but did not mention possible benefits of postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Participant A6 explained students with HASD enrolled in a postsecondary institution many not have the proper supports due to poor social, behavioral, and communicative skills, students would not necessarily garner the benefits of a postsecondary class.

### **Theme 3: Different Needs**

The third emergent theme from interview question number three is *different needs*. Question number three asked, “What have been the benefits of postsecondary classes that help students while enrolled in transition programs with HASD?” The purpose of interview question was to establish the existence of postsecondary classes and how they benefit the student. The results from research question three included responses from participant A1 and A6. Participant

A1 stated, “So as far as classes go, I think you have to fit the kid to the program according to who is educating or training those students.” Participant A6 stated,

I think that our students can be mixed in with students that have different needs and so there is not individualized programs that I'm aware of in this area that really handles that and has good services that are focused right on the need the specific needs of students with high-functioning autism.

Participant A6 explained that many students with HASD could be blended with students who may be lower functioning. If lower functioning students are blended with higher functioning students, there could be oversights made by educators that could inhibit the potential of students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

Participant A2 stated there are different transition programs that are not on a college campus or may not have access to college level classes. This could mean there are transition programs students with HASD with different needs or could follow a different transition program model. Out of the two students with HASD, participant A3 can predict who will struggle and who will be successful. Participant A5 stated there are creative aspects for students to learn curriculum that could be more individualized. The individualization of curriculum tells me there are different methodological approaches of those who learn which brings me to the theory of Gardner (1983) of Multiple Intelligence (MI). According to Gardner (1983), MI intelligence is not just reflected in Intelligence Quotient (IQ); instead, human intelligence uses a much wider set of competencies. The convention of creating individualized curriculum delineates students with HASD who may learn differently.

#### **Theme 4: Limited**

The fourth theme that emerged was *limited*. The theme limited corresponds with interview question number two, “As an instructor, tell me why you believe the number of postsecondary classes help HASD students while enrolled in transition programs?” Participant A6 stated that postsecondary classes are limited in what they offer. When I asked who *they* included, A6 specified transition program educators. Participant A6 stated,

I think there is a general of the things that are going to be covered for students in a transition program. It’s unfortunate that they don’t have specific program for students of high functioning autism because there are not all the same obviously. I think that they are really getting a disservice in transition programs that are around in my experience because they're almost being talked down to and the kids then get bored and they don't see the point in continuing with the program.

Participant A4 did not think that postsecondary classes are limited or ample. When I reiterated limited or ample college class opportunities, A4 thought there are classes that could help students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs but did not think there were ample. When I asked what *ample* meant, A4 stated there was a possibility of limited opportunities of postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

Participant A3 claimed there are postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Participant A3 provided names of classes available to students but did not mention the names of career and technical classes; some of the career and technical classes include computer graphics, landscaping, nursing, and video game design. When I asked participant A3 to provide some of the career and technical classes that are available, A3 could not think of any career and technical classes at the time. I asked A3 if there was any recollection

during the interview to please name them; this did not happen. Participant A1 stated that postsecondary classes assists students to get them prepared for the real world. I asked participant A1 what the *real world* would possibly mean to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs A1 described that real world would mean to live independently and work a full time job.

### **Survey Results**

Those who participated with the one-on-one interview also completed a Qualtrics survey that involved eight survey questions (see Appendix F). The participants provided *yes* or *no* to answer the survey questions. To obtain the participants' knowledge and understanding, I used transition programs, postsecondary classes, and students with HASD in every survey question. It was clear that four participants understood transition programs, postsecondary classes, and students with HASD. It was also clear that three individuals did not have prior knowledge of transition programs that had available postsecondary classes for students enrolled in transition with HASD.

