SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION:
A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

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Special Education Transition:

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this student, especially with respect to the relationships and networks that influenced this student's integration into a community setting. Transition, according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), is a results-oriented process that requires special education program leaders to focus on the specific needs of each student in order to successfully integrate them in communities. This case study was significant in that it contributed to understanding how an individual with disabilities copes in educational programs and in communities. Data collection involved interviews with an adult age student who received special education transition services, her parent, her case manager, document review of the Individualized Education Program of the selected student, and review of relevant transition program and policy documents. Social capital theory was used as the conceptual framework for this study and guided the data analysis. Three distinctive themes were revealed through the analysis of the data: Community Opportunities, Development and Implementation of the IEP, and Employment. The overall findings of this case study revealed that through implementation of the IEP and the transition service in a community based setting, a multitude of social relationships and networks were activated by the student. The IEP specifically generated relationships and networks through opportunities for the student to have a peer mentor, have structured social time with her peers, have access to community venues, and through employment. The following conclusions were drawn: Community opportunities provide access to resources that influence integration: IEP transition services are a mechanism to facilitate community integration; and, employment is a primary outcome of transition service and a means to integrate into the community. The overall findings of this case study confirmed that vital social relationships and networks were activated by the student through conscientious implementation of her IEP and particularly as a result of the recommended transition services that afforded her community-based employment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Twelve years after my first classroom experience, I visited a regional jail facility to satisfy my school district's Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) obligation to incarcerated adults aged 18 to 22 with disabilities. My assignment was to interview inmates with disabilities in order to develop a roster for a regional general educational development (GED) program. As the first inmate entered, I immediately recognized a young man named Jason, since I had been his special education teacher during my initial year of teaching at a small elementary school in a rural county in a southeastern state. At that time Jason was an eight-year-old child spending his second consecutive year in second grade. I recalled having discussions with my colleagues at the school about his prospects for the future. For this child, "the writing was on the wall"…at least that is what many of my colleagues believed, as I did as well, at times.

I still had vivid memories of the harsh circumstances of this child's life. Jason was seriously emotionally disturbed, diagnosed with mental retardation, and lived in poverty. Every teacher in the building had repeatedly told me that he was a "holy terror" and "unmanageable." As a new teacher, I knew I would need the support of his family, my colleagues at school, and possibly other professionals in the community to develop and implement his Individualized Education Program (IEP). Initially Jason's IEP primarily focused on facilitating relationships between him and his regular education teachers and classroom peers. In time, weekly team meetings with his teachers and monthly inter-agency meetings with his various community-based case managers helped shape his IEP, which was required for successful implementation. Eventually, specific attention to building and maintaining relationships within the scope of an IEP became an integral part of my teaching repertoire with other students who had similar needs or circumstances. Despite our best efforts, Jason's incarceration made it clear that we had been unable to overcome the combination of his debilitating disabilities, an uneducated, dysfunctional family, and a school system that was ill-equipped to deal with his various challenges.

Unfortunately, Jason was not the only former student I met in jail that day. Regardless of their crime, I remembered each of these young men as children who struggled with many issues, not the least of which was some form of disability. When the day was over, the experience of coming face-to-face with these former students made me reconsider my purpose as a special

education teacher. I realized that for some students, especially those with significant disabilities, modifying certain aspects of an IEP might have had the potential to improve their quality of life in enduring ways. For example, when I taught these students in the late 80s, post-school outcomes, addressed now through transition services, had yet to be adopted in special education programs. I could not help but wonder whether the lives of those incarcerated students could have been different had transition services been a factor in the design and implementation of their IEPs. Jason, in particular, was a student who would have required and benefited from community-based experiences as part of his transition services. Perhaps he could have had an opportunity to earn a living, develop friendships within the community, and look forward to a promising life.

Statement of the Problem

This study stemmed from the recognition of a lack of information about transition services in the area of community integration for adult students with developmental disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) defined transition services as:

> …a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that is designed within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (34 CFR §300.43).

Thus, this definition reflects a results-oriented process that requires special education program leaders to focus on the specific needs of each student to better prepare him or her to function in the mainstream world.

A way to visualize the process of transition is to imagine special education transition services as the framework of a bridge that connects a student's school opportunities and experiences on one side to community-based opportunities and life experiences on the other side. Special education, with a pragmatic emphasis on life outcomes, purposefully links the two sides. Many special educator professionals believe one of the goals of an IEP transition section is to "pass the baton." In other words, the working relationships and networks that have been

developed via the IEP process should help ensure that the baton, or vital program information, will pass successfully from one year or one agency to the next.

For adult students aged 18 to 21 with developmental disabilities, transition services are more intensive. Adult-age students with significant disabilities require an IEP that includes extensive services beyond those typically offered at a school site. Therefore, supplemental transition services function as important mechanisms for connecting the student to social and vocational resources within a community setting (Kohler & Field, 2003). In these instances, an IEP can delineate transition services to include partner agencies such as Departments of Rehabilitative Service (DRS) and Community Service Boards. The relationships and networks built with partner agencies on behalf of students are of significant importance. Specifically, these organizations will often continue to generate social and vocational networks, as well as provide core community resources for the student once he or she has exited the special education system and is integrated into the community.

The need for community integration is vital for students with developmental disabilities such as mental retardation, as these students traditionally demonstrate lower rates of community integration in the form of minimal employment rates and decreased participation in social activities (Dolyniuk et al. 2002). To understand the importance of community integration, it is essential that the special education professional, as an advocate for the student with a disability and often as chair of the IEP team, fully understands the function of transition as a process that leads to real-life enduring outcomes. However, in order to identify and take advantage of opportunities to facilitate interpersonal relationships and social networks on behalf of students with developmental disabilities, special education teachers must be aware of how to formulate and initiate adjustments to a community setting. One way to study this phenomenon is by examining the relationships and networks that influence community adjustment and integration through the transition process. According to Cummins and Lau (2003), the ways in which individuals with disabilities experience social phenomena such as community integration has rarely been addressed in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

In an editorial commentary, researcher Paul Wehman (2001) stated that in addition to preparation for adulthood, an important postsecondary outcome for individuals with disabilities is the existence of social networks and community support. Specifically, the extent to which an

individual with a developmental disability integrates into his or her community may hinge on the existence of interpersonal relationships and social networks. As Coleman (1988) discussed more than two decades ago, social interactions and relationships influence a person's life opportunities and future successes. For individuals with disabilities who receive special education, however, the responsibility for generating relationships and social networks often rests on the shoulders of parents and special education professionals.

The snapshot of Jason provided earlier in this chapter points to an undesirable outcome that many students in special education experience. Without these relationships and social networks, students with disabilities similar to Jason are statistically at-risk for dropping out of school, experiencing social isolation, becoming incarcerated, and experiencing workplace discrimination (United States Department of Education, Twenty-Sixth Annual Report to Congress, 2004). Moreover, in too many cases, the presence of a developmental disability that is paired with a family history of limited relationships with school and community agencies can negatively impact the effectiveness of school programs such as special education.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this student, especially with respect to the interpersonal relationships and social networks that influenced this student's integration into a community setting.

Theoretical Framework

The complex nature of human behavior and interactions became the basis for social capital theory, which broadly refers to the ways in which social relationships between individuals can facilitate productive outcomes. The use of social capital constructs in this study provided an opportunity to examine the experiences of a student undergoing the transition process. This insider perspective also provided a unique opportunity to apply a social capital framework to a qualitative design. This approach met an identified gap in the literature regarding the application of this theoretical approach to educational outcomes and issues for specific student populations (Dika & Singh, 2002). Also important to note is that social capital constructs have been largely absent from the literature on community integration and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). Thus, a literature review of the theoretical aspects of social capital provided the conceptual lens through which the analysis of the study results was

viewed (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004; Coleman, 1988; Dika & Singh, 2002; Kahne & Bailey, 1999).

Overview of the Research Design

A qualitative research design was used because of its potential for illuminating the structural and functional aspects of the many intricate and intangible social interactions that occur in special education, as discussed by Creswell (2007). As will be shown, the procedural and process requirements of an IEP offer a means by which many formal and informal transition processes occur, which can provide social resources and benefits to the student recipient in the area of community integration. Therefore, the use of case study design provided an opportunity for the researcher to "delve in depth into complexities and processes" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 53). Case study design also facilitated an exploration of the questions that guided this study, since according to Yin (2002), it is the preferred method when the focus is on real-life circumstances.

The case under consideration in this study involved the community integration experiences of one adult-age student (a female) with a developmental disability who received special education transition services in a community setting. This student was identified after obtaining a list of adult-age students who had been receiving community-based transition services through a cooperating school district. The student participant met the following pre-established criteria for the study: (1) was between the ages of 18 and 22, (2) was receiving special education transition services in a community setting for no less than two years, (3) was residing with a parent(s) or guardian(s), and (4) at the time of the study was enrolled in special education through a public school system in southwestern Virginia.

This study focused on the student's experiences with community integration as a part of the special education transition service outlined in her Individualized Education Program for the school year in which the study took place. The case was examined from the perspective of community engagement and participation, as well as the existence and nature of the social relationships and networks within the community. Supplemental information about the case was obtained from a review of the her previous IEP documents that addressed transition services, interviews with her parent, and interviews with the student's special education teacher. The case was delineated by the community integration experiences of this student during the timeframe

during which she received special education transition services; it did not include separate examinations of transition processes, transition strategies, or other community settings.

The research design upheld the purpose of the study and resulted in a richly detailed description of the case, as advocated by Patton (2002). Also important in this study was the inclusion of a social justice perspective, which Patton indicated was well suited for qualitative case study design because it gives voice to those who may be disenfranchised or marginalized by society. This reinforces the view of Pugach (2001), who discussed the importance of individuals with disabilities having a voice in society and storytelling serves to "undergirds the advocacy that continues to serve the field of special education" (p. 439).

The expected significance of the study was its potential to describe what actually occurs to an individual with disabilities in our educational programs and in our communities. Case study design, as described by Yin (2002), is essential when the problem or issue under consideration necessitates a detailed description of "our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena" (p. 4). Therefore, the experiences of the individual in this case study may help practitioners and administrators of special education programs gain a pragmatic understanding of the community-based transition service needs of selected students who receive special education.

Research Methodology

The following methods were used in this qualitative case study. Data collection involved extensive document review of the IEP of the selected student; this included IEP documents for the school year that study took place, as well as previous school years during which transition services were addressed. Relevant transition program and policy documents also provided data about the transition planning that prompted the transition service in the IEP. A series of three interviews were conducted with each of the IEP program stakeholders: the adult-age female student with a developmental disability, the student's parent, and the student's special education case manager (teacher). The fieldwork component of this study was comprised of the researcher's personal reflections of the interview sessions, as well as impressions of the IEP, transition services, program and policy documents. Credibility and trustworthiness of the information collected were established through systematic data collection and the use of triangulation of data. Additional reliability measurements included the use of purposeful

participant selection, audit trails, member checks, and peer review of the data by the researcher's university advisor.

Research Questions

By using a qualitative case study design to examine the community integration experiences of an adult-age student in special education, the following questions were explored:

1. What are the experiences of an adult-age student with a developmental disability who receives transition services via an IEP?
2. How do transition services generate and activate formal and informal relationships and social networks in the community on behalf of an adult-age student with a developmental disability?
3. What are the formal and informal processes that influence transition service delivery?
4. Which processes facilitate increased social capital through the formation of relationships and social networks for this adult-age student?

Significance of the Study

According to Wehman (2001), special education policymakers and practitioners should continually study transition in its various forms in order to better serve their client populations. In an overview of the historical record of the IDEA, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) pointed to increased post-school student outcomes as an area needing continual improvement, although it also cited a number of important accomplishments resulting from the law (United States Department of Education, Twenty-sixth Annual Report to Congress, 2006). Specifically noted as accomplishments were the doubling of post-school employment and the tripling of college enrollment rates of students with disabilities since the landmark Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) passed in 1975.

As noted earlier, preparing students for greater self-sufficiency in the adult world is an integral function of an IEP. Students with certain disabilities often require extensive planning for the transition from school-based to community-based services. Accordingly, beginning at age 16 or younger (if necessary), IEP documents must contain a statement of the transition service needs of the student and a written statement of the course of action to include measurable post-secondary goals. For students with developmental disabilities, the optimal outcome is community integration. One way integration is evidenced is through the existence of

interpersonal relationships and social networks within the community where one lives and/or is employed (Wehman, 2001).

Because special education inquiry is a recent addition to the emergent field of social science research, the benchmark for best practices in this domain frequently changes as scientific research continues to guide policy and practice. The complexities of special education beg the questions “in what context” and “for whom” will the research serve while taking into consideration a range of student characteristics and a continuum of educational contexts (Odom et al. 2005). In this study, the focus of consideration will be on the experiences of a selected adult-age student with a developmental disability who is involved in a specific transition program within the context of special education. This type of qualitative inquiry will add to the current research addressing the community integration needs of a student with developmental disabilities, as well as augment our understanding of the influence of relationships and networks on post-school outcomes for the student who receives special education transition services.

Definition of Terms

In this section, key terms used in special education policy and practice are defined as they relate to this study, which will enhance the reader’s understanding of the issues at stake. Unless otherwise cited all definitions are found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34 (CFR, 2004).

Autism. Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal communications and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affect a child’s educational performance (34 CFR § 300.7).

Developmental Disability. The Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000, defines developmental disability as a severe, chronic disability of an individual five years of age or older that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental and physical impairments. Developmental disability is manifested prior to age twenty-two and is likely to continue indefinitely. These disabilities result in functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of life activities: self-care; receptive or expressive language; mobility; self direction; capacity of independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Development disabilities are also reflected in an individual’s need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, supports, or other assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and that are individually planned and coordinated. In this study, the

term developmental disability is used when referring to individuals with autism or mental retardation, including chromosomal disorders such as Down's syndrome, which cause mental retardation (Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act, 2000).

High Incidence Disability. There are 13 federal disability categories for school-aged children. High Incidence Disabilities refer to those categories of disability that are more prevalent in the overall school-aged disability population. The high-incidence categories comprise 90% of all identified school-aged children with disabilities. These categories include Specific Learning Disability, Speech-Language Impairment, Mental Retardation, Emotional Disturbance, Other Health Impairment, and Autism (Twenty-sixth Annual Report to Congress, 2004).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004, PL 108-446). Formerly named the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA 1997). The IDEA mandates special education programs for children and youth aged 0-22. This law has four subchapters, referred to as Parts A, B, C, & D. Part A refers to the general provisions of the law. Part B refers to programs and services for school-aged children. Part C provides an outline of programs for infants and toddlers from birth through age 3 and Part D focuses on technical assistance, grants, and additional implementation requirements and activities.

Individualized Education Program. Once an individual is eligible for special education and related services, school districts are obligated to develop an Individualized Education Program or IEP. An IEP is a written statement of the program for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a team-meeting format. The IEP specifies the individual educational needs of the child and what specific special education and related services are necessary to meet those needs (34 CFR § 300.22).

Individualized Education Program Team. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) team refers to the mandated or required individuals in attendance at IEP meetings. This group consists of the parents of the child with a disability, not less than one regular education teacher, not less than one special education teacher, a representative of the local education agency, and an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results. The team also may include specific individuals who have special expertise regarding the child and, whenever appropriate, the child with a disability (34 CFR § 300.23).

Mental Retardation. Mental retardation is used as a disability label when an individual demonstrates significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning (IQ 70-75 or below), existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period (age 18 or less) that adversely affects a child's educational performance (34 CFR § 300.7).

Parent or Guardian. The term "parent" as used in this document is a reference to the biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian of the student with a disability. Legal rights to make educational or IEP decisions are typically transferred from parents or guardians to students upon the age of majority, which is age 18. In some cases parents or legal guardians may be involved in the IEP process until a student exits or ages out of special education. This prolonged involvement is especially true of parents or guardians of students with specific high incidence disabilities, such as mental retardation, who may require additional assistance in the educational decision-making process beyond age 18 (34 CFR § 300.30).

Special Education. Special Education is specifically designed instruction, offered at no cost to the parent or parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. This includes specialized instruction conducted in a classroom, in the home, in hospitals, in institutions, or in other settings, and includes instruction in physical education. The term takes into account each of the following if it meets the requirement of the definition of special education: speech-language pathology services, vocational education, and travel training (34 CFR § 300.39).

Special Education Program. The special education and related services, including accommodations, modifications, supplementary aides and services, as determined by a child's individual education program (34 CFR § 300.450).

Special Education Teacher or Case Manager. The special education teacher of a child with a disability, the chair of the IEP team, and the person responsible for the oversight of the IEP implementation. The term case manager refers to the special education teacher in this document.

Termination of Special Education. Special education services are ended once a student graduates with a standard or advanced studies high school diploma or reaches the age of 22 (34 CFR § 300.534).

Transition Services. Transition services are a coordinated set of activities conducted by an IEP team for a student with a disability that is designed within a results-oriented process,

which is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. (34 CFR §300.43).

Limitations

As described earlier, a unique case study was used to portray a student's experiences with community integration as a part of the special education transition service outlined in her IEP. Thus, the data presented herein was limited to the single case and may not be representative of the needs of individuals with similar disabilities who may receive transition services. The community setting used as a backdrop for the study was exclusive to southwestern Virginia. At the time this research was undertaken, the school system, which delivered the transition service per the student's IEP, served approximately 1,300 students with disabilities out of an estimated school enrollment of 9,500. The community resources available to the school system included program partnerships and shared research efforts made available by two neighboring higher education institutions. Comparisons of the transition services found in the IEP of the participant to students with disabilities in another context should take into account specific differences in program services and accessible community resources. Additional studies on this topic may benefit from inclusion of interviews with the student participants co-workers and employment supervisors, community members and peers, as well as site based observations as further types of data.

Format of the Dissertation

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the topic, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework, an overview of the research design and methodology, description of the case, the research questions, the significance of the study, definitions, and limitations. Chapter 2 includes a literature review of the historical and legislative thrusts of special education, transition in special education, community integration, and social capital theory. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study design, data collection and management procedures, and the procedures used in the analysis of the data. Chapter 4 focuses on the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 includes conclusions

drawn from the study, implications for practice, and a discussion of additional areas of study suggested by the research.

Chapter Summary

This study emerged from the recognition of a lack of information about transition services in the area of community integration for students with developmental disabilities. Transition is a results-oriented process requiring special education program leaders to focus on the specific needs of each student to better prepare him or her to function in the mainstream world. The purpose of this study was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this student. Social capital theory, which was used as the conceptual framework for this study, also guided the analysis of the data. A qualitative research design was implemented because of its potential to illuminate the structural and functional aspects of the many intricate and intangible social interactions that can occur in special education. This design framework upheld the goals of the study, and provided a rich, detailed description of the community integration experiences of the female student who received the special education transition services described herein. The research employed semi-structured interviews, in-depth document review, and a qualitative analysis that reflected the design and methods used in this study. Although this case study used the unique lived experience of a single participant involved in the transition process, the researcher believes that it will contribute to understanding the influence of relationships and networks on community integration and post-school outcomes for the student who receives special education transition services

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this student. A social capital framework was used to analyze the data generated from this study, with particular emphasis on the interpersonal relationships and social networks that influenced integration into the community setting.

This chapter provides an overview of special education, giving weight to the literature and data pertaining to special education transition services for students with disabilities. This literature review also delves into the historical and current context of transition services in special education. Facts about student characteristics, special education, and transition outcome data were obtained from the Twenty-sixth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2004). In order to examine student experiences in and beyond the school setting, research findings from the federally funded National Longitudinal Transition Studies (NTLS 1, NTLS 2) in Special Education were used to generate relevant qualitative and quantitative data.

This review also addresses social capital theory, with special attention paid to how the constructs of this theory apply to social relationships and networks. In particular, use of social capital theory offers valuable insights in the social function of schooling and the influence of relationships and networks on community integration for individuals with disabilities.

Literature Search and Review Process

This literature review began with a search of electronic journal databases in the education and social sciences subject areas, with particular emphasis on special education and the philosophical and application aspects of transition service, including the intent of transition service, models of transition service, and best practices. All literature sources reviewed for this study were obtained through the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) library collection and online journal database using the following search engines: Education Full Text, ERIC, Psych Info, OVID, and JSTOR. This process yielded a number of

articles and government reports, whose reference pages also provided additional literature sources of interest.

This literature review is comprised of four sections that examine the following areas: (a) special education, (b) transition in special education, (c) community integration and, (d) social capital theory.

Examination of Special Education

This examination addresses the historical and current context of special education as it relates to services for school age children and youth. Transition information and outcomes, conceptual models of transition service and community integration are also described in this chapter. In addition, data on the current context of transition for adult age students with developmental disabilities is presented.

Historical Context of Special Education

Special education is a relatively recent field of practice within the realm of public education. Before the 1970s, most children with disabilities were excluded from public schools entirely and were either educated at home or were institutionalized. The civil rights movement and ensuing landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) drew attention to the types of discrimination and social injustice that were rampant in the country at that time. The civil rights movement was, in fact, a catalyst that helped expose the marginalization of individuals with disabilities on a national level. In a corollary way, the attention generated by civil rights groups who petitioned for human and civil rights for people of color influenced the organization of advocacy groups that demanded a federal examination of the civil rights of citizens with disabilities (Yell, 2005).