Survey question one stated if colleges should offer the same postsecondary classes for HASD students as typical students; the results from question one were 83.33% answered yes, 11.67% answered no, and 5% did not provide an answer. Survey question two pertained to instructors' perceptions asking if all postsecondary classes should be extended to HASD students. The results from question two were 83.33% answered yes and 16.67% answered no. Survey question three asked if postsecondary institutions understand the abilities of students with HASD; results from question three were 100% answered no. Survey question four pertained to instructors' perceptions that postsecondary classes meet the skills of HASD students; results from question five were 80% answered yes and 20% answered no. Survey question five asked if

postsecondary classes fulfill students with HASD academically; results from question five were 40% answered yes and 60% answered no. Survey question six asked if sufficient postsecondary classes interest HASD students; results from question six were 60% answered yes and 40% answered no. Question number seven asked if postsecondary institutions maximize postsecondary classes for HASD students; results from question seven were 20% answered yes and 80% answered no. Finally, question eight asked if postsecondary classes help students with HASD prepare for college; results from question eight were 40% answered yes and 60% answered no.

### **Trustworthiness: Validity and Reliability**

There are some threats to internal validity that may include the ability to determine the proper inferences from the participants, maturation, and experimental procedures (Thompson, 2006). Some of these threats could compromise the confidence of the researcher that a relationship exists between independent and dependent variables (Thompson, 2006). According to Bieger and Gerlach (1996), in order to safeguard any threats to internal validity, I would get to know the participants on a personal level. This can be achieved by meeting in person during their lunch hour prior to the one-on-one interviews and Qualtrics survey. I used standardized instrumentation that included a digital recording device and a computer for note taking. According to Rogelberg (2008), there could be an error variance that could potentially take place across multiple sources based on manipulating the items. The inferences with the possibility of errors could serve useful to establish the generality of the construct (Creswell, 2013).

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

The dependability of this intrinsic case study can be achieved while interviewing the participants without prior assumptions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Using thick rich descriptions of

the participants helped the reader connect with the research (Creswell, 2013). To avoid any personal confounding results, the data collection should be approached without judgment or predetermined assertions (Creswell, 2013). Conformability questions of the research findings are supported by the data collected (Rogelberg, 2008). This is a process to establish whether the researcher has a preexisting bias during the study; this is due to the assumption that the research can bring a unique perspective to the study. As the researcher, I am able to judge this by studying the data collected from the original inquiry and apply personal reflexivity during the collection process (Creswell, 2013). Personal reflexivity is to apprise participants of the researcher's brief historical background leading up to the research topic (Creswell, 2013).

### **Summary**

This intrinsic case appearing in Chapter 4 was designed to investigate instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes of students enrolled in transition programs with HASD. This intrinsic case study relied on one-on-one interviews, survey responses, and member checking. The instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs were revealed from interviews and a Qualtrics survey. To analyze the data, three different steps were applied to code the data: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The main objective during the coding process was to determine emergent themes. The four themes that emerged included: knowledge, prepared, different needs, and limited.

All six of the participants completed the survey process but did not answer all survey questions. Some of the participants bypassed the survey question and continued to the next survey question. Due to this incompleteness, it is possible some participants believed they lacked the knowledge of other transition programs and if additional postsecondary institutions offer

classes for students with HASD. In Chapter 5, I will explain the results, their relation of the literature, and recommendations and conclusion.

## **Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusion**

Transition programs assist students in social, academic, and vocational skills to become productive members of society (Gothberg, Peterson, Peak, & Sedaghat, 2015; Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011; Szidon et al., 2015). The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. With an increase in prevalence of those with HASD, transition programs and postsecondary institutions may expect an increase of enrollment (Kogan et al., 2009; Zablotzky et al., 2015). With an increase of enrollment, some students who have HASD could be looking for additional postsecondary classes than what colleges and transition programs offer. In Chapter 5, I provided a summary and discussion of results, discussion of results related to the literature, limitations, implications of the results, theoretical implications, recommendations for further research, and conclusion.

### **Discussion and Summary of Results**

I conducted six one-on-one interviews and provided a Qualtrics survey to the same number of individuals. All of the data from interviews and Qualtrics survey were aligned with the central research questions. To interpret the findings, I incorporated direct quotes and paraphrases from six interview responses that lead to three emergent themes: knowledge, abilities, and prepared. Survey responses did produce emergent themes. The Qualtrics survey responses did not present indigenous categories, key words, or word repetition. However, the participants' survey responses are pertinent to this intrinsic case study and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