The discrimination of people with disabilities has stemmed from a prevalent unease and misunderstanding by the public—primarily as a result of the unsympathetic picture of disability portrayed by highly regarded health professions in medicine and psychology. Typically, professionals in the fields of medicine, psychology, and sociology sought to explain various forms of disability by focusing on etiology based in genetics, poor parenting, or economic/cultural deprivation (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2000). Such views left parents of children with a disability often believing that they were responsible for their son's or daughter's particular limitation (Turnbull et al.). Consequently, these families became socially isolated and were deprived of everyday opportunities available for so-called "normal" children,

such as public schooling. As a means of coping, parents and families of individuals with disabilities sought encouragement, alliances, and resources through networks and support groups. From these small informal arrangements grew the advocacy organizations that would eventually prompt the movement toward civil rights for children with disabilities on a national scale (Yell, 2005).

Legal Context of Special Education

By the 1970s, parents and advocacy groups sought legal action against school districts and state board of education offices who denied children with disabilities access to public schooling. The first significant cases on this issue, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972), and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972), served as a foundation for subsequent right-to-education cases (Yell, 2005). The concerns expressed in these cases led to the passage of Public Law 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHCEA), in 1975. This law, featuring a number of federal mandates and financial incentives to states for the provision of special education programming, became the cornerstone of special education as we know it today. In 1990, the act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and has since been reauthorized and clarified on a five to seven year timeline. The Individuals with Disabilities Act was reauthorized in 2004 and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. The acronym IDEA has not changed.

Currently, IDEA (2004) contains four parts. The segment of interest in this study is Part B, which specifically outlines the mandated free and appropriate public special education programs that states must provide to children with disabilities. As defined by IDEA, special education is *specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parent or parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction in a classroom, in the home, in hospitals, in institutions, and in other settings, and instruction in physical education* (34 CFR § 300.26). In addition to defining special education, Part B of IDEA addresses the procedural and substantive aspects of the special education process for school-aged children, from federal eligibility requirements to the development and implementation of the special education services. This includes a statement that should be a component of an individual's IEP delineating the correct placement in special education, supplementary aides, and transition services needed by a

student for work, independent living, or postsecondary education upon graduation or exit from services.

IDEA also includes 13 federal disability categories, including the following most commonly cited groups: Specific Learning Disability, Speech-Language Impairment, Mental Retardation, Other Health Impairment, and Emotional Disturbance. For all students with an IEP, federal law dictates that special education programming will occur in the environment that best meets the educational needs of the student, while ensuring access to the same educational opportunities afforded to individuals without disabilities. IDEA references this component as the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). The LRE is an important aspect of IDEA because it ensures that a student's needs drive IEP services rather than the disability label attached to the student. This piece of the law was greatly influenced by advocates and educators who felt that the traditional "one size fits all" model of service delivery in special education led to segregated educational settings and did not align with the individualized intent of an IEP (Taylor, 2001).

Changes to IDEA resulted from two main sources: stakeholder voices and scientific research (Yell, 2005). Each of these sources shaped the development and implementation of the IDEA transition component, which became an official mandate in 1990. The context of transition as a systematic, instructional IEP service stemmed from empirical quantitative and qualitative data, which found that students with disabilities were socially isolated from their same-age peers, had lower rates of employment, and had higher incidences of incarceration upon exit from school than their non-disabled same-age peers (McAfee & Greenawalt, 2001; deFur, 2003).

Transition in Special Education

Although now considered a vital component of the act, transition is a relatively new feature in IDEA. The notion that special education professionals needed to pay attention to what was happening once students with IEPs graduated or exited from school became the focus of policy makers by the mid 1980s. At that time, data collected in the 1970s and early 1980s revealed that post-school outcomes for students with disabilities were bleak with respect to traditional educational outcomes such as employment and post-secondary education enrollment (Kiernan, 2000; McAfee & Greenawalt, 2001). In fact, data collected at that time reflected 40-90% unemployment rates across the board for youth with disabilities upon exit from school (Wehman, 1993). The outcomes were even more dismal for individuals with developmental disabilities such as mental retardation, who were less likely to find employment, including

sheltered employment, as indicated by unemployment rates of up to 70% for this group as a whole (Kiernan, 2000). The outcome research for individuals with mental retardation indicated that poor rates of employment were indicative of other outcomes such as independent living, social networks, and community integration (Wehman, 1993; Kiernan, 2000).

Thus, the emphasis on accountability for special education in the form of post-school outcomes came to fruition with the 1990 reauthorization of IDEA (P.L. 101-476). At that time, transition, defined as an outcome-oriented service, became a legal mandate under Part B of IDEA. The mandate was strengthened with the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997. At that point, the requirements were expanded to include services for students starting at age 14. The most recent authorization of IDEA requires transition planning to begin at age 14 for students who will require services beyond age 18, and for transition services to begin for all students served with an IEP no later than the student's 16th birthday.

Before the transition mandate, the move from school to adult life for a student with a disability was primarily determined by the student's disability and the availability of community and agency resources. Students with disabilities were served by adult agencies that provided categorical services. In other words, students with certain disabilities, such as mental retardation, were referred to agencies that could provide appropriate services. However, the primary disability group referred for adult agency services prior to exit from school was students with developmental disabilities, such as autism and mental retardation. Referral of young adults with developmental disabilities to state agencies that operated sheltered workshops and vocational training centers was the most typical pre-transition service established at that time. State-run sheltered workshops and centers were purposely created to employ and, in some cases, house adults with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities.

For individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, exit from special education meant a complete cessation of support services in their home communities. Entry into a sheltered workshop or center often meant relocation of an individual with a disability out of his or her community of residence to a centralized location within his or her home state (Taylor, 2001). In 1992, Wehman found that only 20% of students with moderate to severe disabilities were employed in their home communities upon exit from school. For many adults with developmental disabilities, a majority of their social activities and interpersonal relationships existed within the context of their own families or within the sheltered setting, and not within the

community at large (deFur, 2003). Moreover, since special education outcomes for young adults with developmental disabilities centered around one goal, employment, the sheltered workshop setting, which was often isolated and disconnected from the non-disabled community, became "the end goal rather than a transition goal" for these individuals (Kiernan, 2000, p. 90).

The end of 1980 marked a crucial period in the way in which post-school experiences for individuals with developmental disabilities were viewed by practioners and policymakers in special education. At that time, the idea that special education should include a community-based services approach emerged from research (Benz, 1995; Blalock, 1996; Halpern, 1985) that strongly emphasized the need for educators to focus on developing community opportunities, such as partnerships and networks with agencies outside of the school setting on behalf of students with disabilities and their families. Such opportunities could conceivably provide a comprehensive array of services that would be available as an extension to the student upon exit from school. Sheltered workshops and vocational centers, therefore, were replaced by supported employment and community integration activities. In essence, the belief that individuals with disabilities should enjoy a better quality of life began to impact practice and policy.

Eventually, the movement to create positive adult outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities paved the way for all students with disabilities to gain access to coordinated transition activities, and in so doing prepare them for the adult world prior to their exit from school-based services (deFur, 2003). Transition, as a service, moved from being an afterthought and an incidental feature of an IEP to an integral component of a student's educational program. Transition-focused special education shifted the focus away from disability-deficit or categorical services to an approach grounded in consideration of individual student choices and postsecondary needs in a variety of domains (Kohler & Field, 2003).

Federal Initiatives that Support the Transition Mandate

Since its inception, the educational thrust of IDEA has been to meet the unique needs of the child with a disability and to advance education, employment, and independent living. In response to this mandate, three significant federal projects were initiated to examine and improve special education transition outcomes (Kohler & Field, 2003). The first of the three initiatives involved legislation that mandated the inclusion of transition planning and services in all IEP documents for students starting at age 14 (a 1990 provision); that age requirement changed to 16 in the current version of IDEA.

Second, the Office of Special Education Services (OSEP) initiated transition grants across the United States. As an example of the scope of that initiative, as of 2003, the federal government (Kohler & Field, 2003) has funded over 500 transition grant projects in 46 states. Currently, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) funds transition grants through the Virginia Transition Outcomes Project (VTOP), which in turn provides participating school districts with professional development and tools to enhance transition outcomes using best practice models. Typical activities include data collection on student participation in transition planning, training on how to include students as active partners in transition planning, and the provision of tools and materials needed to teach self-advocacy skills to students with disabilities.

Third, an emphasis was placed on effective or best practice research in the area of transition. This included funding for major studies like the National Transition Longitudinal Studies and smaller scale studies that specifically examined transition practices at the programming level. The transition mandate of IDEA corresponds to the federal education law, No Child Left Behind Act (2001), which emphasizes student achievement outcomes. Given this trend, most recent federally funded research in special education focuses on best practices for service delivery. Topics of study in this area include identification of factors that facilitate transition services, effective transition guides, and transition models that improve transition service and outcomes (Kohler & Field, 2003; Zhang, Ivester, Chen, & Katsiyannis, 2005).

Until recently, a national assessment of the context of special education and schooling over time for children with disabilities had not been undertaken. However, beginning in the late 1980s through the year 2000, the Office of Special Education Services (OSEP) of the United States Department of Education sponsored two longitudinal studies to examine the school context of students with disabilities. The first study at the secondary level, the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NTLS 1), was conducted from 1987-1993 and examined the schooling experiences, disability characteristics, and academic achievements of a nationally representative sample of secondary students with disabilities. NTLS 1 focused on the experiences of more than 8,000 students aged 15-21 as they transitioned from secondary school into early adulthood (Wittenburg & Maag, 2002). Methods used to collect student data included telephone and face-to-face interviews with parents, teachers, and students, a review of school records, and student surveys. One important finding of the report was that the type of disability significantly influenced post-school outcomes for students who received special education, as

evidenced by the fact that some groups had more success in the areas of post-secondary transition than others (Wittenburg & Maag, 2002).

Blackorby and Wagner (1996) summarized the first wave of NTLS data and found that lower rates of enrollment in post-school vocational programs were most evident for students with mental retardation. Using the same data, post-school success in terms of education, employment, and independent living, was determined least likely for students with mental retardation and emotional disturbances and most likely for students without significant cognitive or social limitations. For students who were employed in post-school situations, individuals with mental retardation earned less than minimum wage and were unlikely to receive vacation days, sick leave, or health insurance (Kohler, 1996).

NTLS 1 also examined three areas of community participation: work or education-relation activities in the community, living arrangements, and social activities. The results were similar for these areas as they were for employment, particularly for students with mental retardation. These young adults were less likely to be living independently in their communities and were the least likely of all disability groups to have social networks and relationships outside of their immediate families (Kohler, 1996).

In 2000, a second NTLS study (NTLS 2) was commissioned to follow secondary students aged 13 to 17 to their mid-20s using the same methods at the NTLS 1 study (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006). This nine-year study (it will be completed in 2009) is an extension of the first NTLS, but places more emphasis on data specifically related to student post-school outcomes and social experiences. Like NTLS 1, NTLS 2 also includes a nationally representative sample of students in special education. Once it has been concluded, NTLS 2 will provide data on a cohort of special education students who receive transition services under the current IDEA mandate. (Since data from the second study is not yet available for analysis, it was not factored into the present study.) Even though the two studies are important surveys in the field of transition, they do have their limitations. Specifically, the use of one cohort and the length of time needed to collect and analyze the data are limiting aspects of each of the NTLS studies (Wittenburg & Maag, 2002).

Most transition research is concentrated on service delivery approaches, i.e., the practical applications of transition services for school-based programs. Transition service approaches are guided by basic principles of best practice established through a wave of research conducted in

the last decade (Kohler, 1996; Wittenburg, Golden, & Fishman, 2002). Kohler developed the "Taxonomy for Transition Programming" guide, based on a synthesis of research literature, program evaluations, and transition project outcomes. The taxonomy identified five categories of effective practice in transition: (a) student-focused planning, (b) student development, (c) interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, (e) family involvement, and (f) program structure. In a similar review of best practice in transition, Greene and Kochhar-Bryant (2003) identified instruction, collaboration, established networks from school-based services to community entities, and family and student input as crucial elements of effective service.

School-based transition services vary by school district. The most common approach is based on providing students with instruction for skills development through community-based learning experiences. The second approach concentrates on competency in skills acquisition in a school-based setting (Repetto, 2003). The community-based approach aims to teach students specific transition skills and then allows them to apply these skills directly in the field through experiences such as community-based work. This approach, however, hinges on the availability of appropriate community resources. The second approach is based on skills development through school-based instruction in areas needed by the student in a particular area of transition, such as employment skills. The emphasis is on classroom instruction that is drill-oriented so that the student can demonstrate competency before applying the skills in the community.

The extent to which students are involved in the planning process has been found to affect the efficacy of transition service (Kohler & Field, 2003; Zhang et al. 2005). Concerning student involvement, self-determination, and choice making, Karpinski, Neubert, and Graham (1992) examined the impact of these factors on transition planning, services, and outcomes. Their research analyzed post-school outcomes in the area of employment for students with mild to moderate disabilities who had previously participated in a high-school based transition planning as part of an IEP. Findings indicated that students who had participated in the transition planning were more successful in creating post-school employment opportunities when compared to program dropouts. Moreover, students who were involved in transition planning and who had learned to self-advocate were more likely to be satisfied with their post-school employment, to understand their legal rights to employment, and to maintain employment once school-based services were terminated. Similarly, Kohler and Field (2003), reported that student

involvement in the transition process was a key factor leading to active student participation in the IEP and independence in fulfilling adult roles.

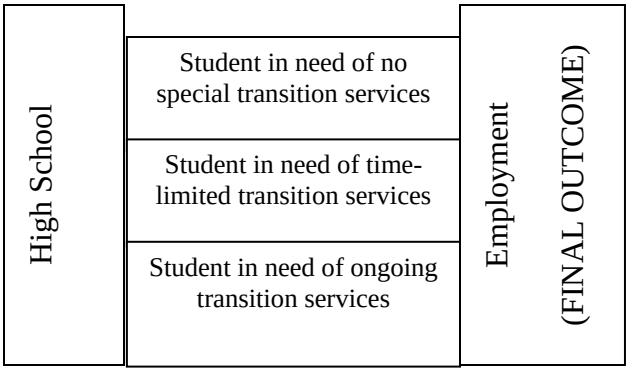
Conceptual Models of Transition Service

IDEA was not developed to promote one specific transition model. Rather, it was intended to serve as a conceptual framework to shape the development of transition services that were situation specific. Despite the potential for a wide variety of transition models, two are most commonly discussed in the literature: the "system-to-system" model and the "community-adjustment" model (Zhang et al. 2005). Eventually, the community adjustment model would have the greatest impact on transition services—and in fact, aspects of this model provide the basis for the current provision of transition service in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004).

Dialogue about transition as an IEP service began in 1984, when Madeline Will, on behalf of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), proposed that transition be a priority in special education practice. From this proposal, preparing students for employment became the major focus in special education policy and practice. Will authored the *Transition Initiative* in 1984, which sparked the allocation of federal dollars for the development of the transition models (Lehman, Clark, Bullis, Rinkin, & Castellanos, 2002) that served as the framework for transition service. Two models resulted from this project: Will's (1984) "Bridges" model and Andrew Halpern's (1985) three-pronged "Community Adjustment" model (Rusch, Repp, & Singh, 1992) (Figure 1 is an adaption of the system to system (or bridges) model and the community adjustment model).

The initial conceptualization of transition service was a bridge model that linked students from the education system to the planned outcome of post-school employment (Kohler & Field, 2003; Zhang et al. 2005). Will's (1984) "Bridge" model is also referred to as a "system-to-system" model because it seeks to link school-based services to adult services with the intended outcome of employment. It also proposed an explanation for what should happen in practice as students were moving from school-based services to adult service agencies. An important component of her model was the recommendation that school-based transition services should be dictated by student disability need. As shown in Figure 1, the model suggests three levels of

System- to- System Model



Community Adjustment Model

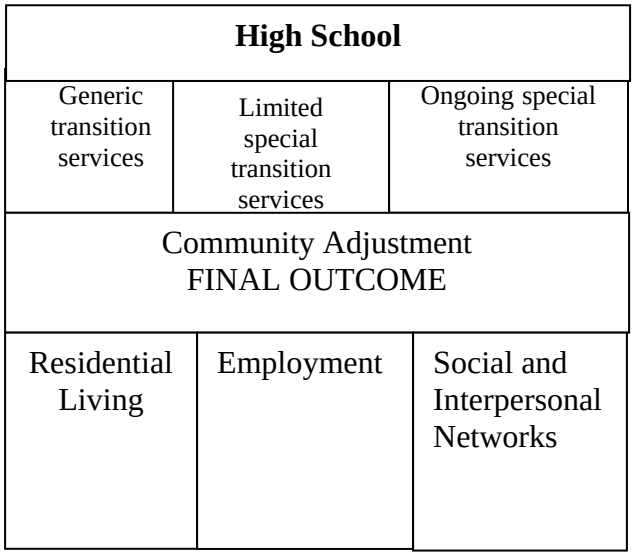


Figure 1. Transition models: In the figures depicted, the first represents the system–to-system (bridges) model. The second represents the community adjustment model. Adapted from Kohler, P. D., (1996). Taxonomy for Transition Programming.

duration and frequency, with the most intense services offered to students with the most significant disabilities. In such cases, these students would receive school-based services of greatest intensity and duration (Kohler, 1996). Typically, special education services were delivered via the disability-deficit models, i.e., the focus was on categorical needs based on disability label.

However, the bridge or system to system model came under scrutiny by researchers because of its total focus on employment, and the lack of attention it paid to the actions and outcomes that occur as individuals transition from one system to the next (Zhang et al. 2005). Kohler and Field (2003) argued that the system-to-system approach overlooked factors such as the process of transition and the context of program implementation.

In response to the perceived shortcomings of the bridge model and to research that indicated poor community adjustment for young adults with disabilities (Repetto, 2003), Halpern (1985) developed a model that offered a broader perspective of transition to include a community participation component. Halpern's model, which emphasized successful community adjustment/integration (instead of just employment), featured three interconnected outcomes: (a) employment, (b) residential living, and (c) social and interpersonal relationships (Lehman et al. 2002). Thus, Halpern's model stressed community adjustment as the primary goal of school-based transition service.

The core of the community adjustment framework includes activities that are of importance to all individuals, such as employment and the existence of social relationships and networks. However, unlike the Will (1984) model, Halpern's 1985 framework asserted that each activity was of equal importance to the individual—and that the absence of any one-domain influenced outcomes in the others. For example, a lack of employment leads to fewer social and interpersonal networks and decreased opportunities for independent living. Therefore, the combined influences of employment, residential environments, and social/interpersonal networks are critical in determining the extent to which an individual is an active participant and member of the community. Similar to the system to system or bridge model, the community adjustment transition model proposed categorical school-based services and three levels of duration and frequency, with the most intense services offered to students with the most significant disabilities. This model set in motion the types of transition service most often found in current special education programming (Repetto, 2003).

Several processes influence how transition services are designed and implemented. These processes range from formal, such as IDEA IEP mandates, to informal, such as the degree of student participation in the transition service planning process. Patton and Blalock (1996) identified the following guiding principles for practioners involved in the transition process: (a) early planning, (b) student empowerment, (c) family involvement, (d) community-based activities, and (e) interagency collaboration.

Formal Processes that Influence Transition Service

IDEA features several transition mandates that factor into the IEP process. The first directive requires that IEP teams complete a transition planning form, followed by a transition services page, for each student with an IEP by age 16. The plan and service page documents become a part of the student's IEP and should address all areas of the student's life (Lehman et al. 2002).

In addition to the required transition documents, a Summary of Performance (SOP) document must be provided to all students who received special education prior to exit from school services. The SOP contains a summary of the student's academic and/or functional performance, as well as recommendations for meeting the student's identified post-secondary goals (Izzo & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006). For students with developmental disabilities, a SOP contains a statement of the social and behavioral skills, independent living skills, and career and vocational skills the student acquired through school-based services. The SOP provides the student and his or her parent(s) or caregiver(s) with information to share with agencies that provide community-based adult services and support (Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006).

Collaboration among agencies and connections to the community via activities such as employment is an important function of the transition process. Close communication and sharing of information is a crucial step in ensuring seamless transition from school-based services to adult services in the community (Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006). All contact to community-based agencies on behalf of students with IEPs is initiated and documented by school system personnel, and in most cases, by the IEP case manager. Before students receive community-based services, school systems conduct a series of vocational and transition assessments to determine what type of services are needed by the student recipient. For students with developmental disabilities, these evaluations often include community-based work and

situational assessments. These processes are required to ensure that receiving agencies have the information they need to prevent a gap in services from school-based to the adult world.

Informal Processes that Influence Transition Service Delivery

Informal processes that effect transition services primarily revolve around two components: (1) the level to which the student can self-advocate, and (2) how involved the student's family is in the IEP transition planning (Repetto, 2003). The degree to which a student is involved in the IEP process speaks to how well that individual can exercise skills of self-determination and contribute to the development of the IEP. The construct of self-determination is grounded in the notion that individuals with disabilities have a right to become active partners in decision- making processes that affect their lives.

Empowerment and self-determination, as they relate to students with disabilities and the IEP transition services process, are considered helpful when the intended services are aligned with student's stated interests and desired outcomes. In speaking about positive transition outcomes for students exiting school-based services, Wehmeyer and Gragoudas (2004) identified empowerment and self-determination as integral best practice features of the IEP process. A current trend in special education is to teach self-determination as a specific skill. In fact, curriculum materials and guides have been developed as instructional tools in this area for use by all students with disabilities (deFur, 2003).

Community Integration

> "In this era of accountability, we often lose sight of what really counts, a sense of community; the idea that we are all in this together"
>
> *(David Pitonyak, personal communication, March 6, 2006)*

Most research and measurement instruments define community integration as the extent to which an individual with a disability participates in daily activities, such employment and recreation, in their community of residence (Cummins, 1997; Cummins & Lau, 2003). Bramston, Bruggerman, and Pretty (2002) argued that the mere presence of individuals with disabilities in a community is not enough to qualify as true "integration" if the participation component is absent. Integration, in this view, is therefore characterized by reciprocal and cooperative arrangements among individuals that reflect a spirit of community membership. Social context, in the form of social interactions and relationships with friends, family and others in the community, is an essential feature of the community integration experience (Cummins & Lau, 2003).

How individuals with developmental disabilities experience community integration is a relatively recent focus of the current research in the disability field (Bramston et al. 2002; Cummins, 1997; Vine & Hamilton, 2005). To address this process, researchers have developed quantitative measures of integration that examine constructs such as quality of life and community involvement (Bramston et al. 2002; Cummins, 1997; Cummins & Lau, 2003; Halpern 1993; Minnes et al. 2002). Most measurement tools in this area use quantitative analysis of specific indicators of integration to determine frequencies of activities, which typically include employment, recreation, and volunteerism. Data collection for these types of studies is often based on questionnaires completed by parents and caregivers on behalf of individuals with disabilities (Cummins & Lau, 2003).

As reported by Cummins and Lau (2003), there are several recurrent measures of community integration that have been reported in the literature. These include (a) the frequency of activities conducted by an individual in the community, (b) the number of personal relations in the individual's social circle, (c) the number of times the individual accesses community resources, (d) the number of leisure or recreation activities the individual participates in outside of home, and (e) the mental and physical well-being of the individual.

Halpern, as cited in Repetto (2003), suggested that community integration is an important factor in how individuals fill their roles as community members and consumers of community services. Halpern's concern was not with frequency of integration activities, but rather the value and the quality of the integration experience. Halpern (1993) proposed his definition of *quality of life* after analyzing data from studies conducted from 1975 through 1990 that examined adult outcomes for individuals with disabilities. He determined that education and employment were the primary indicators of quality of life, while social yardsticks such as relationships and social networks were minor indicators. Halpern used this meta-analysis to develop three domains to measure quality of life: (a) physical and mental well-being, (b) performance in adult roles and through completion of adult tasks, and (c) personal fulfillment.

Quality of life as a measurable experience began to be factored into the post-school rubric of individuals with developmental disabilities in the late '80s and early '90s. It was at that time that placement in sheltered workshops and vocational centers began to be considered an antiquated way of measuring community integration and employment opportunities for this population. Garcia-Villamisar, Wehman, and Navarro evaluated quality of life as an outcome of

employment in a five-year study completed in 2002. This study examined quality of life for cohorts of individuals with autism in two modalities of employment: sheltered employment in a segregated work setting and community-based supported employment. Data collection involved interviews with persons with autism, their caretakers, therapists, and families, as well as completion of the Quality of Life Survey (QLS). Both interview and survey questions focused on community involvement. Study results confirmed that supported employment in the community offered greater opportunities for other forms of community integration when compared to employment in segregated settings. Quality of life as identified by the existence of personal satisfaction, social relationships, and social activity was most evident for individuals who had access to community employment.

Halpern's (1993) analysis of quality of life measures emphasized that employment was a common factor in how quality of life was determined for some individuals. In addition to employment, however, Halpern asserted that transition services were vital for preparing individuals with disabilities for higher functioning in the multifaceted adult world. In a 1994 report by the Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Career Development and Transition (DCDT), the following definition of transition, drawn from Halpern's research, was adopted. Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in post-secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships (Halpern, 1994).

How individuals experience community integration via transition services was recently examined by Garcia-Villamisar et al. (2002), who determined that transition is best evaluated by the fullness of the integration experiences lived by the participant. Cummins and Lau (2003) pointed to several benefits of integration including (a) normalization or a life patterned on mainstream society, (b) access to community resources, (c) change in public attitude for future generation of individuals with disabilities, and (d) tangible benefits in the form of development of pro-social behavior and social skills. Bramston et al. (2002) observed that for individuals with developmental disabilities, community integration is "the most effective means of instigating positive life experiences for people" (p. 386). Upon examining adults with significant disabilities, these researchers concluded that membership in a community decreased

loneliness and isolation-two factors often attributed as common adult outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities such as mental retardation.

After evaluating the experience of “belonging” as an indicator of quality of life, Bramston et al. (2002) concluded that school-aged students with disabilities had higher levels of life satisfaction when they had friends, social activities, and social support in their community neighborhoods. This study utilized the Neighborhood Youth Inventory and the Quality of Student Life Questionnaire to garner data about student perceptions of their own community involvement. Equal numbers of students with and without disabilities were selected as participants (n=132) to compare experiences between the two groups. In addition to the empirical findings that confirmed the importance of relationships and social support networks, feelings of empowerment and social belonging were identified as needs by the students with disabilities more frequently in comparison to their non-disabled peers. The next step in understanding community integration, as suggested by Bramston et al. would be research on how to empower and create a sense of belonging in individuals with disabilities within the context of their community of residence.

Minnes et al. (2002) developed a structured interview format to assess the nature of the relationships between individuals with disabilities in a community and in the larger society. These researchers divided community integration into four areas, which they labeled AIMS, or assimilation, integration, marginalization, and segregation. In this context, integration occurs when the unique needs of an individual are identified and community support is provided to address those needs in a way that involves the individual within the community context. Each indicator of integration is based on the premise that individuals are considered integrated into their communities if they assimilate and if they spend some degree of time with individuals who are not disabled. This research was based on data collected through interviews with caregivers of 66 adults with mild-to-moderate disabilities based on the AIMS format. Minnes et al. concluded that the participants were viewed by the caregivers as marginalized in the areas of education, employment, and volunteerism, which in the eyes of the researchers kept them segregated from the community.

Employment is the most common form of community integration for individuals with developmental disabilities. In the community-based employment setting, individuals with disabilities have opportunities to engage socially, develop friendships, and build social networks

with coworkers who do not have a disability (Wehman, 2003). Thompson, McGrew, Johnson, and Bruininks (2000) seven-dimensional model of community adjustment described the ways in which individuals with disabilities have integrated themselves into the community. This model was created from factor analysis of the predominant indicators of community adjustment found in the literature.

Thompson et al. (2000) developed the seven-dimensional model from elements of community integration that focused on the life skills needed for enhanced community participation. The researchers collected interview data relating to community functioning from young adults with disabilities who had been out of school for 1 to 5 years. The data confirmed that of the seven dimensions of community adjustment, integration has traditionally and most often been achieved through employment.

The importance of employment as a means to integrate into the community cannot be overstated for individuals with developmental disabilities. Kiernan (2000) summarized employment options for individuals with mental retardation and found that social support at the workplace is the key to successful work place assimilation. Employment offers an important opportunity for an individual with a disability to become a part of the social framework of the workplace, which may lead to the development of social relationships and networks.

In light of the value of community functioning as an outcome of educating individuals with developmental disabilities, Dolyniuk et al. (2002) acknowledged that effective transition services must emphasize the social and vocational needs of the student. According to these researchers, successful transition services should occur in a meaningful community-based context that includes same-aged and non-disabled peers in order to meet the essential social needs of adult-aged students with developmental disabilities. Their qualitative examination of one transition program, which placed students with developmental disabilities on a college-campus setting, found that the program participants had acquired needed functional skills in both vocational and social domains.

Current Context of Transition for Adult-Age Students with Disabilities

The United States Department of Education, Twenty-sixth Annual Report to Congress (2004) listed independent living, functional independence, employment, and enhanced social/interpersonal relationships as crucial transition goals and outcomes for students with developmental disabilities. As a whole, however, young adults with disabilities continue to lag

behind their non-disabled peers in every area of transition, including graduation rates, postsecondary employment, postsecondary education, and independent living (Kochhar-Bryant & Izzo, 2006). In fact, insofar as graduation from high school, students with mental retardation and students with autism had the second lowest graduation rates when compared to their peers with and without disabilities. Moreover, as determined by Wagner et al. (2006), Wave 2 data from NTLS 2 indicated lowered social engagement and community participation for students with mental retardation and multiple disabilities. Youth in these disability categories were least likely to take part in organized community groups or activities, least likely to have social networks outside of the school setting, and least likely to be employed in post-secondary work or have had adequate vocational preparation when compared to their peers.

The least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with developmental disabilities is shifting as social change influences the delivery of special education services for this particular population of individuals. Traditionally, IEP transition options for students with developmental disabilities has strictly focused on post-school employment, with service delivery usually occurring in a segregated setting (deFur, 2003; Kiernan, 2000).

In keeping with recommendations from the Twenty-sixth Annual Report to Congress (2004), the current trend in special education for students with developmental disabilities is to provide, among other things, employment, prospects for community living, and social network opportunities in the student's community of residence. The emphasis of this approach is to provide services in the broader environment to which the student will transition upon exit from school (Lehman et al. 2002).

How community-based instruction for students with disabilities contributes to effective transition service is currently under examination in the NTLS 2 study (Wagner et al. 2006). Although not yet completed, early data from this study indicates that students with mental retardation who receive community-based services in the form of paid employment and job training are more likely to demonstrate some form of community engagement upon exit from school (Wagner et al. 2006).

Age-appropriate settings for transition services offer opportunities for students with developmental disabilities to develop social networks and gain functional skills in a natural environment and context. The age-appropriate setting for young adults with disabilities aged 18 and 22 is the adult community, not the high school setting. Therefore, a recent trend in

educational programming is for young adults with disabilities aged 18-22 to receive special education services on campuses of higher education.

Progressive school systems are increasingly partnering with institutions of higher education in implementing transition service programs for students with disabilities (Dolyniuk et al. 2002). As research has shown, the higher education setting offers opportunities for same-age students with and without disabilities to interact socially, and for students with disabilities to gain social and functional skills within a meaningful context. In their qualitative study of social and functional outcomes for students with developmental disabilities, Dolyniuk et al. observed and interviewed 17 students in special education who received the majority of their transition services on a small college campus. Twenty-three college students without disabilities provided the students with disabilities social and instructional support for up to three hours a day for an entire semester. The themes that emerged from the subsequent data analysis reinforced the importance of such learning experiences in augmenting the social and life skills of participants with disabilities.

de Fur (2003) cited several studies that deal with issues that continue to impact effective transition planning and service delivery. One of the primary problems is a lack of appropriate IEP goals addressing adult living and community integration for students with developmental disabilities within a meaningful social context. Unfortunately, the data from this study suggested a disconnect between the federal intent of transition and actual implementation of transition at the program level. Recommendations to remedy this problem include implementation of best practice guides, such as those developed by Kohler (1996), and descriptive studies that shed light on the post-school experiences of young adults with disabilities.

Review of Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory is a relatively new area of study in the field of social science. Theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and later James Coleman (1988) were the first to link social interactions with an accumulation of capital that could benefit individuals and groups (Dika & Singh, 2002). Bourdieu's conceptualization, which was based on European principles, focused on the interrelated impacts of social, economic, and cultural capital. In America, social capital theory grew from Coleman's interest in the concept of social action. Coleman likened social capital to other forms of capital, such as financial and human capital. He argued that like other forms of capital, social capital had the potential to be generated, accumulated, and used by

the holder. Coleman was particularly concerned with how the next generation (i.e., children or youth) could benefit from social capital resources. In his view, social capital was an important factor in the creation of quality of life factors.

As maintained by Coleman (1988), the most important aspect of social capital was in its use as a resource for individuals within their defined social environment. Coleman defined social capital as relationships built on trust, reciprocity, cooperation, and social networks. These indicators theoretically could exist within the family structure or between individuals in a community via participation, obligations, and shared norms (Roberts, 2004).

The Coleman (1988) perspective has been vital in testing the efficacy of social capital theory as a framework for examining educational outcomes. A number of studies in the Coleman spirit have highlighted the relationship between social capital and schooling outcomes for children through quantitative analysis. The point of these types of studies is to explain which aspects of social capital correlate with better schooling outcomes in terms of graduation rates and achievement test scores. In an examination of the social function of education, Putnam (2000) asserted that educators should understand social capital and its potential for enhancing the social outcomes of schooling. In his perspective, the social capital resources gained by students during their school years could ultimately shape the social functioning of the individual into adulthood.

Social capital in its various forms has been linked to empirical positive effects on educational outcomes (Dika & Singh, 2002). This includes positive achievement outcomes for student population subgroups such as immigrant and minority students. These students and their families utilize what Kao (2004) referred to as potential and actualized social capital. In his reasoning, when individuals in a group work toward common goals and outcomes, the potential exists for the creation of networks based on shared experiences, obligations, and expectations. This in turn has the potential to create activated social capital for children and families, which can be applied in various settings such as schools and workplaces.

Kahne and Bailey (1999) provided a rare example of a qualitative approach to exploring the structure and activation of social capital on the lives of young adults. In their case study, an educational mentoring program was designed to provide three forms of social capital to a selected group of junior high school students. The types of capital used to form the conceptual framework of the study were (1) relationships built on trust, (2) social networks, and (3) social norms. These forms of capital were integrated into a specific program model referred to as the *I*

Have a Dream or IHAD program. The researchers found that having a framework of social capital within the program structure ultimately generated additional forms of capital and long-term benefits for selected students upon exit. This study confirmed that specific forms of social capital, such as networks, were sustained—and in some cases eventually provided a self-generating resource for the student participants as they exited the school program and entered the adult world.

Chenoweth and Stehlik (2004) refer to social capital as the "raw material of society created from the myriad of everyday interactions between people," and the "social fabric or glue that makes us human" (p. 61). Social capital and its usefulness as a resource for individuals with disabilities, however, is a relatively unexamined phenomena. The importance of social capital as a framework for studying the community integration of individuals with disabilities hinges on the notion that social capital may enhance the quality of the integration experience (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). In a review of post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities, Wittenburg and Maag (2002) found that several factors influence the effectiveness of transition services, such as the characteristics of the disability, family demographics, work experiences, and the existence of social networks.

Social Capital and Community Integration

Social capital has the potential to offer a framework for understanding the community integration experience of individuals with disabilities, which in turn could help us comprehend the complexity of integration and how to foster and sustain it (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). Smith, Beaulieu, and Israel (1992) determined that social capital in the community offered a valuable resource and served as a support system for all community members—with particular potential for youth in certain demographic areas, such as rural settings where post school opportunities like higher education or employment are scarce.

Since it does not emerge fully formed, social capital requires action by others to make it accessible. The benefits of harvesting social capital include both positive community integration outcomes for individuals and their families, as well as for communities as a whole. Putnam (1993, 2000) applied a social capital framework to the study of community functioning to shed light on the importance of relationships and networks. As a result, Putnam developed the concept of *bridging* social capital. In other words, when members of a community form reciprocal relationships grounded in trust, an opportunity arises for better understanding of differences

among individuals (Putnam, 2000). The bridging function of social capital develops from the relationships and networks that arise among diverse groups of people. The themes that emerged from Putnam's interpretation of bridging social capital in a community context include participation, reciprocity, trust, social norms, common resources, proactivity, and tolerance of diversity. All of these factors affect how an individual with a disability is integrated into a community setting.

Although generally acknowledged to be vital for the community functioning of many adults with disabilities, integration too often remains an unrealized aspect of their lives. This is due in part to the lack of social relationships and networks that exist outside the individual's immediate family. To examine the community inclusion experiences of adults with disabilities in Australia, Chenoweth and Stehlik (2004) conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with individuals with disabilities and their family members. Interview questions addressed the individual's experiences living in the community, relationships with non-disabled individuals and family, and social networks. Participants also completed social network maps, which recorded the type and degree of social contacts and relationships between the individual with a disability and others. Four themes emerged from their data analysis: (a) social capital was predicated on a person's ability to participate in networks, (b) many individuals with disabilities and their families were socially isolated, (c) people with disabilities were excluded from the community, and (d) voluntary contributions in the community made by people with disabilities remained "invisible." The authors concluded that at present, social capital remains unrealized for vulnerable people who appear different behaviorally, cognitively, or physically.

Chapter Summary

Community integration, as a social outcome of transition for adult age students with developmental disabilities, is a human service that may benefit from an examination of the relationships between social integration and the concept of social capital. Despite the fact that post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities have improved to some extent, they remain largely below average when compared to the non-disabled population. Moreover, individuals with developmental disabilities continue to lag behind their peers in areas of employment and community participation.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) mandates transition services for all students with disabilities starting at age 16. These services are designed to

prepare students for life beyond school and in the community. The literature reviewed for this study suggests the need for an in-depth description of the community integration needs and experiences of individuals with developmental disabilities. Social capital theory, with an emphasis on social inclusion, may provide insights into the integration experience of individuals with disabilities as evidenced by the existence of social relationships and networks.

Perspectives for Future Research

One area that remains relatively unexplored in the current disability literature is the importance of social relationships and networks as a mechanism to facilitate community integration for individuals with developmental disabilities, such as mental retardation and autism. By studying the community integration experiences of adult age students who receive special education transition services, one can further examine the influence of social capital on specific educational outcomes for this population. Several additional avenues for further research emerged from this literature review These include investigating the models of special education service delivery that contribute to increased community integration, and the efficacy of current transition trends and practices within the realm of community integration for individuals with developmental disabilities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology selected for this inquiry, which as noted earlier, was an investigation of transition services with respect to the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal of this study was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this particular individual. Supplemental information to illustrate the transition services and integration experience was provided by the student's parent and the special education case manager, as well as by a review and analysis of transition related documents. Quality and rigor indicators of the study methods are also presented in this section. As suggested by the literature, this analysis emphasizes the social relationships and networks that influenced this student's integration into the community setting.

Case Study Framework

In contemplating how to obtain the most useful and authentic data from the participant, it became apparent that case study inquiry and analysis would serve as the most appropriate research framework for conducting this study. In essence, use of a case study framework would enable the participant to describe her experiences and thoughts in an interactive and personal format. This activity culminated in findings that were hoped would authenticate the community integration experience of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability.

In light of the increasing attention to transition outcomes for students with disabilities and after reviewing the literature regarding social capital, it was clear that a detailed account of the social context inherent in special education transition services was needed. It also became evident that results from this study could help identify the most effective post-school resources for the adult-age student recipient in the community setting. For this inquiry, a rich narrative garnered from experience served as an authentic textural portrait of the phenomenon of community integration. As indicated by Seidman (2006), the portrayal of human experience through narrative is a powerful way of understanding a particular issue or event.

This examination includes an analysis of the types of social relationships and networks that can enhance transition services in the area of community integration. This was depicted through the eyes of a young female student receiving special education services. By understanding this phenomenon at the individual level, educators can move toward an increased

awareness of the community integration needs of students with developmental disabilities. Moreover, the macro application of this knowledge could help practitioners develop pragmatic and purposeful special education transition services that are student-centered and prepare students for post-education outcomes.

The following sections are included in this chapter: (a) the research questions, (b) the research design, (c) the role of the researcher, (d) the data collection procedures (e) the data analysis, (f) the quality and rigor indicators of the study methods, (g) the data management procedures, and (h) the plan for representation of the results.

Research Questions

A qualitative research design is critical for illuminating the structural and functional aspects of the many intricate social interactions that occur for a selected student in special education. Drawing on design aspects suggested by Creswell (2007), this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of an adult-age student with a developmental disability who receives transition services via an Individualized Education Program?
2. How do transition services generate and activate social relationships and networks in the community on behalf of an adult-age student with a developmental disability?
3. What are the formal and informal processes that influence transition service delivery?
4. Which processes facilitate increased social capital through the formation of social relationships and networks for this adult-age student?

Research Design

A qualitative research design provided the means for elucidating the social interactions that occur within the context of transition services. Although quantitative researchers have clearly demonstrated the link between social capital and educational outcomes, knowledge of the development and activation of social capital within a specific educational process is essential for exploring its potential as a resource for selected student recipients (Dika & Singh, 2002; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003). Special education, with its emphasis on advocacy and individualized programming, provided a context within which to study the structure, activation, and potential of two frequently cited forms of social capital: social relationships and networks. In addition to developing a descriptive account of these forms of social capital, this study illuminated the ways in which these factors could specifically influence the community

integration experience. As will be discussed herein, this is a significant aspect of the transition from school-based special education services to the adult community.