**Theme 1: Unknowledgeable and Knowledgeable.** The first interview question focused on participants' comprehension of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in

transition programs. The purpose of the interview question was to establish whether postsecondary classes exist for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. Participants A2 and A3 believed there were plenty of post-secondary classes; A2 stated, “video game design, photography, and graphics” and participant A3 stated, “English, math, and science.” The perceptions of A2 and A3 listed specific postsecondary classes, which was an indication they understood the words transition programs and postsecondary classes. The response of participant A4 did not know of any postsecondary classes. Participant A4 stated, “How do you define transition?” Participant A4 also used perceptions and also responded with phrases, “I’m not familiar” and “I would not know” of the interview question. The possible reason of participants A4’s answers suggests a lack of familiarity of transition programs and postsecondary classes. Participant A1 claimed all classes are available for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. It was unclear if A1 was under the assumption that all postsecondary classes are available or that classes could be made available to students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. Participant A6 stated that postsecondary classes are available but it depends on the emotional intelligence and academic readiness for a postsecondary class. Participant A5 thought there are postsecondary classes available but could not remember the name of the classes offered to students with HASD enrolled in transition programs.

**Theme 2: Prepared.** Another question asked during the interview focused on the participant’s belief about the number of postsecondary classes that help HASD students while enrolled in transition programs. The purpose of this interview question was to establish if postsecondary classes helped HASD students while enrolled in transition programs. Participants A1, A3, and A5 believed that postsecondary classes help students with HASD prepare for employment and college. Participant A1 stated, “It gets them prepared. It’s an introductory

preparation for them to kind of know what real-world work is going to be like. Because truly postsecondary to me is about getting them ready for their jobs their careers.” Participant A1’s perceptions asserted that postsecondary classes help students with HASD prepare for jobs and careers. Participant A3 stated, “I mean it eases into college, so college isn’t such an abrupt change. Change is hard and so um being able to ease into that change is very helpful.”

Participant A5’s perceptions conclude that postsecondary classes for HASD students do exist and stated, “They have several different options.” Participant A2 claimed some classes help students with HASD. Participant A4 was unsure if postsecondary classes help students with HASD enrolled in transition. Participant A6 claimed that postsecondary classes should fit the students’ abilities and interest.

**Theme 3: Different needs.** Another question that took place during the interviews included a discussion about what postsecondary classes are available for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. The purpose of this interview question was to establish if participants knew the names of postsecondary classes available for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Participant A1 stated, “I think we need to fit the kid to the program and who is educating or training those students.” Participant A6 stated, “Transition services are very different depending on where they are.” Participant A1 and A6 did not come name specific postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. Participant A6 also mentioned that state funds are disbursed for students with HASD to “teach them how to fill out a resume, do job searching, and not only just get a job but retain job.” Some students whose HASD is more severe than other students with HASD; students whose HASD is more severe would more than likely be unable to participate in a postsecondary class. Participant A6 may have only worked with a population of HASD students who are lower functioning and

unaware of specific postsecondary classes. Participant A2 and A3 claimed postsecondary exist. Participants A2 and A3 believed there were ample post-secondary classes. A2 stated, “video game design, photography, and graphics” and participant A3 stated, “English, math, and science.” The perceptions of A2 and A3 listed specific postsecondary classes, which was an indication they understood the words transition programs and postsecondary classes. Participant A5 stated that postsecondary classes exist and participant A4 thought there could be some classes available but unsure of the names of the classes available to students with HASD enrolled in transition programs.

**Theme 4: Limited.** The fourth theme that took place during the one-on-one interviews was limited. The theme limited corresponded to interview question two. The purpose of this interview question was to establish if there were limited postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. Participant A1 explained all postsecondary classes are available for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs but did not provide specific names of the classes. Participant A1 and A5 explained transition programs do not offer identical program opportunities, which could mean some transition programs offer a certain number postsecondary classes for students with HASD; this could infer there are limited postsecondary classes for students with HASD. Participants A2, A3, A4, and A6. Participant A6 stated,

I think that our students can mixed in with students that have different needs and so there's not individualize program that I'm aware of in this area that really handles that and has good services that are focused right on the need the specific needs of students with high-functioning autism.

## Summary of Survey

Those who participated in the one-on-one interviews participated in the survey containing eight survey questions; however, not all of the participants completed the survey. According to the data analysis in Qualtrics, participants clicked on to the next page leaving the page unanswered. Those who answered the survey resulted in 60% completion. Table 4 elucidates the participants' percentage of completion and answers.

Table 4

*Research question number three of open, axial, and selective codes*

Survey Questions	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	Completion %
1. All postsecondary institutions should have the same amount of postsecondary classes like other colleges (e.g., history, science, mathematics, business, law enforcement programs) extended to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	83%
2. All postsecondary classes offered at the college level should be extended to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	100%
3. Most postsecondary institutions understand the abilities of students who have HASD enrolled transition programs?	No	No	No	No	No	No	100%

4. There are sufficient postsecondary classes that fulfill HASD students' academically while enrolled in transition programs?	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	83.33%
5. There are sufficient postsecondary classes that meet the skills of HASD students while enrolled in transition programs?	No	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	No	83.33%
6. There are sufficient postsecondary classes that interest HASD students enrolled in transition programs?	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	No	83.33%
7. Do you feel transition programs work well with postsecondary institutions to maximize the number of postsecondary classes?	No	N/A	Yes	No	No	No	83.33%
8. There are sufficient postsecondary classes to help transition students with HASD become prepared for college?	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	83.33%

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Not all of the participants completed all of the qualitative survey questions in Qualtrics; answers that were not answered were listed as Not Available (NA) in Table 4. In order to help answer the main research question, all of the interview and survey responses had to be compared to one another to make sure there were no discrepancies. Interview question number one stated, “Explain what postsecondary classes are available for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?” Participant A2 stated there were plenty of postsecondary classes available

for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs; however, participant A2 left survey question five unanswered, “There are sufficient postsecondary classes that meet the skills of HASD students while enrolled in transition programs.” Participant A3 stated there are postsecondary classes available to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs; however, participant A3 left survey question three unanswered, “There are sufficient postsecondary classes that interest HASD students while enrolled in transition programs.” Participant A1 specified all of the postsecondary classes are available to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs when presented with interview question number one; however, participant A1 left survey question number eight unanswered, “There are sufficient postsecondary classes to help transition students with HASD become prepared for college?”

Participant A4’s responses suggest the lack of familiarity of transition programs and postsecondary classes when presented with interview question number one. Participant A4 answered seven survey questions and unanswered survey question number four, “There are sufficient postsecondary classes that fulfill HASD students academically while enrolled in transition programs?” Due to participant A4’s unanswered response, it is unclear if A4 perceives sufficient or insufficient postsecondary classes of students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs; however, when comparing A4’s interview responses and survey responses, participant A4’s comprehension and knowledge could have broadened during the interview process in which A4 was able to complete seven survey questions. Participants A5 completed all survey questions; no discrepancies were found from one-on-one interview and survey responses. Participant A6 completed seven survey questions but did not answer survey question one, “All postsecondary institutions should have the same amount of postsecondary classes like other colleges (e.g., history, science, mathematics, business, law enforcement program) extended to

students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.” Due to A6’s unanswered response, it is unclear if A6 is knowledgeable of other postsecondary institutions that may offer postsecondary classes to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

The survey questions that involved 83.33% participation included question one, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight. The survey question that involved 100% participation involved question number two and three. The internal validity of a case study refers to how well a case study is conducted to avoid more than one possible independent variable Rogelberg (2008). The different variables that could be considered for this intrinsic case study are participants’ inferences. Participants may believe that they already answered question from the one-on-one interview and did not want to duplicate their answers. Another possible reason for 83.33% participation is their knowledge or lack of knowledge within the context of the questions; some participants may not have prior experience or knowledge of transition programs or experience working with other colleges that offer postsecondary classes to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

I conducted six individual interviews and provided a Qualtrics survey to the same persons. The interview responses revealed three emergent themes: knowledge, prepared, and different needs. The first emergent theme is *knowledge*. The participants’ perceptions regarding postsecondary classes ranged from unknowledgeable to knowledgeable of postsecondary classes available to HASD students while enrolled in transition programs. Not all transition programs offer similar program opportunities due to the number of adults with varying abilities (Everson & Moon, 1987). The perception of A6 asserts transition programs do not offer suitable options for HASD students. Students with HASD entering adulthood could need specialized secondary

transition services, exposure to postsecondary education programs, employment support, vocational training, family support, and residential services (Cimera et al., 2013; Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