To understand social abstractions such as education, an effective research design should examine the perspectives of individuals who make the concept real (Seidman, 2006). By documenting the actual experiences and interactions of a female student receiving special education services, this study gives a human face to the analysis in that it provides a richly descriptive account and understanding from her point of reference. Therefore, this qualitative research study used social capital theory as a framework for studying special education transition services.

In terms of informing practice, this study was intended to promote dialogue on issues related to special education transition service in Individualized Education Program development and implementation. It was also hoped that this exploration would serve as a novel approach for examining social capital theory and its application as a conceptual framework in this type of educational research. These areas were examined within the context of special education transition services as revealed in the interview data, in the IEP documents of the selected participant, and by reviewing the relevant transition policy and program documents.

The case study method was specially chosen for this study for two primary reasons. First, this method facilitates a more personalized relationship with the data, thereby opening the door for a deeper understanding of the experience. Second, this method allows the researcher to probe for meaning and reveal the structural elements of the relationships and networks that define and describe social capital. As a result, the findings presented have the potential to thoughtfully reflect the meaning of the participant's experience as opposed to simply reporting the results (Moustakas, 1994).

Role of the Researcher

An effective approach for conducting case study research requires the researcher to suspend judgment as fully as possible toward the subject matter in order not to interfere with the analysis process (Creswell, 2007). In discussing the data collection phase, Giorgi (1970) recommended that the researcher apply the process of case study reduction, which asks the researcher to limit drawing from personal life experiences and beliefs in order to absorb the voice of the participant to the utmost degree. According to Merriam (2001), this is a difficult aspect of case study inquiry that requires considerable self-discipline and conscious thought from

the researcher throughout all stages of the data collection and analysis. To understand this principle is to understand one's own bias and subjectivity. Case study reduction obliges the researcher to recognize that subjectivity and bias are natural human behaviors that can be overcome with what Wolcott (2005) referred to as "disciplined subjectivity." In other words, a researcher's personal feelings and thoughts are inherent in any qualitative study—the trick is to exercise restraint so that personal biases do not taint study findings.

Peshkin (1990) acknowledged that the subjectivity of researchers is an inevitable and natural occurrence, but that they should strive for objectivity. Moreover, the ways in which personal or professional interests and subjectivity influence data collection and analysis depends upon the researcher's acknowledgement of this subjectivity and candid recognition of its impact. Such information should be clearly indicated in study results (Peshkin). In the present study, any subjective biases have been identified and documented in this section, as well as in field notes.

Researcher's Statement

My interest in this topic has stemmed from a professional and personal commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities. I was first introduced to transition research in 2000, when I was employed as a field researcher for the National Transition Longitudinal Study (NTLS 2). Through my educational practice and personal experiences, I have learned a great deal about the complexities of human interactions within an educational context. My training in special education has provided me with fluency in reviewing IEP documents for relevant information, as well as soliciting individual and group perspectives from colleagues, parents, and students about educational services. In my current position as a school system administrator, I am fortunate to have had opportunities to inform special education teachers about resources or strategies that may benefit students who receive transition services.

As an advocate for people with disabilities, I am interested in the types of educational services available to people with disabilities, and am concerned about the larger social justice context of the educational rights of the disability community. In my opinion, school programs—and the teacher leaders within—often serve as a primary source of social support for students with disabilities and their families. Special education teachers, as advocates, have a responsibility to take the lead in the development and implementation of comprehensive, thoughtful, and proactive special education services that emphasize real life outcomes.

This research project has enabled me to learn more about the community integration needs of individuals with developmental disabilities by studying the experiences of a selected young adult. Thus, my goal as researcher for this study has been to portray the educational experience of the participant as descriptively as possible. My own scholarly input and influence is, I hope, reflected in the depth of the interviews, an articulated understanding of the process and procedure of special education transition services (including analysis of IEPs), and in the recommendations for further research that have resulted from this investigation.

Data Collection Procedures

This study focused on data collected from an adult-age public school special education student and her parent and special education case manager. This approach is based on the premise that individuals are candid informants of their own experiences, as well as active social agents who influence the social context of their own lives (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006). The primary mode of data collection for this case study involved face-to-face, audio taped interviews with participants, which included the adult-age student, her parent, and her special education case manager. Data collection also included a review of relevant documents including the participant's IEP, and transition policy and procedure information. In addition, field notes provided complementary information in the analysis of the interview data and the descriptions of the participant's experiences.

Gaining Access and Entry

After obtaining approval from Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board, (see Appendix A), the Superintendent and Director of Special Education in the selected region were contacted via telephone and letter to gain permission to access the records of selected students in special education (letters presented in Appendices B and C). (Access to confidential student records is a part of my professional role in the field of special education.) In response to my request, the Director of Special Education identified a number of adult-age students who receive transition services in a community-based setting in the cooperating school system.

Case Selection Process

This investigation examined the experiences of an adult-age student participant who at the time of the study was enrolled in public school and received special education transition services, as evidenced by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) document. Selection

criteria also required that the participant spend over 50% of their school day in special education placement, as well as be considered a self-contained or level II placement. In order to maintain a focus on transition, participant selection for this study consisted of a purposeful, non-random sample of individuals who received special education on or before age 22. This criterion ensured that transition services were included in the IEP as required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004). It should also be noted that the final participant selected for this study had to receive community-based transition service as part of an IEP.

The participant sample originated from the confidential Category II records of the cooperating school system. For greater accessibility, the researcher also sought to identify a student from southwest Virginia. Eventually, in collaboration with the Director of Special Education, a list of potential participants who matched all the selection criteria was generated. Once this selection cohort was identified, the parents of the students were contacted to explain the study and determine interest in participation. The script for the telephone questionnaire is presented in Appendix E. The final participant selection was based on whether a parent or guardian expressed an interest in participating on behalf of themselves and the student.

For this study, it was necessary that the participant have the expressive and receptive language skills needed to understand and be able to respond to the interview questions. Typically, many individuals with developmental disabilities rely on family members or guardians for assistance in receptive and expressive communication. For this reason, as part of the initial participant selection process, parents or guardians were asked to help convey the purpose and procedures of the study to the potential student participant. Parents or guardians were also asked to help clarify any questions that required additional information or explanation that were posed to the adult-age student participant.

Once the participant selection was established, an introductory letter written at a fifth grade reading level, which explained the study, was sent via postal mail to the adult-age student participant (see Appendix F). A similar letter, which included a copy of the research methods outline (see Appendices G, H & I), was sent to the parent or guardian and to the special education case manager. A copy of the informed consent document written at a fifth grade level for the adult-age student participant (see Appendix J), as well as a similar document for the parent or guardian and special education case manager, were also included in this initial mailing (seeAppendices K & L). Within a one-week timeframe, the parents or guardian of the adult-age

student was contacted by telephone, at which time a face-to-face meeting was arranged to review these documents, answer questions, administer a brief capacity to consent questionnaire (see Appendix M), and obtain written consent.

For clarification purposes, the adult-age student participant is referred to as the "student participant," or by the name of "Hope." The parent or guardian participant has been simplified to the term "parent," and the special education case manager is referred to as the "case manager."

School System Data

The cooperating school system for this study is located in southwest Virginia. At the time of this investigation, the school system had an average daily membership of 10,000 students in grades PK-12. Of the total student enrollment, approximately 12% were identified as students with disabilities and received special education services through an Individualized Education Program during the 2007-08 school year. The school system in question typically provides special education transition services to approximately 30 adult-age students with disabilities in the community setting.

Transition Services Data

Two conditions were associated with the specific community-based transition services evidenced in this study. First, the special education case manager was required to facilitate a relationship between the student and community-based resources as established by a partnership between the school system, local universities, and various places of employment. Second, the transition services had to be implemented in an inclusive community setting with non-disabled individuals. These criteria aligned with the IDEA 2004 transition requirements of planning for post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

Institutional Review Board Requirements

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University requires specific consent documentation prior to all research conducted with human participants. Qualitative researchers such as Creswell (2007) and Merriam (2001) stressed the importance of securing participant consent as a measure of best practice and ethical conduct. In research involving human subjects, IRB approval represents a form of protection of the rights and safety of the participants. The consent document, as recognized by the IRB, informs the

participants of the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. Additionally, the researcher must delineate assurances of confidentiality, compensation, freedom to withdraw, and subject consent. The practice of IRB review and approval verify that all parties involved understand the purpose and function of the study.

There were no identified risks or direct benefits for participants who agreed to participate in this study. However, larger societal and educational benefits may occur if transition services for students with developmental disabilities improve because of the information presented herein. In light of the low risk to the subject population, an Expedited IRB Review was granted.

Assurance of Confidentiality

Participant confidentiality was ensured both verbally and via written agreement. As suggested by Rossman and Rallis (2003), consent documents are written using text that an individual with a disability with a fifth grade reading level can read and comprehend. To protect all subjects, the cooperating Director of Special Education signed a letter that emphasized the confidentiality requirements of this study (see Appendix N). This person will not have access to interview transcripts, audiotapes, field notes or other data collected in this study.

Pseudonyms were used in this study to protect the identity of participants, individuals in the community, and locations of interest. The researcher's doctoral committee members and an individual hired to transcribe the audio taped sessions were the only other persons with access to the raw data collection. The paid transcriber was also informed of and had to agree to the confidentially requirements of this study before starting work (see Appendix O). All interview and document data were securely locked in separate locked filing cabinets in the researcher's office and were disposed of upon completion of all presentations and publications that will result from this inquiry. In addition, all informed consent documents were maintained in individual locked filing cabinets apart from the storage of interview and document review data in the researcher's office. Informed consent documents were disposed of upon completion of all presentations and publications that will result from this inquiry.

Informed Consent and Permission Procedures

All participants in this study were required to complete an informed consent agreement. The student participant letter and informed consent form are found in Appendixes F and J. The parent/guardian letter and informed consent form are found in Appendix G and K. The case manager letter and informed consent are found in Appendix H and L. Participant involvement

was completely voluntary and all participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. Participants were not monetarily compensated for their contributions to this study.

Capacity-to-consent is a term that refers to prospective participants being fully aware and understanding the purpose of a given study, their rights as participants, and any risks that could occur prior to giving their consent to participate. Typically, instruments used to measure prospective participants' ability to demonstrate informed consent focus on four standards: understanding, appreciation, reasoning, and volunteerism (Zayas, Cabassa, & Perez, 2005). While this is a fairly straightforward instrument for much of the research involving human subjects, capacity-to-consent can become problematic when research involves vulnerable populations, such as individuals with disabilities (Zayas et al. 2005).

Thus, the extent to which a particular capacity-to-consent instrument is applied is principally dependent on factors related to the type of study, the risks involved, and the potential vulnerability of the participants. This particular investigation was considered non-invasive educational research and presented little-to-no risk of harm to participants. Even so, to protect the student participant and ensure that informed consent was ethically obtained through documented measures, a capacity-to-consent instrument based on current studies in this area was developed and was implemented as suggested by Zayas et al. (2005). This instrument is presented in Appendix M.

Before obtaining written informed consent, the study introductory letter and informed consent documents were reviewed in a face-to-face meeting with the potential participant. The capacity-to-consent screening tool was then verbally reviewed with each individual, by asking each question and recording each potential participant's verbal responses. Based on measurement criteria established through similar tools, the participant had to answer eight of ten questions correctly in order to demonstrate capacity-to-consent (Zayas et al. 2005). If the researcher believed that the study's introductory letter and informed consent documents had not been understood by a potential participant, the ten capacity-to-consent questions were asked up to three times to address areas not fully understood. If capacity-to-consent was not demonstrated after three attempts, the participant was not asked to participate in this study. The participant who was eventually selected for the study demonstrated capacity-to-consent on the first attempt.

Data Collection

The primary mode of data collection for this case study involved participant face-to-face audio taped interviews, use of the IEP document, review of relevant transition policies and procedures, and use of researcher field notes.

Interviews

A total of nine interviews were conducted for this study, including three 90 minute interviews with the student participant; three 90 minute interviews with the parent, and three 90 minute interviews with the case manager. Before the initial interview session, the parent of the student participant was queried to determine the most familiar form of communication to use in the interview sessions. Based on this query, it was expected that the student participant would use verbal communication. All interviews, regardless of format, were conducted face-to-face at a private location most convenient and safe for all parties involved. After talking with the participants, it was determined that this location would be a private conference room at the school system Office of Special Education.

As recommended by Patton (2002), all interview sessions were audio taped and transcribed to allow the researcher to listen to the tapes and read interview transcripts for accuracy and to gain a perspective on the context of the participants' responses to particular questions. Audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews were properly secured in individual locked filing cabinets in the researchers office and were disposed of by erasing tapes and shredding transcripts upon completion of any presentations and publications that will result from this study. Researcher field notes, which may contain sensitive information related to the interview sessions, were also securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office and will be properly disposed of as described above.

The interview schedule followed a three-step series of 90 minute meetings recommended by Seidman (2006). The first interview session focused on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability. Identification of the social relationships and networks that existed for the student participant was also incorporated into that interview session. The second session focused on the concrete details of the student participant's experience as a person with an IEP who received transition services in a community setting. Social relationships and networks exclusive to the transition service and the community setting were described during this session.

The final session focused on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the activities conducted by the student participant in the community, such as the number and types of relationships and networks available to the student in the community, the types of community resources accessed by the student participant, and the number and types of social activities the student participated in outside of the home. A discussion of identified social relationships and networks focused on the impact of these factors on the integration of the student into community activities.

The parent interviews followed a three series format of 90 minute interview sessions. Parent interviews took place several days following the student participant interviews. The parent interview served as a supplement and a follow-up to the information collected from the student. The questions developed for these sessions were similar to those used in the student participant interviews. A secondary focus of the parent interview was to explore the transition process from the perspective of individuals who were directly involved in program development as part of an IEP team.

Case manager interviews also followed a three series format of 90 minute interview sessions. These interviews served as a supplement and a follow-up to the information collected from the student participant and the parent. The questions developed for these sessions were similar to those used in the student participant and the parent interviews. A secondary focus of the case manager interview was to explore the transition process from the perspective of individuals who were directly involved in program development as part of an IEP team.

The interview question structure consisted of non-directive, open-ended questions designed to explore the participant responses and provide a foundation upon which additional questions were developed for each step in the interview series, as suggested by Seidman (2006). The semi-structured interview format provided discretion to the interviewer while allowing some flexibly in the formulation of questions as the participants' responses guided the overall process (Patton, 2002). Bramstom et al. (2002) noted that research has shown that individuals with developmental disabilities will often provide answers to interview questions based on what the interviewer may want to hear. To minimize this issue, the interview questions in this study avoided yes/no formats, and used simplified wording as suggested by Bramstom et al.

Interview protocols of student participant sessions are located in Appendices P, Q, and R. Interview protocols of parent participant sessions are located in Appendices S, T, and U.

Interview protocols of special education case manager participant sessions are located in Appendices V, W, and X. An interview guide was provided to the participants before each session (see Appendix Y). The purpose of this approach was to provide the student participant, in particular, with an opportunity to read and think about each question before the actual interview session.

As suggested by Merriam (2001), this study contained interview guides for all interview sessions to provide the preliminary structure and format for the interviews. The interview guides provided an overview of predetermined questions on specific topics or themes to guide the researcher in the interview sessions. These guides were used as outlines to map the general direction of the interviews. Patton (2002) suggested the use of interview guides as a means of keeping interview data on-track and systematic. The limitation to using an interview guide is that the direction of the sessions may affect the type of questions that need to be asked. When this occurred, the interviewer used personal discretion to determine the focus of the session. Deviations from the guide were noted in the field notes and in the results section of this document. Transcriptions of each interview took place immediately following each interview. A paid assistant completed this activity.

Document Review

Before the interview sessions, review of the student participant's existing IEP document confirmed that specific goals and services related to transition were included in the program development and implementation. Each document was reviewed to confirm that the student and the parent were involved in program development and attended the corresponding IEP meeting. IEP transition goals and services in the area of community integration served as the guiding theme for data collection and analysis for this phase of the study in order to respond to the research questions. A document review form is located in Appendix BB.

To ensure confidentiality, document review of the student participant's IEP occurred in a private location at the school system central administration building. IEP documents were photocopied with the participant's consent. These photocopied documents were stored in a locked office filing cabinet and were shredded upon presentation of the study results.

Researcher's Field Notes

The field notes taken during this study provided a written record of observations and interpretations of document and interview data (see Appendix AA). Patton (2002) suggested that

field note documents take the form of a working journal to which the researcher can repeatedly use to evoke specific personal feelings or experiences about the study. In some cases, the field notes recorded personal reflections on information shared by participants. As suggested by Wolcott (2005), the use of field notes also provided a written outlet to explore personal experiences and thoughts about the study's process, progress, and significance. All researcher field notes were typed by the researcher and properly secured in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office during the study. Field notes and saved disks were shredded and disposed of upon dissemination of the results of this study.

Data Management Procedures and Analysis

Creswell (2007) described the case study data analysis approach as an examination of participants' statements and identification of themes that can ultimately enable the researcher to tease out all possible meaning from a given study. As discussed, this study featured five sources of data: student participant interviews, parent interviews, case manager interviews, document review, and researcher field notes. Transcribed documents followed standard transcription formatting and procedures. All field notes were transcribed from a hand written journal to a word processing program by the researcher.

Data Management

Qualitative studies often yield large amounts of data, which must be organized in a logical and structured format, as suggested by Anfara, Brown, and Magione (2002), and Miles and Huberman (1994). Interviews, document reviews, and field note data were typed and coded by source and date. Coded interview data were stored by source in individual binders.

Data was collected, coded, and analyzed in on-going process. Throughout this process, key words, phrases, or ideas extracted from the data sources were placed on color-coded note cards, which were related to constructs of social capital and measures of community integration. A rubric, which was divided into the four areas addressed by the research questions, served as the framework for sorting the coded data.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this descriptive case study I described transition services as they related to the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. Data analysis for this investigation followed the constant comparative method. Analysis included

descriptive coding to facilitate the management of the information and the development of themes that emerged, as described by Creswell (2007), and Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002). These and other research based practices were used to obtain as much information as possible from the data. Transcripts and field notes were carefully examined in order identify and code key words, phrases, or ideas that eventually became part of the analysis process. Data was coded as it related to the purpose of the study and the research questions. Analysis and coding involved identification of keywords, phrases, and ideas related to important constructs of social capital. These included relationships and social networks and measures of community integration as reported by Cummins and Lau (2003): (a) the frequency of activities conducted by an individual in the community, (b) the number of personal relations in the individual's social circle, (c) the number of times the individual accessed community resources, and (d) the number of leisure or recreation activities the individual participated in outside of home. A separate or miscellaneous file was reserved for data that did not fit onto the rubric framework. These data were frequently revisited during the analysis process to determine if it could be incorporated into the rubric framework.

Parent interviews, case manager interviews, the IEP document, relevant transition policies and procedures, and researcher field notes supplemented the analysis of student interview data. This inductive analysis process involved a back and forth action between the researcher and the data until all relevant data was coded and placed on the rubric framework (Merriam, 2001). Throughout the analysis process, recurring patterns were used to form the basis of categories and themes portrayed in the data, as suggested by Creswell (2007), Merriam (2001) and Patton (2002). Following the model of the data spiral outlined by Creswell (2007), data were analyzed until the patterns around social capital as evidenced through the transition service in the community setting emerged to form themes. Triangulation of data, which occurs when a researcher provides evidence of data collected from more than one participant or source, was used in this study. Specifically, triangulation in a specific category signified that an emergent theme had developed, which could then be analyzed with respect to the purpose of the study and the research questions.

The final state of the analysis involved the identification and description of what was experienced and how it was experienced in terms of the types of social capital most frequently cited by the individual receiving the transition service in the community setting (Merriam, 2001).

Narratives of the experiences of the student were developed during data analysis, with an emphasis on the key themes that resonated during this process.

Data Quality Procedures

Research validity and reliability are essential components of any quantitative inquiry. The analogous procedures that ensure the rigor of empirical qualitative studies are credibility and trustworthiness (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). Qualitative research produces science-based evidence by means of systematic and rigorous data quality procedures specifically designed to answer the stated research questions. The procedures for establishing credibility and trustworthiness in this research project are outlined in this section. In this inquiry, as in any qualitative methodology, the research approach involves discovery. As a result, reliability measures were not a goal of the study, since the uniqueness of this type of approach places attention on the process of inquiry rather than on the replication of methods or results (Wolcott, 2005).

Credibility and Trustworthiness

An empirical qualitative researcher ensures credibility and trustworthiness through clearly articulated research questions and systematic procedures in the collection and analysis of the data (Merriam, 2001). This process of inquiry was vital to this study, since the end result was an illustrative portrait of unique human experiences rather than absolute statements of fact. Triangulation of the data, member checks, audit trails, and peer debriefing served to reinforce the credibility and quality measures applied in this project, as described by Brantlinger et al. (2005).

In this study, the primary participant was a single individual and data were collected through interviews, document reviews, and researcher field notes. In addition, supporting interview data were gathered through the student participant's parent and case manager. Audio taped interviews were transcribed after each interview session and these data were shared with each participant to check for accuracy before the next interview session. The researcher noted all changes to the interview data according to participant feedback. Audit trails tracked the number and duration of interviews and time spent on document review and all other research procedures. Peer debriefing occurred on a regular basis as the study advisors reviewed the study and provided feedback.

Transferability

The information gathered in this study was exclusive to the selected participant. The readers can judge the transferability of the findings based on descriptions of the details of this study and other investigations known to the reader. The findings of this study are intended to enlighten the reader, rather than recommend a specific transition service.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this student, especially with respect to the relationships and networks that influenced this student's integration into a community setting. The participant selection process used in this study was non-random and purposeful. The selected adult-age student who participated in this investigation received special education transition services in a community-based setting. Data collection involved interviews with the student, her parent, and a special education case manager. Additional data were obtained through document review of the student participant's IEP, relevant transition policies and procedures, and researcher field notes.

This study used three types of data: (a) interviews with the student, her parent, and her special education case manager, (b) document review and, (c) researcher field notes. Data gathered from this study may be of benefit to practitioners and administrators of special education who seek to enhance transition outcomes for students with developmental disabilities who require extensive planning and service needs.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

It's All About Relationships (Case Manager Interview, Session 3, Line 5)

The purpose of this investigation was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal of the study was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this student. Narratives of these experiences and the emerging key themes that resonated from the data are presented in this section.

The following research questions guided the methodology and data collection in this study:

1. What are the experiences of an adult-age student with a developmental disability who receives transition services via an Individualized Education Program?
2. How do transition services generate and activate social relationships and networks in the community on behalf of an adult-age student with a developmental disability?
3. What are the formal and informal processes that influence transition service delivery?
4. Which processes facilitate increased social capital through the formation of social relationships and networks for this adult-age student?

As reported by Coleman (1988), social interactions and relationships are immensely influential in shaping a person's life opportunities and future successes. For individuals with disabilities who receive special education, however, opportunities to generate relationships and social networks often rest primarily on the shoulders of parents and special educators, thereby limited a fuller assimilation into the community. This is why transition services can be so influential in the lives of young adults with disabilities.

In order to interpret the interpersonal relationships and social networks of a student who experienced the transition process, a social capital framework was employed. Immersion in the data and the analytical steps taken to interpret it was essential for gaining a deeper understanding of the results, as well as for identifying the key elements that resonated as themes. Findings are presented as narratives of the experiences of the selected student, with supplemental narratives provided by her parent and her special education case manager. Themes from the data analysis of this student's experience are presented in connection with the four research questions and describe the transition experience and the social relationships and networks that were generated

and influenced this individual's community integration. Excerpts drawn directly from the data illustrate rich detail of the case for the reader.

Data types are referenced in the study using codes that identify the type of source (I-interview transcript, D-document, FN-field notes). The interviews are referenced by a letter that identifies the participant (S-student, P-parent, CM-case manager). Finally, the interview sessions (1, 2, or 3) are identified and the page number of the transcript is listed. In the case of documents, the document type and date is listed.

Overview of the Findings

The analysis of the data collected for this study revealed three major themes: Community Opportunities, Development and Implementation of the IEP, and Employment. Within each of these themes, specific factors illuminated the way in which Hope's transition services influenced her community integration experience. In essence, her transition services were developed through an IEP that was fully implemented in a community-based setting. This type of implementation resulted from a partnership between the school system and a neighboring institution of higher education. The IEP included the major component of employment as a goal of her transition services. In addition to the employment element, there were also a multitude of generated social relationships and networks suggested by the IEP as part of the transition services. These were activated by the student. Especially significant for this student was her ability to use language and her vibrant personality to maintain these relationships and networks and build new relationships with others in the community.

Narratives

In this section, a narrative is presented to capture the experiences of the selected student. Supplemental information is also presented in narrative form derived primarily from interviews with her mother and special education case manager. A pseudonym was assigned to each individual to protect confidentiality. In this study, the student is referred to as "Hope," her mother as "Jesse," and her special education case manager as "Ms. Jones." References to Hope's eligibility for special education data such as neurological and other reports, as well as her IEP and transition planning data, were obtained from her confidential school records which were accessed by the researcher once informed consent and Intuitional Review Board approval were obtained. In the case of documents, the document type and date is listed.

Hope

Hope was the primary participant in this study. She was an adult-age student with a disability who received transition services by means of an Individualized Education Program through special education. By her request, I met with Hope on three separate occasions in my office for our interview sessions. After our initial interview, I realized that I had met Hope once before but in a different capacity. Two years prior to this study, I was seated next to her at a luncheon hosted for high school students with disabilities at a nearby university campus. I remember that I enjoyed her company, was able to converse with her easily, and felt connected to her the first time we met at the campus luncheon. Hope appeared to be the type of person who had the capacity to draw people into her social circle through her vibrant personality and the warmth and kindness that she radiated almost effortlessly. Her positive attitude and willingness to talk set the tone for our interview sessions.

During the course of our interview sessions, I noted in my field notes the strength of Hope's receptive and expressive language skills. Strong verbal communication and language comprehension skills have helped Hope become an active partner in her special education programming. She was a person who demonstrated that she could clearly articulate her interests, desires, and personal goals for the future.

Hope appeared to have no issues with verbally expressing her likes and dislikes. This self-advocacy resonated in our first interview session when we talked about her participation in academic or functional skill classes. When asked if she would be taking classes in the fall, she laughed and said, "No". When I asked why, she responded by looking me directly in the eye and stating, "I don't really like taking classes that much" (SI. 1. 2). Her dislike of structured learning was confirmed when I reviewed her IEP and found noted that her current schedule, designed with her input, did not contain an academic or functional learning class component.

When this study was undertaken, Hope was a 21-year-old woman with a developmental disability that was not obvious based on her physical appearance. She looked like any other non-disabled college-age adult. Her ability to blend in with nondisabled individuals by virtue of her appearance and her grasp of language has facilitated the extent to which she integrated into her community. However, Hope was a person who required support and supervision when she participated in activities typical to individuals without developmental disabilities. This need for support and supervision was most evident in the domain of independent living.

Hope lived with her mother and one non-disabled adult-age sibling. This close-knit family provided her with the social and daily life supports she required outside of the school environment. In order to maintain this status, Hope's mother obtained legal guardianship to make all relevant life decisions on Hope's behalf. This arrangement included the provision that Hope's sibling would become the legal guardian if her mother was ever incapable of performing this function.

Religious activities were the major component of Hope's social world outside of school. Church-related functions such as bible study class occurred on a weekly basis and were the primary community activity of this family. A document review of an IEP interest inventory completed by Hope's mother when Hope was in high school listed the "mall, church, bible study, the doctor, and friend's homes" (D. Transition Planning Document, 2001) as the five most important locations her mother wanted her to go with her in the community. These early IEP transition-planning notes reflected three things Hope told me she loved to do the most at that time: go to church, work with animals, and go shopping at the mall.

Seven years later, Hope remained consistent in her interests and the things she wanted to do with her life. After getting to know her through our interview sessions, her self-determined attitude appeared to have everything to do with her personality. She undoubtedly was a person who like many, had hopes, dreams, and personal goals that kept her focused on the future.

Overview of Hope's Disability

Hope was diagnosed with a developmental disability early in life that will affect her functioning thought her lifetime. At age three, she received school-based special education services under the educational disability labels of Developmental Delay and Speech-Language Impairment. By her tenth birthday when she was evaluated by a team of doctors, she was diagnosed with the following medical and mental health conditions: Mild Cerebral Palsy, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Motor Tic Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and Acute Anxiety. In describing Hope's disability, her neurologist noted the following impression in the opening statement of the report. This is indeed a very complex and challenging young lady."(D. Neurological Report, 1997)

These disorders, coupled with intelligence quotient scores in the mild to moderate range of mental retardation, led to a change in Hope's educational disability label and the focus of her special education programming. By fifth grade, her educational disability label changed from

Developmentally Delayed and Speech-Language Impairment to Multiple Disabilities. Multiple Disabilities is the current educational disability label under which Hope meets the criteria for school-based special education; she will receive these services until she reaches age 22.

The Impact of Hope's Disability

Hope's disability has required individualized attention to meet her unique needs in all areas of functioning. Her outstanding grasp of spoken language facilitated her ability to interact and build social relationships with others. This skill was quite useful to her because she had to rely on others to help her meet her basic life needs. Despite her language skills, Hope's disability affected the extent to which she could perform any task independently. Because her self-help skills such as personal hygiene and maintaining personal safety were significantly delayed, supervision and assistance has always been required to ensure that she properly cared for herself, remained safe, and made appropriate food choices throughout her day.

Through targeted instruction, which addresses her specific areas of academic weakness, Hope has learned some basic functional academic skills in the areas of reading and mathematics. She was able to read and comprehend basic sight words such as "and, on, the, fire" and simple sentences. She could count and make change for sums less than ten dollars and she could tell time with the use of a digital watch. In an employment setting, she performed rote and simple tasks with minimal help or supervision. On occasion, direct supervision from an employment instructional assistant or job coach was required in order to demonstrate a new routine or prompt her to get back on task if she stopped to socialize. This need for adult support was reported by her special education case manager in her 2002-03 IEP:

> Hope (sic) has been working at the art supply store (sic) since 2001. She stocks shelves, assists customers as needed, breaks down boxes, and arranges/straightens merchandise. She has been extremely successful in this setting, although she continues to require some limited supervision to stay on task.

Medicaid and disability checks from Social Security were Hope's primary financial and benefit sources. A Mental Retardation Waiver from Medicaid provided her and her family with home and community support resources, such as respite care for emergencies and a community-based assistant. If Hope were to continue to have an interest, supported employment services would become an automatic feature of the Medicaid Waiver provided by the Department of Rehabilitative Services once she exited school-based services.

As required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), Hope has had some input into the school-based and community activities that have been a part of her daily life. Nonetheless, all major life decisions have been made by her parents-and primarily by her mother-throughout Hope's lifetime. Decisions such as where she would work and live have rested solely in the hands of her family members, who have worked diligently to balance her needs with what would be in her best interests. Since Hope turned 14, much of this planning has taken shape in the form of IEP transition programming. This feature of the IEP is specifically designed to prepare Hope and others with disabilities for life beyond school, and to enable families to be able to network with community agencies that would ultimately provide young adults important disability services.

Overview of Transition Services in Hope's IEP From Ages 14-18

At the start of her ninth grade year, Hope's IEP committee worked with her and her family to discuss and plan in the areas of post-secondary education, career and technical education, employment, independent living, and community participation. From the start of her ninth grade year until the time this study was undertaken, Hope has attended all of her annual IEP meetings (D. IEP, 2002-2008). By tenth grade, prior to each IEP meeting, Hope completed a "Transition Planning" sheet with her case manager (D. Transition Planning Documents, 2002-2008). The information on these documents facilitated her participation in the IEP meeting and gave her case manager and family insights into her personal goals. As part of this planning document, she discussed and listed in detail her likes, dislikes, interests, strengths, and needs. Areas of particular interest observed upon review of these documents was in working with animals, a love of all things social such as parties, and a desire by Hope to live with her family into adulthood. In her eleventh grade year she clearly articulated the type of help she would like to receive in school and at work by stating, "Show me what to do first" and provide "reminders" (D. Transition Planning Documents, 2003-06).

The academic emphasis of her school-based IEP services from grades 9-12 was on the acquisition of the basic reading and mathematics skills needed to function in a job and as an independent adult in her community (D. IEP, 2001-2008). Thus, subsequent transition services for Hope have principally revolved around preparing for employment in her community once she exited school. This goal was addressed through vocational skills instruction based on Hope's

interests and abilities. Employment skills were taught through activities such as community-based instruction, hands-on job training, and exposure to different types of jobs.

The first community agency that became a part of the transition-planning component of Hope's IEP team was the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). This agency was instrumental in providing Hope with vocational training, job placement, and follow-up services in supported or competitive employment settings upon exit from school services. The next agency to participate was the Community Services Board (CSB). This particular agency would eventually facilitate Medicaid and benefits coordination on Hope's behalf into adulthood. Case management through the CSB would connect Hope and her family to local services such as opportunities for therapeutic recreation programs and respite and/or residential care if needed. In 2004-2005, an Independent Living Center (ILC) agency was added to the team in the event that Hope and her family should decide that a group home living arrangement was in her future—a vital step in assisting Hope in becoming self-sufficient within her community.

Existing Transition Services

At the time of this investigation, Hope's existing IEP transition service was being implemented through placement in a full-time community-based setting. For two years prior, Hope had been completely immersed in a specialized educational program for adult-age students with developmental disabilities located on a university campus. Special education case manager, Ms. Jones, was in charge of the program. This unique opportunity was being offered by Hope's school system in partnership with a local university located about fifteen minutes from her home community.

As a student in the community-based program, Hope began her weekdays by accessing public school transportation from her town to a nearby university. Once there, she checked-in with Ms. Jones who had an office on campus and who reviewed her daily schedule, after which she met with an instructional assistant. Ms. Jones helped her review the day's schedule, answered any questions Hope had, and sent her off to her assigned work at the university library. This simple routine took place daily and was necessary to help Hope grasp concepts such as time and sequence.

Hope worked at the university library. Although her university employer was not responsible for her salary, she did receive a temporary training wage of $1.90/hour through the Department of Rehabilitation Services. A paid instructional assistant employed through the

public school system accompanied her to this job but did not interfere with the work. At the library, Hope was fully trained to perform the job tasks and required minimal support from the assistant. Stripping books, counting patrons, stamping book covers, and shredding papers constituted the core requirements of her library work, and she was almost completely independent in performing these tasks. Hope indicated that she liked this job and wanted to continue to do it once she completed school (D. IEP, 2008). An important feature of this university library position was that Hope had co-workers who provided natural support and assistance to her by prompting her to stay on task or training her in new tasks as appropriate. Moreover, her coworkers made a point of getting to know her and made her feel like a part of a team. Like other employees, Hope received email from her library supervisor about work-related activities and responded with the help of her instructional assistant. She participated in social activities with library staff including occasional lunches and staff parties.

After work, Hope and an unpaid peer mentor often had lunch in the community or on the university campus. The peer mentor, a university student, was there to be a friend and to model age appropriate behavior and social skills. This activity provided an opportunity for Hope to develop her social skills, practice using money responsibly since she had to pay for her lunch, apply choice making, and relax. Other students with IEPs who also participated in the community-based transition program often joined Hope for lunch with their peer mentors. The arrangement of selecting where to eat and with whom to socialize allowed Hope to make independent adult-type choices. According to Ms. Jones, “She was encouraged to eat lunch in whatever arrangement she wanted to, she was encouraged to make that choice, and she was very good about doing that. She had some definite preferences.” (CMI. 1. 2)

In the last hour of her school day, Hope participated in some type of recreational activity of her preference. Ms. Jones had a list of available activities because like academics, exercise was not a favorite activity for Hope. Of these options, the university-bowling center was a popular choice for Hope and her peer mentor. Sometimes she would choose to volunteer at the local animal shelter. The final activity of each day occurred when Hope used the computer resource center to check her email. Before leaving, she signed out with Ms. Jones and waited for the public school bus to take her home. In summary, her weekdays at school were spent working, socializing, and recreating with others in a community-based setting with age appropriate peers.

Jesse

Jesse is Hope's primary guardian and her mother by birth. Through court order, she, not Hope's biological father, was responsible for all legal decision making on Hope's behalf. From my document review and field notes, I learned that Jesse was actively involved in Hope's educational programming from the start. Comments made by Jesse in the form of parental input in Hope's IEP documents provided the bulk of information about the effect of Hope's disability on this family. In our interview sessions, Jesse repeatedly emphasized the importance of parental involvement and advocacy in the special education process. Jesse indicted that she viewed her role in Hope's life as an advocate, caretaker, and mother. Her input to and attendance at all of Hope's school-based IEPs and her participation in the school system Special Education Advisory Committee have helped her become well versed in her rights as a parent and in the policies and procedures that guide special education.

Respite care, community-based support, and school-based services have provided essential resources that have enabled Jesse to maintain full time employment in a private daycare setting, as well as engage her in community activities. During our second interview session, Jesse told me that before Hope had a Medicaid Waiver, which provided after-school and respite service, taking care of Hope was "…all encompassing. It's like you can't even have a life" (PI. 2. 8). In addition to getting Hope ready for school in the morning, Jesse had to be available during the school day if Hope became ill or an unforeseen problem arose—not to mention being with her after school until Hope's bedtime. Prior to Hope receiving the Medicaid Waiver, Jesse was unable to maintain employment, have a social life, or take care of her own health and well-being.

Jesse explained that she had many concerns about Hope's future now that school-based services were near an end. She indicated that these concerns resurfaced every time she had to make decisions that had some bearing on Hope's IEP services. When Hope turned 20-years old, the school system proposed through an IEP meeting that she participate in the community-based transition program. Jesse did not initially embrace this idea. Her worry as a parent was that her daughter would be in the community without the physical and supervisory confines offered by her high school placement, which in Jesse's eyes was a safe, familiar, contained space. Knowing Hope's cognitive limitations and her inability to be independent, Jesse's greatest fear was for Hope's safety. However, after meeting with special education staff, Jesse related to me that she reluctantly agreed to sign the IEP. Looking back, Jesse now says that this placement turned out

to be beneficial to Hope in many ways, but particularly in enhancing her ability to feel comfortable in the community and in a work environment.

In Jesse's observation, the transition services in Hope's current IEP have been successful in helping Hope become familiar with social norms, the routine of employment, and the enjoyment of opportunities available to non-disabled adults her age. Unlike the time in her life when she was overwhelmed by Hope's disability, Jesse was able to think to the future. When asked what her primary goal for Hope was in the long term, she promptly replied, "I want her to be fulfilled in something and, uh, she loves animals, so if she had a job at a Pet store (sic) or if she did volunteer work with animals, just to be fulfilled at something" (PI. 3. 5).

Through her volunteer work with the school system, Jesse has been promoting transition programming that focuses on community-based activities to parents of children who have disabilities similar to Hope. Her comment about helping parents understand how students with disabilities can become integrated into the community revolved around preparation. In her words, "There's the transition program for the students, but we need a transition program for parents." (PI. 2 .5) This comment was followed by several excellent suggestions as to how the school system could better prepare parents for what to expect in the final years of schooling for their young adult with a developmental disability.

Ms. Jones

When I interviewed her, Ms. Jones had been a special educator for 25 years and was Hope's case manager. Prior to that, Ms. Jones oversaw special education in a high school setting with over 180 students with disabilities. Her educational background included a postgraduate degree in the area of special education programming for students with severe disabilities and mental retardation. Ms. Jones started her career in education working with foster care youth with emotional disorders in a group home setting. Three years after this, she worked in a segregated elementary school program for children with severe disabilities, such as severe and profound mental retardation. Shortly thereafter, her career path led to an agency where she provided technical teaching assistance to K-12 educators of students with severe disabilities across the state of Virginia. Ms. Jones moved into her present position after becoming aware of the school system's philosophy of providing inclusive or non-segregated special education programming for all students with disabilities.

As a supplement to the interview sessions I conducted with Hope and her mother, Ms. Jones was asked to provide additional information about Hope's IEP. Our interview sessions focused on Hope's current program and the transition services that would be part of the bridge to link her to the adult world and her community. Daily check-ins, assessments of Hope's performance, job training, functional, academic, behavioral instruction, facilitating social interactions, interagency coordination, and supervision of instructional assistants are the ways in which Ms. Jones implemented Hope's IEP.

In addition to being very knowledgeable about Hope's program, Ms. Jones was well versed in the obstacles that tend to accompany community integration for individuals with developmental disabilities. The importance of interagency partnerships was an aspect of Hope's programming that Ms. Jones highlighted as crucial for the process of integration. With that in mind, in this last year of Hope's transition service, Ms. Jones was focused on connecting Hope to the community-based agencies that would facilitate her integration once her IEP expired. Ms. Jones was making clear how the involved agencies could maximize support for Hope based on her strengths, needs, personal goals, and preferences. She articulated her focus on the importance of community-based partnerships as a resource to Hope by stating:

> What I would like to do ideally is work with the community services board and her direct service provider and make a list of places and activities she likes to do and set it so that when she leaves us, she'll have paid employment through the supported employment agency, which is funded through the Department of Rehabilitation Services, and then the community service provider will be able to lace that with a variety of activities in her home, workplace, and community that she prefers to do. (CMI . 3. 2).

Themes from the Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. An additional goal was to provide the reader with a detailed portrait of the experiences of this student. Themes from the data analysis, field notes, documents, and the narratives of Hope, Jesse, and Ms. Jones are presented to respond to the research questions. From this examination, three distinctive overarching themes were revealed: Community Opportunities, IEP Development and Implementation, and Employment.

Community Opportunities

We certainly offer a wide variety of community-based alternatives. Hope (sic) especially on Fridays tends to go all around the community.

(CMI. 2. 3)

Hope's transition services generated and activated social relationships and networks in the community on her behalf—in large part because it was implemented in a typical setting in her local community. Community opportunities that occur in natural settings increase the ways in which a student can access other services and experiences. The availability and type of community opportunities that were part of Hope's transition services influenced the extent to which her integration was actualized.