The second emergent theme is *prepared*. The participants' perceptions of postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs help prepare them for college and employment. Some students with HASD could be ready to attend a college or university after they graduate from a transition program (Adreon & Durocher, 2007). However, some students with HASD could have trouble handling the stress and rigor of college life and classes. A response from the one-on-one interview from A6 asserts not all HASD students have the same level of functionality. According to VanBergeijk, Klin, and Volkmar (2008), students may present additional comorbidities with HASD. Some students may have a primary diagnosis of HASD with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), or General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) (Ghaziuddin, Weidmer-Mikhail, & Ghaziuddin, 1998; Turcotte et al., 2015). This could mean that students with HASD could have psychological comorbidities that could impede their abilities to complete a postsecondary class (Turcotte et al., 2015).

The third emergent theme is *abilities*. Participant A3 asserts postsecondary classes help HASD students become prepared for college. There are many different challenges students with HASD are confronted with while attending college that include social skills, academics, and finding support for mental health (Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Cory, 2007; Dipeolu et al., 2014; Retherford & Schreiber, 2015; Thurlow et al., 1997). A study was conducted to examine the characteristics of HASD students' readiness for college; Krell (2010) concluded that students with HASD lack self-knowledge, self-determination, and social skills. Krell also concluded that

students with HASD could face additional challenges during college and could need non-traditional supports. Participant A1 asserts postsecondary classes help students prepare for the real-world experiences. Many students with HASD who are employed had performed menial positions in replacing dirty glasses with clean glasses; future research for those enrolled in a transition program should be analyzed regarding transition program services that promote successful program outcomes (Taylor & Seltzer, 2011). The postsecondary classes for students enrolled in transition programs with HASD could assist them to gain professional careers.

The fourth emergent theme is *limited*. A taxonomy presented by Kohler (1996) and Kohler and Field (2003) of transition programs include student-based programming, collaboration with educators and parents, and utilization of community resources; the taxonomy could include industries to come forward to help transition programs and postsecondary institutions create training programs that industries are demanding; this could help HASD obtain professional careers. It also important for students with HASD to enroll in transition programs and be offered a range of postsecondary classes that typifies students' talents, abilities, and interests (Müller et al., 2003; Kohler, 1996). According to survey question number 4 and 6, not all postsecondary classes fulfill and interest students enrolled in transition programs with HASD. Although, instructors' perceptions suggest classes are available to transition program students, there could be an oversight that educators at that postsecondary and transition programs educators do not maximize student opportunities in general education, career, and technical courses. However, according to Joshi and Bouck (2016), regardless of students with HASD or learning disabilities who are enrolled in transition programs, students with HASD would not necessarily be successful in all postsecondary opportunities without the support of the college faculty and transition programs staff.

## **Limitations**

In all case studies, there are limitations that are unavoidable (Creswell, 2013). One of the limitations that should be considered for further research could include principals from transition programs and students enrolled in a transition program with HASD. The principals from transition programs could provide feedback if there are limited or unlimited postsecondary classes for students with HASD. The students with HASD enrolled in transition programs could reveal postsecondary classes assist in college preparation. Students with HASD enrolled in transition programs could also provide if postsecondary classes assist in career possibilities. The online Qualtrics survey was incomplete. Some of the survey questions were left unanswered. If the participants completed the survey, the researcher could have gained a greater understanding of the participants' perceptions.

Another limitation of this intrinsic case study was the sample size. The study only focused on the instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes. The perceptions from students, paraprofessionals, special education teachers, students or principals could have provided the researcher with differentiated perspectives that could lead to further insight. According to Creswell (2013), the use of personal interviews could be limiting. If the interviewee was nervous or anxious their answers could lead to inaccuracies of the data (Creswell, 2013). The participants who were interviewed could have become uncomfortable when answering the interview question. The participants' responses could have been clearer and articulated.