Partnerships in the Community that Influence Transition Service Delivery

In this study, an IEP was fully implemented in a community-based setting that resulted from a partnership between the school system and an institution of higher education. Hope's IEP facilitated a number of opportunities that would not have been available to her in an isolated high school setting. The community in which her IEP was actualized included a university campus, a thriving downtown area, parks, recreation centers, multiple shopping locations, restaurants, and public transportation. The heart of the community was within walking distance from the campus where Hope's transition program was based. She was able to access the downtown area to shop, go out to eat, exercise, and to broaden her own sense of community membership. In addition, it is expected that Hope will be able to access these venues once she exits her transition services, because according to Jesse, she will be comfortable" in the community (FN).

In addition to the cooperative agreement between the school system and the institution of higher education, similar IEP-related partnerships with community-based agencies played a part in shaping Hope's IEP transition service delivery. Collaboration among agencies and connections to the community via activities was a formal transition process for Hope. Agencies such as the DRS provided a temporary training wage and job coaching to support Hope in a non-segregated job placement. Other agencies, such as Independent Living Services and the Community Services Board, supported Hope through her Medicaid Waiver and participated in her IEP planning to devise concrete plans to meet Hope's community needs. These services included a community-based aide to support her in activities such as volunteering at her favorite non-profits and shopping for personal items.

Immersing Transition Services in the Community

When asked to cite specific examples of how community-based transition services were different from those in a high school setting (other than the obvious physical location), Ms. Jones replied, “The good thing is that expands Hope’s (sic) community” and it provided her with “the richness of age appropriate peers” (C.M.I. 3. 3). When I asked Jesse if there was a benefit to Hope receiving transition services in a community setting, she summed it up this way:

> Oh, yes, definitely, because when she was at the high school she was in this little cocoon and all these people knew her and babied her. But, when she was transition over to the campus program (sic) um, you know, I remember having many discussions with her case manager (sic) to say, okay, you have to tell Hope (sic) we don’t just run straight over to the lunch lady here. There’s a whole lot here and there are college students here and everybody has to get in line and everybody has to get one thing and the lunch ladies would let her take stuff and not pay for it and she wasn’t learning the value of, you know, being an integral part of a community (P.I. 2.7).

Experiencing transition services in a community location offered Hope a way of developing social relationships and networks with a variety of individuals in different settings. These included peer mentors on campus, students in the program, community citizens, co-workers at the library, and other university staff. Jesse pointed out that Hope had developed many friends in the community through the IEP being implemented on the university campus. In discussing Hope’s friends in the community, she maintained, “She had all kinds of friends. Everybody is her friend.” (P.I. 1. 2).

Hope’s Relationships and Networks in the Community Setting

For many adults with developmental disabilities, a majority of their social activities and interpersonal relationships exist within the context of their own families, or within a segregated setting--not within the community at large (deFur, 2003). Hope participated in a community-based transition program, through which she had an opportunity to expand relationships and social networks in a natural community setting. She readily accessed public facilities, restaurants, shops, recreational facilities, and other similar community locations. Hope was on a first name basis with several shopkeepers in the community’s downtown area. According to Ms. Jones, “She’s friends with many of the employers’ downtown. When she goes into their business

they know her, they speak to her, call her by name. Um, she chats with them about various things. She makes it, um, her business to get to know people." (CMI. 1. 2)

As discussed previously, Hope's language skills and her outgoing personality enhanced the social relationships and networks that she established in the community as part of her transition services. The setting offered multiple opportunities for her to become familiar with people in a conventional way. Her ability to carry on a conversation and her friendly nature complemented the social nature of her downtown visits and activities. Ms. Jones cited Hope's ability to engage others as a positive factor in how others in the community responded to her as a person.

In addition, Hope's interests were broad enough to motivate her to make decisions about where she wanted to go and who she wanted to see in the community. Ms. Jones referenced this in an interview by confirming, "She likes to go downtown shopping, she likes to go to the pet store, she likes to, um, go to various restaurants downtown, she likes to go to the park" (CMI. 2. 3). The downtown and campus social visits provided Hope with occasions to hone her communication and social skills with non-disabled adults. Both Jesse and Ms. Jones (FN) frequently cited this aspect of Hope's transition service as beneficial.

Development and Implementation of the IEP

Development and implementation of an IEP involves several formal procedures and processes that have some bearing on the success of the transition service delivery. In Hope's case, the operational aspects of the IEP influenced the types of social relationships and networks that were generated for and activated by Hope. Employment, in particular, was a major focus of Hope's IEP and a primary venue through which she activated her social relationships and networks.

Creating Hope's Transition Plan

Prior to placing Hope in a community-based transition program, the school system conducted a series of vocational assessments and transition planning meetings. The purpose of these assessments and meetings was to determine Hope's strengths, needs, interests, preferences for employment, as well as her potential for post-school independent living and post-secondary training or education. These required assessments augmented the input from the IEP team to guide the development of Hope's transition goals and services. Since employment was a primary

focus of Hope's transition planning, the supplemental vocational assessments were essential in developing a job placement that matched her interests and strengths.

As case manager, Ms. Jones was the primary author of Hope's IEP and chair of the IEP team. It was her task to implement the transition services developed by the team in the program document. Based on Hope's needs and her future goal of community-based employment, the team determined that a community-based program would be essential in helping Hope gain needed experience for work in typical settings.

The IEP focused on expanding Hope's sense of community via transition services while teaching her functional life and employment skills in a natural context. The intent was to teach Hope specific transition skills that she could directly apply through experiences such as community-based employment, recreation, and socialization. As this was Hope's final year in special education, her IEP was purposely designed to mirror services and employment opportunities that would be available to her in the future. The statement, "Hope's (sic) goals are to work part-time in the community when she finishes with school", followed by, "We will seek employment at Large Bookstore (sic) or perhaps a Pet Store (sic) or other animal related job in the community", (D. IEP, 2007-08), demonstrated how the IEP transition services were designed with the goal of integrating Hope into her home community, with a focus on employment after services were terminated.

Self-Advocacy as an Aspect of Hope's Input into the IEP

The extent to which Hope self-advocated was an essential theme of her transition services and a significant factor in the development and implementation of her IEP. Her input, along with that of her mother, Jesse, was crucial to the types of transition services that were built into her IEP. Subthemes that emerged from this category included Hope's Personal Goals and Preferences, and Jesse's Input. Through her verbal input as documented in her IEP (IEP, 2007-8), Hope clearly articulated what types of activities she wanted to include in her IEP to achieve her future goals when she completed school. She was able to ask for assistance, offer an opinion, and agree and disagree with what was presented to her.

In fact, in each of our interview sessions Ms. Jones referred to Hope as an excellent "self-advocate" (FN), as expressed in the following statement:

> She will tell you what she wants, she will tell you what she prefers and, um, the way she interacts with me is she's pretty pointed in telling me what she would like to do and if I

> suggest something that doesn't meet with her interests, there's a pause and she really tries to reformulate her requests in her mind so that I will hear her (CMI. 3. 4).

This characteristic was verified by Jesse, who when asked if she considered it good that Hope could self-advocate, responded "yes," then added, "It is because a lot of children are, um, that have disabilities, are inhibited" (PI. 3. 4).

Self-advocacy incorporates a skill set called self-determination that is purposefully taught to students with disabilities. It is considered a key aspect of post school success for this population. The construct of self-determination is grounded in the belief that individuals with disabilities have a right to become active partners in any decision-making processes that affect their lives. As a measure of the importance of this concept, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) requires that all students with disabilities have input into their IEP no later than age 16.

In Hope's case, she became an active member of her IEP team at age 14. Her attendance and input at every IEP meeting from 2001 to the time this study was conducted is documented by her signature on the student input pages located in the transition section of each IEP. Empowerment and self-determination as they relate to students with disabilities and the IEP transition services process are evidenced when services align with student interests and desired outcomes, which as noted above was acknowledged in Hope's IEP documents.

Hope's Goals and Preferences

As evidenced in her IEPs and in conversations with Ms. Jones and Jesse, Hope has always been able to articulate definite goals for her future. In her 2001-02 IEP, for example, she indicated her personal career goal would be to work with small animals in a part-time employment situation. Her preference for independent living was to live with her family, and her community participation goal was to be able to self-advocate. From this information, her IEP was developed to include the transition service of community-based instruction. She was placed, without pay and under the supervision of the school system, at a local art supply store to gain work and social skills. Hope maintained this placement and her IEP transition services remained the same until 2003. At that time, her personal goals and preferences were listed as working with small animals, working with a job coach, stocking and shelving goods at a local discount department store (D. IEP, 2003-04).

From this input, her IEP evolved to include transition services that focused on job coaching and the use of public transportation as a means to access work. Her transition service also included opportunities to participate in community activities through partnership with a local organization that provided recreational and social activities for individuals with developmental disabilities. By 2003, at age 17, Hope indicated that she would like to continue school as a post-graduate. This articulated preference prompted her IEP team to initiate bringing adult service providers into future IEP meetings to prepare for Hope's exit at age 22.

At Hope's twelfth grade IEP meeting (D. IEP, 2004-05), two community service providers were represented on the IEP team. The Department of Rehabilitation Services provided information about job training, and a local community services agency provided information about possible group home and other living arrangements— on condition that Hope and her family believed such an arrangement would be feasible in the future. In addition, the community service agency was a link for Hope and her family to access benefits obtainable through Hope's Medicaid waiver.

A change occurred in the 2004-05 IEP in terms of Hope's career goals. This was highlighted in the report as, "…Hope (sic) has expressed an interest in working in the school cafeteria, a bookstore, and a greenhouse for the upcoming semester for community-based instruction." (D. IEP, 2004-05). At this time it was determined that Hope would graduate with a "Special Diploma," which entitled her to seek post-graduate services until the age of 22 from the school system. Both of Hope's parents attended this meeting and their recommendations for the transition service focused on Hope having part-time supported employment after high school. The IEP team also agreed that Hope would participate in the community-based transition program the following school year.

Hope started the 2006 school year with the expressed desire to begin the community-based program. Jesse, however, did not did not initially consent to this placement (P. I . 3. 5). Once a consensus was established, the IEP focused on preparing Hope for the community-based program. The primary activities that resulted from this program goal were to get Hope used to kinds of skills she would need in a program placement and to understanding the rules of the program. Particular aspects of the program included following a schedule and routine, learning to check in with adults to maintain safety, and on maintaining personal responsibility for her belongings and hygiene.

From 2007 up to the most recent IEP, Hope's IEPs have focused on her primary goal of working in the community in a supported employment position. In the spring of 2007, she sat down with Ms. Jones, who developed her final IEP. About the current IEP, Ms. Jones indicated:

> I talked a lot directly with Hope (sic) about what she wanted in the IEP and she actually sat with me and helped me edit the previous IEP. We talked together about what we wanted to include and what we felt like we didn't need to include and, um, things we wanted to add. So, Hope (sic) did have quite a bit of input into that IEP and she did come to the IEP meeting. (C.M.I. 1.6)

As evidenced in her IEP data, in our interview sessions, and in conversations with her mother and Ms. Jones, Hope wanted to work either in a library, at a bookstore, or in a setting working with small animals. She wanted to live at home with her mother and continue to do social activities and volunteer work with her church. These interests, preferences, and personal goals have shaped her program, which included the richness of community-work and volunteerism at local non-profits such as the animal shelter.

Jesse's Input

Jesse had specific ideas for Hope's transition service and her plans. Jesse's input shaped the extent to which Hope's goals and preferences were given substance in the IEP. As a parent, Jesse's major concern was for Hope's happiness and fulfillment. Jesse's initial concerns about Hope receiving transition service in a community-based placement shaped how this experience evolved for Hope. Through transition planning document review, it was clear that Jesse's primary goal was for Hope to be employed in the community once she completed school. She confirmed this in our interview session by asserting, "She (Hope) needs a job" (P.I. 1. 4), when I asked her what her most important goal was for Hope as a recipient of the transition program.

By law, Jesse had complete control and the final say over Hope's IEP. Jesse decided if Hope would be able to participate in off-campus field trips, have spending money for downtown shopping trips, or engage in social relationships with friends from the program outside of the school day. In my interview with Jesse, she stated her approval of the types of activities Hope participated in as part of her transition program. She noted a positive change in Hope by observing her daughter become more mature and become comfortable with adults her own age. According to Jesse:

> The transition program (sic) requires Hope (sic) to be peer appropriate and I mean, and that's the biggest thing and what we were just talking about the peer appropriateness and then the maturity that's gained from being at the transition program (sic) and I don't want her to lose that (P.I. 3. 2)

Employment

Employment remains an essential feature of Hope's transition service and the main venue through which she currently integrates into her community with minimal adult supervision. The time she now spends working at the library is double the amount of time spent on academic, recreation, or other IEP activities. The long-term focus of all of her IEPs has been on the ways in which employment would be an outcome of her transition services. Hope liked to work. She was comfortable at the library and had established social relationships with her coworkers.

For Hope, an abundance of informal support was afforded by her job placement. A paid instructional assistant did not need to be at her side in this location and supervised her from afar. Because Hope understood her work routine and was able to use language effectively to maintain a degree of independence, she integrated herself in the library community. Her coworkers knew her name, acknowledged her presence, included her in work related communications, and indicated to Ms. Jones that Hope was a considered a part of the library team.

The Work Routine

Hope's successful application of her job requirements helped her assimilate into the library setting. Her effectiveness as an employee depended in large part on how she was trained for the position and in how the placement was configured prior to her employment. As a special education case manager working on transition service for adult-age students with developmental disabilities, Ms. Jones was responsible for locating potential employers and facilitating the employment relationship between the student and the employer.

Obviously, employers have a choice as to whether or not to use their location as a training site for individuals with IEPs who receive community-based instruction (CBI). If an employer is willing to serve as a community-based employment site, a special education teacher or a DRS agent will work with that employer to "carve" or create a job within existing opportunities. Job carving involves an examination of job requirements and selection of specific activities that usually tend to be rote and systematic. Activities such as counting patrons using a

clicker, pulling labels off books, and shredding documents were the types of routine tasks Hope did at her library job.

Once Ms. Jones secured Hope's placement at the library, she trained a paid instructional assistant to coach and supervise Hope at her university library setting. Next, Ms. Jones specifically taught Hope the task requirements of her new job. Lastly, she met with employees of the library to provide them with details about Hope. This process was repeated every time Hope moved into a new employment setting or if the tasks shifted within the current setting. Ms. Jones was always there when things changed to prepare Hope for new requirements.

Hope depended on a routine to structure her day and to function independently in the work setting. Having a routine taught her how to manage time, be accountable and independent, and clarified what to expect in a typical employment environment. According to Ms. Jones, "Student (sic) would go in the library and she would check in with her supervisor who was an employee of the library and she would start her jobs…" (CMI. 1. 1). Understanding her work routine created a comfort zone that allowed Hope to feel at ease interacting with her colleagues and the library patrons because she was not preoccupied or worried about what to do to next. Social skills acquired in natural settings—such as via job placements with non-disabled adults—tend to become better ingrained than when they are taught in a classroom setting. In Hope's case, her improved social skills helped her to feel that she was an employee of the library and considered this as her real job.

Relationships and Networks in the Employment Setting

Social relationships and networks were generated both formally and informally on Hope's behalf through her transition service placement in a typical (not sheltered) employment setting. Formally, Ms. Jones worked with the employer to provide information about Hope's disability to her colleges in a way that helped them understand her specific support needs. In turn, the individuals who worked with Hope had background information on how to interact with her and how to interpret her actions. Ms. Jones singled out key individuals, like the work site supervisor, for specific input into the "carved" job that Hope was required to perform. The work site supervisor had a stake in Hope's employment performance and was considered by Hope as someone she could turn to for guidance or work support.

Through her social interactions with colleagues and patrons of the library, Hope activated the social capital made available by the established social framework. Her colleagues knew about

Hope and her disability before she started working in the library. Ms. Jones' front-loaded and continuous conversations provided staff with techniques on how to communicate with and model social skills for Hope. Despite her limitations, Hope's interactions with library patrons were natural and occurred as they typically do for most people. These supplementary "unscripted" interactions provided her with excellent opportunities to put into action the social skills she learned from her relationships with her coworkers and job coach at the employment site.

Hope talked to me during our second interview session about the expectations set forth by her employers regarding how she was to interact with library patrons. She clearly understood that she was to "…be quiet, like please be quiet and not talk so loud, like, especially when people are trying to study" (SI. 2. 6). She indicated after I turned off the tape recorder that these were the expectations of all individuals in that setting because it was a library and people were there to get work done (FN). Hope also knew when and how to ask for help in the work setting. According to Ms. Jones, "With this particular student I see the average person as helping her because she's a good self-advocate (CMI. 3. 4)

Knowing how to interact and follow the social norms of the work setting was the key to Hope's social integration at this site. She fit the model of what was expected of all employees even though the required tasks were modified to meet her needs. Socially, she activated the relationships that were established for her by her IEP and built on these relationships to develop her own social network. In addition, she accessed the use of email, a form of social networking, to maintain communication with her employer and other staff outside of the work setting about work-related and other topics.

The Research Questions in Relation to the Themes

This chapter reviews the findings from a case study of an adult-age student with a developmental disability who received transition service through an Individualized Education Program, with a particular focus on the following four research questions.

The first research addressed the pragmatic experiences of an individual with a developmental disability who receives transition services as part of special education. A response to this question was found in the description of Hope's transition services as discussed in her narrative. In essence, Hope's transition experiences via her Individualized Education Program were varied to included academic, social, recreation, and employment activities all embedded in a community-based setting. Ms. Jones' narrative illustrated a typical day for Hope and

emphasized the key components of the transition service and aspects of importance about the setting in which this service was delivered. Both narratives highlighted Hope's daily events as a part of the overall core of her participation in the community-based transition program.

With respect to the question of how transition services generated and activated social relationships in the community for Hope, it is important to look at the themes of Community Opportunities and Employment. The community setting where the transition services were provided offered Hope numerous occasions to interact socially with non-disabled adults her age and with others. Hope actively pursued building relationships with her peer mentors and other program participants on campus and with individuals in the community. Social relationships and networks were intentionally generated on her behalf via her employment in the university library. Hope activated and maintained these social connections in the employment setting through positive relations with her work supervisors and colleagues. She demonstrated the importance of these relationships and networks by such activities as using email to create social network with her friends and colleagues, through selecting peers and friends with whom to socialize, through her knowledge of and interactions with individuals in the community, and by being considered a colleague by her coworkers at the library. More importantly, individuals in her work setting, on campus, and in the community knew her and were comfortable enough to initiate conversations with her and include her in social activities such as work parties.

The formal and informal processes that influenced transition service delivery in Hope's case were primarily illustrated through the theme of Development and Implementation of the IEP, which included Hope's self-advocacy and Jesse's input. The IEP transition process typically requires several components for transition service planning and delivery. For Hope, this included completion of student input forms and vocational assessments. Several community service agencies provided input into Hope's IEP , which shaped her transition service. In addition, Hope's skills in self-advocacy guided the development of an IEP based on her interests, strengths, and personal goals. These skills, which vary depending on the individual, informally affect the extent to which transition or other services may be realized. Finally, Jesse's input, a formal process of IEP development, shaped how Hope's plans were integrated into the IEP. Jesse also had ultimate say over the types of and location of the transition service.

The theme of Community Opportunities included a subtheme that explored the partnerships that influenced Hope's transition service delivery. Partnerships with other agencies

were highly influential on how her IEP was implemented. Through a partnership with the school system and an institution of higher education, Hope was able to receive her transition services on a university campus in her community rather than at the high school setting. Partnerships with the Department of Rehabilitation Services provided job support and a temporary training wage. The Community Services Board and a Center for Independent Living offer adult services to Hope and participated in developing her IEP to meet her community and post-school needs. A table of the themes in relation to the research questions is presented in Table 1.

Chapter Summary

This chapter included a description of the planning, evolution, implementation, and effectiveness of transition services designed for an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability to help her become integrated into her community. Data were collected through three interviews with the selected student, the student's parent, and the student's special education case manger. Document review of the selected student's Individualized Education Program, relevant transition information, and researcher field notes provided additional data sources. Three distinctive overarching themes were revealed through analysis of the data: Community Opportunities, Development and Implementation of the IEP, and Employment.

The overall findings of this case study confirmed that vital social relationships and networks were activated by the student through conscientious implementation of her IEP—and particularly as a result of the recommended transition services that afforded her community-based employment. The IEP specifically generated relationships and networks through opportunities for Hope to have a peer mentor, have structured social time with her peers, have access to downtown and community venues, and through supported employment at the university library. Hope's ability to use language and her vibrant personality facilitated how she maintained these relationships and networks, as well as how she established new relationships with others in the community. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice and future research are discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 1

Relation of Themes to the Research Questions and Examples as Found in the Data Analysis

Question	Theme	Examples of theme as identified in the analysis
What are the experiences of an adult-age student with a developmental disability who receives transition services via an Individualized Education Program?	Community Opportunities IEP Development and Implementation Employment	Narrative descriptions of Hope's experiences including narratives of the impact of her disability and her current IEP services
How do transition services generate and activate social relationships and networks in the community on behalf of an adult-age student with a developmental disability?	Community Opportunities Employment	Peer mentors Structured social activities with and without peers with disabilities Access to downtown and community venues Supported employment and work experience at the university library
What are the formal and informal processes that influence transition service delivery?	Community Opportunities IEP Development and Implementation	Formal: IEP transition planning documents; partnerships with community agencies; vocational assessment; transition service of community-based employment Informal: Family involvement; student involvement and self-advocacy skills
Which processes facilitate increased social capital through the formation of social relationships and networks for this adult-age student?	Community Opportunities IEP Development and Implementation	Formal: partnerships with community agencies; transition service of community-based employment

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this investigation was to examine and describe transition services vis a vis the community integration of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability. A social capital framework provided the conceptual lens through which the data in this study were analyzed. This chapter presents conclusions based upon the findings, implications and recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research. The findings of the study align with the research findings on transition services and community integration as previously reported in the literature review in Chapter 2. This study has contributed to the research on special education transition by presenting a descriptive portrait of the community integration experience of an adult-age special education student with a developmental disability who received transition services.