## **Implications of the Results for Transformation**

The implications of the results for this intrinsic case study of instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs could help students obtain postsecondary degrees. The study was conducted to gain further insight of

instructors' perceptions regarding the benefits and challenges students with HASD are confronted with. The discovery of findings from this intrinsic case study could help improve current programming for postsecondary institutions and transition program students with HASD. Help professors and instructors understand the needs and accommodations students with HASD may need. Transition programs and postsecondary institutions could work simultaneously to develop and diversify postsecondary classes that could help students with HASD obtain a postsecondary degree. Implications could force states to conduct five-year assessments for all HASD students who have graduated from a transition program. The assessments could provide preliminary data for administrators at the postsecondary level and educators who teach transition program students with HASD. The data from the assessments could help current students enrolled in transition programs with HASD an opportunity to enroll in all postsecondary classes. The postsecondary classes could include all general education, technical, and career courses.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Many adults with HASD who are employed may have performed menial positions in replacing dirty glasses with clean glasses; future research of those who graduated from a transition program could be analyzed regarding transition program services that promote successful career opportunities (Taylor & Seltzer, 2011). Participant A1 stated, "It gets them prepared. It's an introductory preparation for them to kind of know what real-world work is going to be like. Postsecondary education is about getting them ready for their jobs their careers."

Howard Gardner is a developmental psychologist best known for his theories of multiple intelligences; Gardner asserts that an individual will demonstrate a particular aptitude but will not necessarily demonstrate a comparable ability; for example, a meteorologist, landscape artist,

and zoologist may demonstrate high levels of naturalistic intelligence but may demonstrate low levels in linguistic ability to write a speech or book (Gardner; 1983; Gardner & Moran, 2006).

The multiple intelligence theory could be applied to students with HASD.

In Kohler (1996) and Kohler and Field (2003) present a taxonomy for transition programs for students that could produce favorable outcomes that may include individualized student-based programming, collaboration with educators and parents, a utilization of community resources, structured programming, and student development. In one of the interview questions; “What could colleges do to offer additional classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?” One of the participants who were interviewed asserts industries should come forward and communicate with postsecondary institutions. The participant also explained that if industries come forward, colleges could access HASD students’ talents, interests, and skills industries are looking for. The conceptual framework presented by Schlossberg (1984) includes that state and county agencies could provide assistance or service in a physical setting. This theory could also be applicable to industries that could provide career opportunities for HASD students while enrolled postsecondary classes and transition programs.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

A proposed design and method could include all transition programs in a single state that could uncover if HASD students should have independent programs due to the increase in prevalence of those with HASD (Kogan et al., 2009; Zablotsky et al., 2015). The students with HASD could increase in value and distinction to offer additional program options that help students who may be lower functioning. This distinction of students with HASD students and students with HASD who lower functioning could lead separate transition programs.

Recommendations for further research would include a qualitative or quantitative study of students' perceptions of postsecondary classes with HASD while enrolled in transition programs. . The study could reveal that postsecondary classes do not facilitate students' interest, skills, and abilities while enrolled in transition programs with HASD. Another recommendation for further research could include parents' perceptions of their child's postsecondary classes while enrolled in transition programs. A triangulation of data of students' perceptions with HASD, parents' perceptions, and teacher perceptions could present a thematic analysis for educators at the postsecondary level. A thematic analysis could produce confounding evidence that transition programs offer limited postsecondary classes for students enrolled in transition programs. If postsecondary classes are limited for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs, postsecondary institutions and transition programs could diversify the number of postsecondary classes; diversifying postsecondary classes could give students learning opportunities and experiences (Fink, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

The results from the interviews and Qualtrics survey suggested there are postsecondary classes available to students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. In the one-on-one interviews, there was only one participant out of six who was unaware of postsecondary classes for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. However, five of the participants were aware of postsecondary opportunities and three of the five participants provided a list of postsecondary classes for students with HASD.

The findings and results of instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes for HASD students while enrolled in transition programs did not coincide with present literature. Although, the results of the data I provided is integral for researchers and scholars could reform effective

programming services for students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. My review of literature did not provide specific outcomes of instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes of students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. However, the literature I provided comprises implications of transition programming challenges students face in college with HASD, self-determination, and employment outcomes. Transition programs do help students with HASD strengthen their social skills, independent living skills, and participate in their community. Even though there are HASD students in transition programs learning similar skills, they should not be overlooked academically. From an education standpoint, is important to incorporate postsecondary classes with transition programs on a continual basis. Students with HASD could present a skill set employers are looking for, but be unemployable, because of an absence of a 2-year or 4-degree college degree. The significance of this intrinsic case study is for educators and administrators to recognize the academic potential of students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Consent

### CONSENT FORM

**Research Study Title:** Instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes for students with HASD

**Principal Investigator:** Lisa M. Kemp

**Research Institution:** Concordia University

**Faculty Advisor:** Christopher Maddox, Ph.D.

The purpose of this one-on-one interview and survey seek the instructors' perceptions of postsecondary classes for students with High Functioning Autism Disorder (HASD) enrolled in transition programs. I expect approximately six to seven volunteers. There will be no compensation provided to the participants who take part in the study. We will begin enrollment on 12-18-17 and end enrollment on 12-22-17.

The principal will contact instructors delineating all the details I have supplied him regarding the study. I should receive emails for interested individuals to be part of the study beginning 12-18-17. After I have received an email from an instructor interested to be part of the study, I contacted the instructor to schedule the interview and fill out the survey. The one-on-one interviews should take 45 minutes and the survey should take 15 minutes. The total time to participate in the study should take approximately one complete.

#### **Risks:**

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely

via electronic encryption or locked inside my personal office. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will refer to your data with a code that only the principal investigator knows links to you. This way, your identifiable information will not be stored with the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

**Benefits:**

Information you provide for this intrinsic case study could enlighten participating education professionals such as postsecondary administrators, secondary administrators, and community service providers to better serve transition program students with HASD.

**Confidentiality:**

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information:**

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Lisa M. Kemp. Her email is [Researcher email redacted]. If you

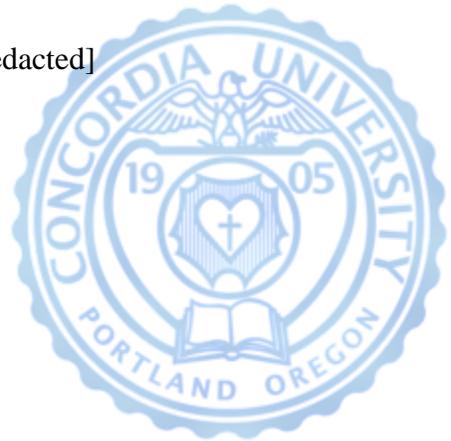
want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email [obran@cu-portland.edu](mailto:obran@cu-portland.edu) or call 503-493-6390).

**Your Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____	_____
Participant Name	Date
_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Name	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Signature	Date

Investigator: Lisa M. Kemp email: [Researcher email redacted]  
c/o: Professor Christopher Maddox, Ph.D.  
Concordia University – Portland  
2811 NE Holman Street  
Portland, Oregon 97221



## **Appendix B: One-on-One Interview Questions for Instructors**

1. Explain what postsecondary classes are available for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?
2. As an instructor, tell me why you believe the number of postsecondary classes help HASD students while enrolled in transition programs?
3. What have been the benefits of postsecondary classes that help students while enrolled in transition programs with HASD?
4. What would be the steps to let administration know if postsecondary classes are limited to HASD students enrolled in transition programs?
5. What could the colleges do to offer additional postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs?

### **Appendix C: Qualtrics Survey Question for Instructors**

1. All postsecondary institutions should have the same amount postsecondary classes like other colleges (e.g., history, science, mathematics, business, law enforcement programs) extended to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs? Yes or No
2. All postsecondary classes offered at the college level should be extended to students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs? Yes or No
3. Most postsecondary institutions understand the abilities of students who have HASD enrolled transition programs? Yes or No
4. There are sufficient postsecondary classes that fulfill HASD students' academically while enrolled in transition programs. Yes or No
5. There are sufficient postsecondary classes that meet the skills of HASD students while enrolled in transition programs. Yes or No
6. There are sufficient postsecondary classes that interest HASD students enrolled in transition programs. Yes or No
7. Do you feel transition programs work well with postsecondary institutions to maximize the number of postsecondary classes? Yes or No
8. There are sufficient postsecondary classes to help transition students with HASD become prepared for college? Yes or No

## **Appendix D: Introductory Letter to Postsecondary Instructors**

December 18th, 2018

My name is Lisa M. Kemp and I am a doctorate student at Concordia Portland Oregon. I am interested in interviewing instructors who teach students with HASD enrolled in transition programs. As a partial fulfillment of my dissertation, I am seeking six individuals to participate in a one-on-one interview and to answer an online survey.