Conclusions from the Data Analysis

The primary mode of data collection for this case study involved participant face-to-face audio taped interviews, IEP document review, and an examination of relevant transition policy and procedure documents and researcher field notes. The findings of this study align with the research findings on transition services and community integration. Several conclusions were drawn from the data as related to the purpose of the study and the research questions.

The analysis of the data collected for this study revealed three key themes: Community Opportunities, Development and Implementation of the IEP, and Employment. Within each of these themes, specific factors illuminated the ways in which transition services influenced the community integration of this study's primary participant, Hope. In essence, the transition services were developed through an IEP which was fully implemented in a community based setting. This type of implementation resulted from a partnership between the school system and a neighboring institution of higher education. Hope's IEP featured community-based employment as the goal of her transition services. In addition to the employment element, there were also a multitude of generated social relationships and networks suggested by the IEP as part of the transition services, which Hope was able to activate in her job. Especially significant for this student was her ability to use language and her vibrant personality to maintain these relationships and networks and build new relationships with others in the community.

Conclusion #1: Community opportunities provide access to resources that may influence integration.

The first theme discussed in this study, Community Opportunities, is important because individuals with developmental disabilities typically have not had access to opportunities for community membership (Bramston et al. 2002). In this case study, transition services were implemented in a setting that offered many occasions for the recipient to activate social networks and relationships in the community. This unique feature of the transition service resulted from a partnership between the school system and a nearby institution of higher education.

In addition to the higher education partnership, other community agencies played a part in shaping the IEP transition service. The idea that special education should include a community interagency approach emerged from research that strongly emphasized the need for educators to focus on community opportunities and to develop partnerships and networks with agencies outside of the school setting (Benz, 1995; Blalock, 1996; Halpern, 1985). And indeed, this type of approach was evidenced in this study. Specifically, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) provided a temporary training wage and job coaching in a non-segregated job placement, and Independent Living Services and the Community Services Board assisted with a Medicaid Waiver and participated in the student's IEP. These partnerships offered links to important social networks that positively influenced the transition services of the student.

NTLS-1 (1987-93) data has indicated that young adults with developmental disabilities were the least likely of all disability groups to have social networks and relationships outside of their immediate families (Kohler, 1996). Through Hope's engagement with others in the community as a function of her transition service, she had an opportunity to activate social capital in the form of networks and relationships as she readily accessed public facilities, restaurants, shops, recreational outlets, and other community venues. This vital social context, in the form of social interactions and relationships with friends, family and others in the community, was an essential feature of her community integration experience.

As represented in Halpern's 1985 model the current trend in special education for students with developmental disabilities is to provide, among other things, employment, community living, and social engagement opportunities in the student's community of residence. The approach emphasizes providing services in an environment that is least restrictive, and into which the student will transition upon exit from school (Lehman et al. 2002). In Hope's case, her

transition services occurred in a neighboring community to her home and one that she frequented with her family.

Successful community integration is generally defined by the extent to which an individual with a disability participates, rather than just being physically present, in daily activities, such employment and recreation (Cummins, 1997; Cummins & Lau, 2003). As discovered in this study, Hope participated in a multitude of activities in the community setting to broaden her own sense of membership. These included employment, social outings, recreation, and volunteerism at a local animal shelter and at her church.

Conclusion #2: IEP transition services serve as a mechanism to facilitate community integration.

Prior to the IDEA transition mandate in 1997, the most typical outcome of IEP services for individuals with developmental disabilities was entry into a sheltered workshop or institutional setting in a centralized location, which was often away from their home community (Taylor, 2001). In 1997, IDEA changed its focus on how transition-based special educational services would be provided. No longer would it be a "one size fits all" approach. Instead, transition services began to take into account individual choices and postsecondary needs in a variety of domains (Kohler & Field, 2003). From this point, the IEP became a mechanism to help students with disabilities identify their personal goals, desires, and preferences in areas such as employment, independent living, postsecondary education, and community participation.

Given the wide variety of needs and available services, IEP transition services vary by school system according to the type and availability of community resources and transition curricula. This researcher examined transition services that were implemented in the community on the campus of a local university. In fact, as reported by Dolyniuk et al. (2002), community-based transition programs that feature employment in nearby institutions of higher education are becoming increasingly popular among progressive school systems for implementing transition services. Such a model offers opportunities for students with disabilities to gain social and functional skills within a meaningful context with same age peers. In Hope's case, both her case manager and parent noted that she had developed many appropriate social skills through her university-based employment, which enabled her to interact with same age peers who were not disabled. Moreover, age-appropriate settings for transition services offer meaningful opportunities for adult-age students with developmental disabilities to develop social capital in

the form of social networks, as well as gain functional social skills in a natural environment and context.

As discussed earlier, a number of processes influence how transition services are designed and implemented. One important component of this process is student input into the IEP document, particularly in the form of transition planning, which is an important requirement of special education. These processes range from the formal, such as completion of the specific transition documents, to the informal, which encompasses the degree of student participation and self-advocacy in the transition planning process. Kohler and Field's (2003) research synthesis on this subject found student involvement in the transition planning process to be a key factor that led to active student participation in the IEP and independence in fulfilling adult roles. As discussed herein, Hope was an active member of her IEP team and completed transition-planning documents with her various case managers starting at age 14.

Conclusion # 3: Employment is a primary outcome of transition service and a means to integrate into the community.

The importance of appropriate employment as a means to integrate into the community cannot be overstated for individuals with developmental disabilities. Typically, employment is the most common form of community integration for individuals with developmental disabilities and a vital means by which most forms of social capital are generated. In the community-based employment setting, individuals with disabilities have opportunities to engage socially, develop friendships, and create social networks with coworkers (Wehman, 2003). NTLS-2 (2000) data indicated that students with mental retardation who receive community-based services in the form of paid employment and job training are more likely to demonstrate some form of community engagement upon exit from school (Wagner et al. 2006).

Employment as a goal and outcome was the most prevalent feature of Hope's transition services and the main venue through which she integrated into her community. For Hope, employment offered an opportunity to become a part of the social framework of the workplace, which led to the development of social relationships and networks. In addition, her employment in the university library provided a structured work routine through which she learned both valuable employment skills (e.g., time management), as well as social skills that would be required of her in any typical employment setting.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Integration remains an unrealized aspect of community functioning for many adults with disabilities. Specifically, the extent to which an individual with a developmental disability integrates into his or her community may hinge on the existence of interpersonal relationships and social networks. As Coleman (1988) discussed more than two decades ago, social interactions and relationships are immensely influential in shaping a person's life opportunities and future successes. For individuals with disabilities who receive special education, however, opportunities to generate relationships and social networks often rest primarily on the shoulders of parents and special education professionals, which can limit a fuller assimilation into the community. This study, therefore, investigated transition programming that was implemented in an age-appropriate community setting for an adult-age student in special education. The setting offered opportunities for the recipient of the transition service to have access to social capital in the form of relationships and networks within a broad social context. The implications drawn from the findings of this study shed light on the need for special education professionals to recognize that transition services for some students require service delivery in natural settings. In addition, an understanding of the extent to which the IEP and the transition service can facilitate social relationships and networks in the community on behalf of the student may have a positive influence on how well that individual integrates and experiences community membership. Finally, integration must be balanced with parental concerns and apprehension about the safety and supervision of their adult-age child in the community setting.

Recommendations for Future Research

An identified gap exists in the literature regarding the application of a social capital framework to analyze educational outcomes and issues for specific student populations (Dika & Singh, 2002). In particular, social capital constructs have been largely absent from the literature on community integration and the community inclusion of individuals with disabilities (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). Continued research is needed, therefore, to add to the current research addressing the community integration needs of students with developmental disabilities. In particular, such investigations will augment our understanding of the influence of relationships and networks on post-school outcomes for students who receives special education transition services.

Based on the findings of this study and a selected review of the literature, the following recommendations for further research are suggested:

1. A study to explore specific IEP activities that result in community integration and participation outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities.
2. A descriptive study that examines how social capital is generated vis a vis specific types of transition service models, such as progressive models like on-campus programs and more traditional school-based models.
3. An exploration into how social relationships and networks influence community integration for individuals with developmental disabilities who have limited communication and social skills, such as individuals with autism.
4. A qualitative study to tell the story of transition planning for adult age students with developmental disabilities from the perspective of parents and special education professionals.

Personal Reflections

My purpose in this study was to describe the experiences of a single individual receiving transition services rather than to evaluate the effectiveness of the transition services or to measure the degree to which this person integrated into the community. For me, the most difficult aspect of the process has been self-regulation. Because of my experience as a special education teacher and administrator, I knew that it was critical to put aside my assumptions and personal biases the data were collected and analyzed for this investigation. It took a lot of conscious effort on my part to do this, but once I did, I was truly open to the data. The lessons learned absorbing and analyzing the data have been invaluable and rewarding to me on a professional and personal level. As my committee members encouraged, I put my faith in the process and applied my qualitative research skills along every step of the way, and as I did, this document evolved from a work in progress to a finished piece.

I feel a great sense of respect for the participants in this study. Hope was one of the most engaging and sincere individuals I have ever met. She openly shared her story with me and I am grateful for having had the opportunity to hear it. A feeling of obligation to the social justice efforts of individual with disabilities and my high regard for Hope underscored how important it was to me that I produce an authentic portrait of her experience. In addition, Hope’s mother, Jesse, took time away from her work for our interview sessions and follow-ups. She was a true

advocate for Hope and I admired her for being a single parent who accomplished so much for herself and her child. Ms. Jones was one of the most dedicated and motivated special education teachers I have ever met. She was immensely knowledgeable about her field and spent countless hours on job…even after the school day ended. Her contributions to this study provided excellent supplementary material to Hope's and Jesse's input.

Concluding Statements

The expected significance of this study is in the description of what occurs for individuals with disabilities in our educational programs and in our communities. The study was approached from a social justice perspective to give voice to individuals with disabilities who have been disenfranchised or marginalized by society. Special education as a discipline is based on advocacy and, as much as possible, on an attempt to level the playing field for individuals with disabilities. Only through understanding the experiences of such individuals can those of us without disabilities create social and cultural change that is meaningful, appropriate, and enduring.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

VirginiaTech

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4991 Fax 540/231-0959
e-mail moored@vt.edu
www.irb.vt.edu

FWA00000572(expires 1/20/2010)
IRB # is IRB00000667

DATE: January 12, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Penny L. Burge
Julie Ligon

Approval date: 2/11/2009
Continuing Review Due Date:1/27/2010
Expiration Date: 2/10/2010

FROM: David M. Moore

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Continuation 1 of previous Full Review: "Building The Bridge: Transition In Special Education"**, IRB # 07-647

This memo is regarding the above referenced protocol which was previously granted Full IRB approval. The proposed continuing review request is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval for extension of the study for a period of 12 months, effective as of February 11, 2009.

Approval of your research by the IRB provides the appropriate review as required by federal and state laws regarding human subject research. As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

cc: File

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APPENDIX B

LETTER TO DIVISION SUPERINTENDENT

March 13, 2008
Tiffany Anderson, Ed D
Montgomery County Public Schools
200 Junkin Street
Christiansburg, VA 24073

Dear Dr. Anderson,

I am currently a doctoral student at Virginia Tech in Special Education Administration and Supervision. Dr. Penny Burge is advising me. I am working toward completing my dissertation research and need your assistance. The purpose of my study is to examine and describe transition services as they relate to the community integration of an adult age special education student with a developmental disability.

To complete my study, I will need access to the Individualized Education Program documents of a small sample of special education students from your school district. I will work closely with your Director of Special Education to select a participant from this sample. The participant will be asked to participate voluntarily. This individual will also be asked to provide informed consent and will receive an assurance of confidentiality. No information will be released regarding the identity of your school district or of the selected student participant.

I would like to complete this Individualized Education Program document review during the spring of 2008. Upon your request, I will gladly share the results of my study with you when I am finished. I would like to meet with you to discuss this study and receive your verbal permission to access MCPS student records. I will contact your office to arrange an appointment. Please contact me at 540-382-5114 or juligon@vt.edu if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Julie Ligon
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-9730

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

March 13, 2008
Christina Gilley
Montgomery County Public Schools
200 Junkin Street
Christiansburg, VA 24073

Dear Mrs. Gilley,

I am currently a doctoral student at Virginia Tech in Special Education Administration and Supervision. Dr. Penny Burge is advising me. I am working toward completing my dissertation research and need your assistance. The purpose of my study is to examine and describe transition services as they relate to the community integration of an adult age special education student with a developmental disability.

To complete my study, I will need access to the Individualized Education Program documents of a small sample of special education students from your school district. I am asking you to provide a signed Montgomery County Public Schools record release by the student's parent/guardian prior to my examination of student records in order to comply with the federal confidentially requirements for school divisions and departments of special education,. I will work closely with you to select participants from this sample. The participant will be asked to participate voluntarily. This individual will also be asked to provide informed consent and will receive an assurance of confidentiality. No identifying information will be released.

I would like to complete this Individualized Education Program document review during the spring of 2008. Upon your request, I will gladly share the results of my study with you when I am finished. I would like to meet with you to discuss this study and receive your written permission to access MCPS student records. I will contact your office to arrange an appointment. Please contact me at 540-382-5114 or juligon@vt.edu if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Julie Ligon
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-9730

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

March 18, 2008

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is written to document the agreement to support the research conducted by Julie Ligon, doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. I will secure written permission from each parent or guardian for record release of any Montgomery County student who has his or her Individualized Education Programs reviewed for the purpose of Ms. Ligon's research.

A signed record release for each student will be presented to Ms. Ligon prior to her review of such records.

Sincerely,

Christina Gilley
Director of Special Education
Montgomery County Public Schools
208 College Street
Christiansburg, VA 24073

APPENDIX E

PHONE CONFERENCE SCRIPT FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Student Participant Name:_____

Parent/Guardian Name:_____

1. Introduce Self
2. Ask permission to inform parent/guardian of study
3. Explain research purpose
4. Explain procedure for participant selection to parent/guardian
5. Explain procedures of the study
6. Ask parent/guardian opinion as to whether or not student is able to understand the research procedures (interview format)
7. Ask parent/guardian if he/she would be willing to help the student participant understand the study information letter and informed consent document
8. Ask parent/guardian if he/she would give permission for student to complete a capacity-to-consent questionnaire
9. Ask parent/guardian if he/she would be willing to help the student participant understand written or verbal interview questions

APPENDIX F

STUDENT PARTICIPANT LETTER

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Dear _____,

This study is about how young people with disabilities get ready for adult life in the community. I am asking you to share your story with me because you receive transition service as part of your IEP.

You will be asked to answer questions. I will meet with you three times. We will talk for about 90 minutes each time. I will ask you questions about your Individualized Education Program, the transition services, and your life right now. After the interview session, you may give me ideas or ask me questions.

You do not have to share your story with me if you do not want to. You are a volunteer in this study, and this means you can decide if you want to share your story. I will ask you over the phone if you would like to help, you can tell me yes or no on the phone or in person. I will ask some questions about the study and what I am asking you to do. Once I do this, I will ask you to sign this form to show that you want to share your story.

If you decide to work with me, we will meet in a quiet location on campus or at your home. You may meet with me alone or bring your parent or guardian. I will tape-record our interviews. When we are done, I will listen to the tape and type out your answers. I will share this information with you and you can tell me more or ask me to make changes. What we talk about will be shared with the people helping me with this study. When we are done with the study, I will destroy all of the tapes.

I will not use your real name in the interviews or in the study. If you use the names of teachers, friends, campus staff, or guardian/parents, I will replace those names with names I make up. I will make-up names for your high school and the community. I want to talk about your story but I do not want to use real names. This study may help teachers and other adults learn about transition services.

Thank you for your help with this study. Please contact me at 540-382-5114 or juligon@vt.edu if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Ligon
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-9730

Penny Burge, Ph. D., Professor
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-9730

APPENDIX G

PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPANT LETTER

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Student Participant Name:_____

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are invited to take part in a study, which will describe the experiences of your child who receives transition services as part of an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The purpose of this case study is to examine and describe transition services as they relate to the community integration of an adult age special education student with a developmental disability.

Through this project, I would like to learn more about how certain aspects of Individualized Education Programs might benefit students with disabilities in the process of transition from school to the adult world. This study is about how young people get ready for adult life as based on the experiences of a select young adults with a disability. As a special educator, I believe that the lived experience of an individual with a disability provides an important story about the process of transition in special education.

As a family member or guardian of an individual with a disability, you are asked to review the consent form and study abstract (attached) with your child to ensure understanding of the nature of the study and the expectations for participation. All participants must provide informed consent. To meet this requirement, I will be asking your child a set of screening questions related to the information I have provided about the study (attached). With your permission, I will seek informed consent from your child if he/she demonstrates understanding of the study and its requirements for participation. I am also asking permission to review your child's IEP.

Each student and parent/guardian participant will be asked to complete three individual, 90-minute interviews. During the interview sessions, all participants will be asked to discuss personal experiences about Individualized Education Programs, the specific transition services under study, and current life situations (see attached questions). In addition to interview questions, you may also be asked to clarify or supplement the information provided by the student participant following his/her interview session. Your input will help me portray the community integration experience of the student fully and with accuracy.

Each interview will be conducted in a quiet location on the campus of a local university or at your home. The student participant will be informed that a parent or guardian is invited to

sit-in on his/her interviews. Participation is voluntary and you or the student participant may opt out at any time. All interview sessions will be tape-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy by each participant. Only my advisors and I will have access to the audio tape recorded tapes and the typewritten transcripts of each interview. If a typist is used for any part of the study, this individual will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

I do not believe that the participants in this research will encounter any identified risks during or upon completion of this study. However, given the depth of the interview methods used, participants could possibly be identified by the experiences shared with me in the interview sessions. To decrease this risk, a made-up name or pseudonyms for individuals, groups, and settings will be used throughout the study so that only the researcher will be able to identify the individuals, groups, or places mentioned. Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time under no penalty

Thank you for your assistance. I will contact you within the next week to determine interest in participation in this study. Please contact me at 540-382-5114 or juligon@vt.edu if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Ligon
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-9730

Penny Burge, Ph. D., Professor
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
burge@vt.edu
540-231-9730

APPENDIX H

CASE MANAGER PARTICIPANT LETTER

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Student Participant Name:_____

Dear Case Manager,

You are invited to take part in a study, which will describe the experiences of a student with a disability who receives transition services as part of an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The purpose of this case study is to examine and describe transition services as they relate to the community integration of an adult age special education student with a developmental disability. As a special educator, I believe that the lived experience of an individual with a disability will provide an important story about the process of transition in special education.

A total of nine interviews will be conducted for this study; three with the selected student, three with parent/guardian, and three with you because you work with the selected student. Each interview will be approximately 90-minutes in length. During the interview sessions, all participants will be asked to discuss personal experiences about Individualized Education Programs, the specific transition services under study, and current life situations (see attached questions). In addition to interview questions, you may also be asked to clarify or supplement the information provided by the student participant following his/her interview session. Your input will help me portray the community integration experience of the student fully and with accuracy.

Each interview will be conducted in a quiet location on the campus of a local university or at your home or office. Participation is voluntary and you may opt out at any time. All interview sessions will be audio tape-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy by each participant. Only my advisors and I will have access to the recorded tapes and the typewritten transcripts of each interview. If a typist is used for any part of the study, this individual will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

I do not believe that the study participants will encounter any identified risks during or upon completion of this study. However, given the depth of the interview methods used, participants could possibly be identified by the experiences shared with me in the interview sessions. To decrease this risk, pseudonyms for individuals, groups, and settings will be used throughout the study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time under no penalty

Thank you for your assistance. I will contact you within the next week to determine interest in participation in this study. Please contact me at 540-382-5114 or juligon@vt.edu if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Ligon
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-9730

Penny Burge, Ph. D., Professor
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
burge@vt.edu
540-231-9730

APPENDIX I

RESEARCH OUTLINE

Research Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to examine and describe transition services as they relate to the community integration of an adult age special education student with a developmental disability.

Social Capital Framework

View social capital in terms of relationships and networks that are generated and activated via the transition service in the community setting.