All the instructors' names will remain anonymous regarding all of those who participate in the one-on-one interview and online Qualtrics survey. I would very much like to speak with you at your convenience. For those who want to participate, I can meet with you after instructional hours. I am also available to speak with you today or tomorrow via phone if you have any question at [Researcher phone redacted]

Please let me know if you need additional information regarding the one-on-one interviews and Qualtrics survey. Each interview should only take one hour to complete and online survey using Qualtrics should take 15 minutes to complete.

I can provide you with additional documentation of the one-on-one interview Qualtrics survey. An informed consent is also provided in this email. This form will require your signature to take part in the study.

Thank you for your time,

Lisa M. Kemp  
M.A. Education Leadership

### Appendix E: Open Coding and Axial Coding

Research Question One: Open, Axial, and Selection Codes

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
<p>All classes are available</p> <p>Certain career tech classes</p> <p>Some classes available</p> <p>I believe postsecondary</p> <p>Postsecondary classes are</p>	<p>Knowledge of</p> <p>postsecondary classes</p> <p>varied</p>	<p>Postsecondary classes for</p> <p>HASD students while</p> <p>enrolled in transition</p> <p>program</p>
<p>Traditional courses</p> <p>Math, science, core</p>	<p>Knowledge of</p> <p>postsecondary classes</p>	<p>Students with HASD</p> <p>enrolled in transition</p> <p>programs can register for</p> <p>any core postsecondary</p> <p>opportunity</p>
<p>I do not know</p> <p>Unaware of any specific</p> <p>classes</p>	<p>Unknowledgeable of</p> <p>postsecondary classes</p>	<p>Not all postsecondary</p> <p>classes are available to</p> <p>HASD students while</p> <p>enrolled in transition</p> <p>programs</p>

Research Question Two: Open, Axial, and Selection Codes

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
<p>Gets them prepared</p> <p>Prepared for technology</p> <p>Prepared for the workforce</p> <p>Gradual step to college</p> <p>Depending on level of student</p> <p>Advocate for themselves</p>	<p>Perceived benefits of postsecondary classes</p>	<p>The benefits of a postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in transition programs</p>
<p>They have several options</p>	<p>Unlimited postsecondary classes</p>	<p>Students with HASD enrolled in transition programs have unlimited postsecondary classes</p>
<p>They have limited options</p> <p>I do not think they are ample</p>	<p>Limited postsecondary classes</p>	<p>Students with HASD enrolled in transition programs have limited postsecondary classes</p>

Research Question Three: Open, Axial, and Selection Codes

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
<p>Administration should Survey the students after graduation</p>	<p>Academic changes at postsecondary level</p>	<p>Colleges should provide postsecondary classes for students with HASD while enrolled in programs</p>
<p>Industries needs to change Additional training in the workforce</p>	<p>Internal challenges and limitations</p>	<p>Industry expectation for students with HASD while in a transition program</p>
<p>Untrained staff Students are set up Instructors are unwilling Higher prevalence in HASD Different transition services Different transition settings Begin at transition programs Need continued support Increase communication</p>	<p>Post-secondary challenges Additional training for all postsecondary instructors Transition programs should provide HASD students</p>	<p>Colleges and transition programs need to create more classes for students with HASD Administration at the postsecondary and secondary level should provide more postsecondary education classes</p>

**Appendix F: Qualtrics Survey Responses**

Progress Complete	Recipient Identification	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
100%	A2	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		Yes		Yes
100%	A4	Yes	No	No		No	Yes	No	No
100%	A3	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
100%	A6		Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
100%	A5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
100%	A1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	

## Appendix G: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Lisa M. Kemp

Digital Signature

Lisa M. Kemp

Name (Typed)

April 5, 2018

Date