- Literature review of social capital theory
- Current applications of social capital theory in educational research

Methods

- Document Review
  - Document Review Data shared with Committee Chair for review
  - Examine IEP for language in transition services that speaks to collaboration between team and community agencies, implementation of services in the community, inclusion of student, parent, and other agencies in development of program
- Interviews
  - Member checks with participants prior to each session
  - Student Interview
    - Three 90 minute sessions
      - Session I
        - Focus on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability
        - Identify social relationships and networks that currently exist
      - Session II
        - Focus on the transition service in the IEP
        - Identify social relationships and networks exclusive to the transition service and the community setting
      - Session III
        - Focus on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the frequency and types of activities conducted by the student participant in the community;

Explore the number and types of relationships and networks accessed by the student participant in the community

Explore the types of community resources accessed by the student participant

Explore the number and type of social activities the student participates in outside of home

Parent or Guardian Interviews

Three 90 minute sessions

Session I

Focus on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability

Identify social relationships and networks that currently exist

Session II

Focus on the transition service in the IEP

Identify social relationships and networks exclusive to the transition service and the community setting

Session III

Focus on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the frequency and types of activities conducted by the student participant in the community;

Explore the number and types of relationships and networks accessed by the student participant in the community

Explore the types of community resources accessed by the student participant

Explore the number and type of social activities the student participates in outside of home

Case Manager Interview

Three 90 minute sessions

Session I

Focus on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability

Identify social relationships and networks that currently exist

Session II

Focus on the transition service in the IEP

Social relationships and networks exclusive to the transition service and the community setting will be described in this session

Session III

Focus on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the frequency and types of activities conducted by the student participant in the community;

Explore the number and types of relationships and networks accessed by the student participant in the community

Explore the types of community resources accessed by the student participant

Explore the number and type of social activities the student participates in outside of home

Researcher Field Notes

Document personal assumptions, feelings, impressions

Provide audit trail of data

Data Analysis

Research Questions

What are the experiences of an adult age student with a developmental disability who receives transition services via an Individualized Education Program?

How do transition services generate and activate social relationships and networks in the community on behalf of an adult age student with a developmental disability?

What are the formal and informal processes that influence transition service delivery?

Which processes facilitate increased social capital through the formation of social relationships and networks for this adult age student?

Themes in document review

Relationships as evidenced by shared responsibility for specific goals or services

Relationships as evidenced by participation of individuals in development and implementation of program

Networks as evidenced by participation of community-based service providers, agencies, and other entities in the development and implementation of Individualized Education Program

Data coded according to

Key words, phrases, ideas

Identification of specific relationships and networks generated and activated by transition service in community setting

Description of the types of relationships and networks

Description of the quality or meaningfulness of specific relationships or networks

Description of relationships and networks viewed by participant as resources in the community setting

Findings

Portrait of experience of one individual will form the basis of the findings with analysis of specific references to the structure and activation of social capital evidenced in the transition service in the community setting of the selected student.

APPENDIX J

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS OF INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS:

STUDENT PARTICIPANT FORM

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigators: Julie A. Ligon, Penny Burge (faculty advisor)

Purpose of this Research/Project
This study is about how young people with disabilities get ready for adult life. I am asking you to share your story with me because you receive transition services in the community setting as part of your IEP.

Procedures
You will be asked to answer questions about your experiences. I will meet with you three times. We will talk for about 90 minutes each time. I will ask you questions about your Individualized Education Program, your transition services, and your life right now. We will meet in a quiet location on campus or at your home. You may meet with me alone or bring your parent or guardian. I will audio tape-record our interviews. I will also review of your Individualized Education Program (IEP) to help me learn more about your program.

Risks
There are no known risks for you by helping with this study.

Benefits
You will not directly benefit from this study. This study may help teachers and other adults learn about transition services and community integration.

Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality
I will not use your real name in writing about the interviews or in the study. I will replace the names of your parents, teachers, and friends and the community with names I make up.

Compensation
You will not be paid for helping with this study.

Freedom to Withdraw
You do not have to share your story with me if you do not want to. You are a volunteer in this study, and this means you can decide if you want to share your story. You have a right to

withdraw or stop your participation in this study at anytime by telling me or having your parent/guardian tell me on your behalf.

Subject's Responsibilities
I freely agree to help with this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- To participate in three 90 minute audio taped recorded interviews
- To review the interview data for accuracy

Subject's Permission
I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ _____

Signature *Date*

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, and researcher subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Julie Ann Ligon, Investigator	juligon@vt.edu/540-231-9730
Penny Burge, Faculty Advisor	burge@vt.edu/540-231-9730
David M. Moore, IRB Chair	moored@vt.edu/540-231-4991

NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent

APPENDIX K

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS OF INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS:

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigators: Julie Ann Ligon, Penny Burge (faculty advisor)

Purpose of this Research/Project
The purpose of this case study is to examine and describe transition services as they relate to the community integration of an adult age special education student with a developmental disability.

Procedures
Participants will be asked to complete three individual, 90-minute interviews. During the interview sessions, you will be asked to discuss personal experiences about Individualized Education Programs, the specific transition services under study, and current life situations (see attached questions). In addition to interview questions you may also be asked to clarify or supplement the information provided by the student participant following his/her interview session. Your input will help me portray the community integration experience fully and with accuracy. A review of the student's Individualized Education Program will be conducted in order to give me insight into the student's transition services and programming.

Risks
There are no identified risks for participants who agree to participate in this study.

Benefits
There are no identified benefits for participants who agree to participate in this study. Larger societal and educational benefits may incur if processes and programs for students with moderate disabilities improve because of the information presented in the final report.

Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality
Given the depth of the interview methods used, participants could possibly be identified by the experiences shared with me in the interview sessions. To decrease this risk, pseudonyms for individuals, groups, and settings will be used throughout the study.

Compensation
Participants will not be monetarily compensated for their contribution to this study.

Freedom to Withdraw
Participant involvement is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer questions during interviews at any time you chose.

Subject's Responsibilities
I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:
To participate in three 90 minute audio taped recorded interviews
To participate in the three 90 minute student interview sessions (if requested)
To review the interview data for accuracy

Subject's Permission
I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ _____
Signature *Date*

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and researcher subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Julie Ann Ligon, Investigator	juligon@vt.edu/540-231-9730
Penny Burge, Faculty Advisor	burge@vt.edu/540-231-9370
David M. Moore, IRB Chair	moored@vt.edu/540-231-4991

NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent

APPENDIX L

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS OF INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS: CASE MANAGER CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigators: Julie Ann Ligon, Penny Burge (faculty advisor)

Purpose of this Research/Project
The purpose of this case study is to examine and describe transition services as they relate to the community integration of an adult age special education student with a developmental disability.

Procedures
Participants will be asked to complete three individual, 90-minute interviews. During the interview sessions, you will be asked to discuss personal experiences about Individualized Education Programs, the specific transition services under study, and current life situations (see attached questions). In addition to interview questions you may also be asked to clarify or supplement the information provided by the student participant following his/her interview session. Your input will help me portray the transition process experience fully and with accuracy. A review of the student's Individualized Education Program will be conducted in order to give me insight into the student's transition services and programming.

Risks
There are no identified risks for participants who agree to participate in this study.

Benefits
There are no identified benefits for participants who agree to participate in this study. Larger societal and educational benefits may incur if processes and programs for students with moderate disabilities improve because of the information presented in the final report.

Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality
Given the depth of the interview methods used, participants could possibly be identified by the experiences shared with me in the interview sessions. To decrease this risk, pseudonyms for individuals, groups, and settings will be used throughout the study.

Compensation
Participants will not be monetarily compensated for their contribution to this study.

Freedom to Withdraw
Participant involvement is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer questions during interviews at any time you chose.

Subject's Responsibilities
I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:
To participate in three 90 minute audio taped recorded interviews
To review the interview data for accuracy

Subject's Permission
I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ _____
Signature *Date*

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and researcher subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Julie Ann Ligon, Investigator juligon@vt.edu/540-231-9730

Penny Burge, Faculty Advisor burge@vt.edu/540-231-9370

David M. Moore, IRB Chair moored@vt.edu/540-231-4991

NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent

APPENDIX M

CAPACITY-TO-CONSENT SCREENING TOOL

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Student Participant Name:_____

- Questions relate to demonstrating an understanding of the study, and understanding of volunteerism, appreciation of the research procedures, and reasoning of the benefits or risks associated with participation
- Capacity to consent is measured by demonstrating understanding through accurate verbal response as measured by the researcher to 8 of 10 questions

1. **Why were you asked to participate in this study?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (*Understanding- Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated*)
2. **Can you tell me something about the study?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (Understanding- Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated)
3. **Will real names be used in the final report?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (*Appreciation-Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated)*
4. **What are the risks you might face by helping with this study?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (*Appreciation- Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated*)
5. **Is it ok for your parent or guardian to attend the interviews with you?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (Appreciation-Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated)
6. **Where will we meet for the interviews?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (Appreciation-Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated)
7. **Will you be paid for talking with me?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (Reasoning--Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated)

8. **How long will you work with me?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (Appreciation- Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated)
9. **If you do not want to, do you have to be in this study?**
   Response:_____
   _____
   (*Volunteerism-Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated*)
10. **If you do not want to answer a question, do you have to?**
   Response:_____
   (Volunteerism- Demonstrated/Not Demonstrated)

APPENDIX N

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT- DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE
Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

I _____ understand that information pertaining to this research study is confidential. This confidentiality agreement serves to protect the privacy rights of study participants. All conversations or information gained about or about this study are not to be discussed with any individual or agency other than the researcher. All typed or handwritten data and information is not to be discussed or shared with any individual or agency other than the researcher. I agree to and accept the terms of this confidentiality agreement as verified by my signature.

Signature_____

Date_____

APPENDIX O

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT- TYPIST

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE
Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

I _____ understand that information pertaining to this research study is confidential. This confidentiality agreement serves to protect the privacy rights of study participants. I agree to and accept the terms of this confidentiality agreement as verified by my signature.

All conversations or written information gained about this study are not to be discussed with any individual or agency representative other than the researcher.

I understand that my role in this study is to transcribe, verbatim, the audiotaped recordings of each interview session. I understand that I am not to alter these recordings or add editorial comments to the written transcriptions. I understand that I am to transcribe the audio recording within an established timeframe and on a payment schedule as agreed upon by the researcher and myself.

Signature_____

Date_____

APPENDIX P

SESSION I INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: STUDENT

Session I: *Focus on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability.*
Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about your transition services, the people in your life, and the things you do in your community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time. If you do not want to answer a question, you can say no.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about your day during school hours.

Prompt Questions:

a. Where do you start your day (work/class/recreation)? Get sequence or schedule of the day.
b. What do you do at this location and for how long? Ask for each activity.
c. Who are the people who are there to work with you? Ask for each activity.
d. Who are your friends (or peers) who are there? Ask for each activity.
e. How are you transported to the places you go each day? Ask for each activity.
f. What time does your day end?
g. What is the final school type activity of the day?

2) Tell me about your IEP.

Prompt Questions:

a. Who is your case manager?
b. Do you spend time with this person each day?
c. What does this person help you with or teach you?
d. Who are the other people that work with you as part of your IEP?
e. Did you attend your most recent IEP mtg?
f. What do you want to do when you finish your program? (job, hopes, dreams)
g. Did you share this information at your IEP mtg? How? (portfolio, discussion, power point)

3) Tell me about your life apart from school and work.

Prompt Questions:

a. Do you live with a parent or guardian or in a host home?
b. Tell me as much as you can about any clubs or volunteer activities you do outside of your school or work day.
c. What do you like to do when you are not working, going to classes, or spending time at home?
d. Tell me about people who are not in your school program with whom you may spend time or do things with in the community?

APPENDIX Q

SESSION II INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: STUDENT

Session II: *Focus on the concrete details of the student participant's experience as a person with an Individualized Education Program who receives transition services in a community setting.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about your transition services, the people in your life, and the things you do in your community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time. If you do not want to answer a question, you can say no.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about your transition services.

Prompt Questions:

a. Do you have a job in town as a part of your IEP?
b. What types of things do you do at your job?
c. Is there a job coach or a person who helps you complete your work or helps you if you have problems at work?
d. Do you take classes? If so, tell me about the activities you do in class and what you are learning.
e. Did DRS or any other agency or person from an agency participate in your most recent IEP mtg?
f. Do you receive services from DRS or any other agency or person? If so, tell me about these services.

2) Tell me about your job.

a. Tell me what kind of work you do and where you are working right now.
b. Tell me about your friends at work. Do you have work friends?
c. Do you and friends eat lunch together or take breaks together? If so, how often and where does this activity occur.
d. Do you see your friend(s) outside of work to do things like go to the movies?
e. Does your case manager and your parent or guardian know the people at your job?

APPENDIX R

SESSION III INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: STUDENT

Session III: *Focus on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the activities conducted by the student participant such as the number and types of relationships and networks available to the student in the community, the types of community resources accessed by the student participant, and the number and types of social activities the student participates in outside of the home.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about your transition services, the people in your life, and the things you do in your community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time. If you do not want to answer a question, you can say no.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about your relationships with people in the community.

Prompt Questions:

a. Think about all of the people who help you each day in the community. Can you tell me some of their names?
b. Can you describe how each of these people help you with school, work, or at home?
c. Tell me about the people you have met because of your program. Describe your relationship with these people (friends, coworker, support person).
d. When you want to do something in the community, like go to the mall, do you go alone or with someone? Do you ask people to do these things with you?

2) Tell me about resources you use in the community (go to the CSB, use the BT, etc).

Prompt Questions:

a. Do you use public transportation? If so, how often and where do you usually go?
b. Do you go to the community or recreation center for activities? If so, which activities and how often.
c. Do you participate in any on-campus activities? If so, describe the types of activities and how often you participate (if regularly).
d. Do you attend a church or belong to a community organization? Do you go alone or with your parent or guardian?

3) Tell me about social things you like to do.

Prompt Questions:

a. Describe the fun things you like to do on your free time.
b. Do you have any hobbies? Describe.
c. Do your friends participate in fun activities with you? If so tell me what you and your friends do for fun.
d. Do any of the people from your program do activities with you outside of the school day? If so, describe these activities.

e. What is your favorite thing to do outside of school?
f. What are your plans for the future when you no longer receive school services- what will change?

APPENDIX S

SESSION I INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PARENT/GUARDIAN

Session I: *Focus on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about your child's transition services, the people in her life, and the things she does in the community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about _____'s current situation in school, home, and the community.

Prompt Questions:

a. Describe _____'s school day based on your role in the IEP.
b. Do you know _____'s co-workers, or friends who are part of the program? Identify.
c. Do you know what type of relationship _____ has with these individuals? Describe.

2) Tell me about _____'s current IEP.

Prompt Questions:

a. Did you and _____ participate in the most recent IEP?
b. Do you interact with or receive any type of regular feedback/communication from campus staff regarding _____'s activities or completion of IEP goals?
c. What is the nature and type of this feedback/communication?
d. What are _____'s goals for life outside of school? Describe.
e. Have plans been made to specifically support _____once the IEP has expired? Describe.
f. When _____ shared information about his/her future goals or dreams in the IEP mtg, how was this information incorporated into the current program?

3) Tell me about _____'s life apart from school or work.

Prompt Questions:

a. Does _____ currently live with you?
b. Describe any clubs or volunteer opportunities _____ participates in outside of his or her IEP program.
c. Describe _____'s hobbies or interests.
d. Tell me about people who is not a part of the IEP program but with whom _____ spends time with in the community.

APPENDIX T

SESSION II INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PARENT/GUARDIAN

Session II: *Focus on the concrete details of the student participant's experience as a person with an Individualized Education Program who receives transition services in a community setting.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about your child's transition services, the people in her life, and the things she does in the community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about _____'s transition services.

Prompt Questions:

a. Describe the employment services offered to _____through the transition service in the IEP.
b. Does _____ or you work with DRS or any other agency to support _____ in the community? Describe.
c. Are you familiar with the job tasks and co-workers located at _____'s current job?
d. Have you observed _____ on in classes or at work?
e. Is there anything about the transition services that you would change?
f. Have you been able to access any community agency networks through _____'s transition services? Describe.

APPENDIX U

SESSION III INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PARENT/GUARDIAN

Session III: *Focus on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the activities conducted by the student participant such as the number and types of relationships and networks available to the student in the community, the types of community resources accessed by the student participant, and the number and types of social activities the student participates in outside of the home.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about your child's transition services, the people in her life, and the things she does in the community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about __'s relationships with people in the community.

Prompt Questions:

a. Describe any specific relationships that are currently useful in meeting _____'s community integration needs?
b. Describe any agencies or individuals who have helped _____ connect to certain community resources?
c. Describe any educational or community resources do you feel are necessary for _____'s transition to the community?
d. Have you met and interacted with other parents or guardians through _____'s IEP transition services?
e. Are there any individuals who have formed relationships with you or _____ because of this program? Describe.
f. Can you tell me about any relationships or networks that assist you as a caregiver for an individual with a disability?

APPENDIX V

SESSSION I INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CASE MANAGER

Session I: *Focus on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about this student's transition services, the people in this student's life, and the things this student does in the community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about _____ 's day.

Prompt Questions:

a. Describe _____'s school day in regard to IEP services?
b. How often do you see _____ during the course of a typical school day?
c. Do you facilitate any after-school activities for _____? Describe.
d. Did you help develop this IEP?

APPENDIX W

SESSION II INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CASE MANAGER

Session II: *Focus on the concrete details of the student participant's experience as a person with an Individualized Education Program who receives transition services in a community setting.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about this student's transition services, the people in this student's life, and the things this student does in the community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about _____'s transition services.

Prompt Questions:

a. Describe the input of the student and the parent in regard to the transition services found in the student's current IEP?
b. What is your role in implementing the transition service?
c. Do you feel that you established any specific relationships or networks with individuals or agencies through the IEP process and transition services?
d. What is the status of the transition services in _____'s IEP? (Is everything in place, waiting for services, etc)?
e. How does this program offer _____ different opportunities than what is offered through the school-based program? Describe.
f. Can you describe any specific relationships that are currently useful in meeting _____'s transition needs?
g. Is there anything about the current transition services that you would change?

APPENDIX X

SESSION III INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CASE MANAGER

Session III: *Focus on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the activities conducted by the student participant such as the number and types of relationships and networks available to the student in the community, the types of community resources accessed by the student participant, and the number and types of social activities the student participates in outside of the home.*

Introduction: During the next hour and a half we will be talking about this student's transition services, the people in this student's life, and the things this student does in the community. You can tell me as much or as little as you like during this time.

Primary Question:

1) Tell me about _____'s relationships with people in the community.

Prompt Questions:

a. Describe any agencies or individuals who have helped _____ connect to certain community resources?
b. What educational or community resources do you feel are necessary for _____'s transition to the community?
c. In your opinion, how has _____'s participation in this program, through meeting various individuals, and working with various agencies, prepared her for life in the community?

APPENDIX Y

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Interview Guide Student/Parent/Guardian/Case manager		
Session I	**Session II**	**Session III**
Focus on the current educational, vocational, and living situation of the student participant to include general information about the individual as a person with a disability.	Focus on the concrete details of the student participant's experience as a person with an Individualized Education Program who receives transition services in a community setting.	Focus on the student participant's experiences within the community to include an examination of the activities conducted by the student participant such as the number and types of relationships and networks available to the student in the community, the types of community resources accessed by the student participant, and the number and types of social activities the student participates in outside of the home.

APPENDIX Z

RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Questions	Interview Questions
What are the experiences of an adult age student with a developmental disability who receives transition services via an Individualized Education Program?	**Student-** CS- 1, 2 & 3 TS- 1, 2 & 3, CI- 1 **Parent/Guardian-** CS-1 & 2, TS-1 & 3, CI-1 **Case Manager-** CS- 1, TS-1, CI-1
How do transition services generate and activate social relationships and networks in the community on behalf of an adult age student with a developmental disability?	**Student-** CS- 1, 2 & 3, TS-1, CI-1 & 2 **Parent/Guardian-** CS-1, 2 & 3 TS-1, CI-1 **Case Manager-** CS- 1, TS-1, CI-1
What are the formal and informal processes that influence transition service delivery?	**Student-** CS-2, TS- 1 & 2, CI-2 **Parent/Guardian-** CS-2, 1, TS-1 CI-1 **Case Manager-** CS- 1, TS-1, CI-1
Which processes facilitate increased social capital through the formation of social relationships and networks for this adult age student?	**Student-** CS-1, TS-1 & 2, CI-2 **Parent/Guardian-** CS-1 & 2, TS-1, CI-1 **Case Manager-** CS- 1, TS-1, CI-1

Codes for Interviews:
Session I- Current Situation-CS
Session II- Transition Services- TS
Session III- Community Integration-CI

Numbers represent the question on the individual interview guides

APPENDIX AA

RESEARCHER'S FIELD NOTES FORM

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Date:

Document Review or Interview:

Interview #:

Interview Type: (Student-Parent/Guardian):

Location of Interview:

Person present:

Notes:

APPENDIX BB

DOCUMENT REVIEW FORM

Title of Project: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

Investigator: Julie A. Ligon

Date:

IEP Participants:

Begin/End Date:

Transition Service pages included: YES/NO

Transition Services:

Transition Goals: