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PARENT EXPECTATIONS ON THE POSTSECONDARY ENVIRONMENTS OF THEIR SECONDARY-AGE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WITH HIGH SUPPORT NEEDS: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

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PARENT EXPECTATIONS ON THE POSTSECONDARY ENVIRONMENTS OF THEIR SECONDARY-AGE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WITH HIGH SUPPORT NEEDS: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my parents, Michael and Tammy Pulos.

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Abstract

The purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) is to prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living. Researchers in the field of secondary transition have been working to provide teachers with evidence-based practices and evidence-based, in-school predictors of postsecondary success to utilize in their classrooms (Kohler, 1993, 1996; Test, Fowler et al., 2009; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). These practices and predictors are meant to bolster the postsecondary outcomes for these students. Nevertheless, students with disabilities, specifically students with disabilities with high support needs, continue to leave high school unprepared for the challenges of adult life and are attaining success at lower rates than their peers without disabilities. However, could a newly identified predictor—parent expectations (Mazzotti et al., 2016)—provide the key to postsecondary success?

By employing a general qualitative inquiry design (Creswell & Poth, 2017), I explored parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. Three research questions guided my study: (1) What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?; (2) Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?; and (3) How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

The data source were derived from in-depth, semi-structured interviews, where I interviewed 16 parents. With the guidance of Morse's (1994) cognitive processes of qualitative analysis, I subjected all transcripts to inductive and thematic analysis developed by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) and Shank (2002). A multitude of themes and sub-themes emerged from my data analytic schema: (a) Research Question 1, magnitude across and within postsecondary environments, employment first, educational training for employment success, college experience, leaving the nest; (b) Research Question 2, variant of postsecondary education supports, variant of postsecondary employment supports, variant of postsecondary independent living supports; and (c) Research Question 3, postsecondary expectations shaped by my secondary-age child, postsecondary expectations shaped by outside forces, postsecondary expectations shaped by in-school interactions. Implications for practice and future research are discussed as well as study limitations.

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Life is a series of transitions; from diapers to underpants, from day care to preschool, preschool to elementary school, elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school” (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009, p. 160). However, for many students with disabilities, the most significant transition is graduating from high school and entering adulthood. These students stand on a threshold of new beginnings, where they hope to gain experiences in postsecondary education and employment. In addition, they aspire to live a life of independence. As a primer to Chapter 2: Review of Literature, the purpose of this chapter is to succinctly portray the disparities students with disabilities face in relation to their postsecondary outcomes. Specifically, this chapter is divided into three sections: (a) problem statement, (b) significance of the study, and (c) research purpose. Finally, this chapter will conclude by providing the research questions guiding this qualitative exploration.

Problem Statement

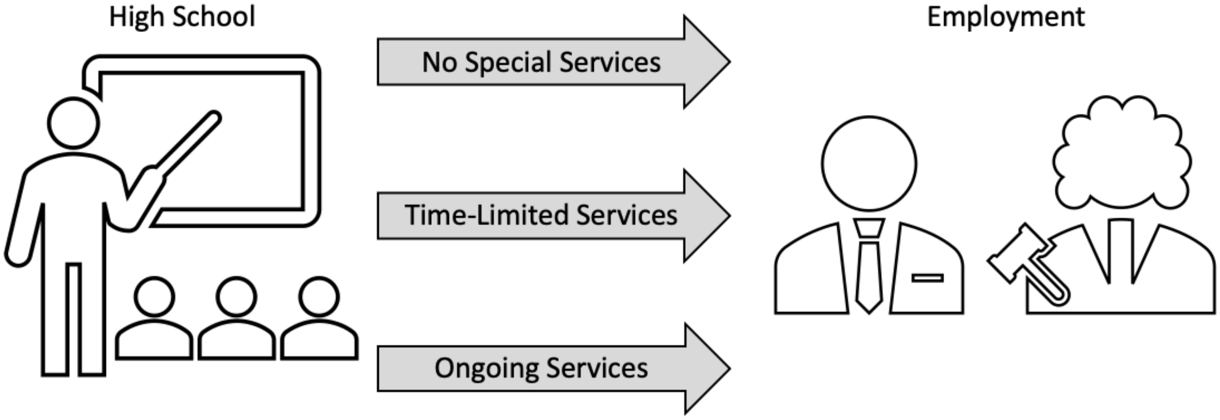
From a phenomenological evaluation, Halpern (1992) defined transition as “a period of *floundering* that occurs for at least the first several years after leaving school as adolescents attempt to assume a *variety* of adults roles in their communities” (p. 203). This period of floundering often lasts for years for students with disabilities (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Since the 1980s, researchers in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, have documented the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities, which depicts this period of floundering. For example, Hasazi et al. (1985) conducted a study of 462 students with disabilities from nine school districts located in Vermont who graduated from high school between 1979 and 1983. They reported that 55% of the students with disabilities were in paid employment; however, only 67% were working full-time. For those students that graduated from high school, 71.1% earned less than $5.00/hr, with 28.4% making more than $5.00/hr. Moreover, for those students with disabilities that dropped out of high school, 90% earned less than $5.00/hr.

To improve the documented poor postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities, two secondary transition models were developed (Halpern, 1985; Will, 1983). These federally funded secondary transition models were engineered to demonstrate the necessary secondary transition supports students with disabilities need to gain access to and find success in postsecondary environments (Stodden et al., 2018). Will's (1983) model of secondary transition proposed three bridges of support for students with disabilities to attain postsecondary employment. This model of secondary transition recognized the diverse support needs students with disabilities require when transitioning from high school to assist them in this endeavor. Figure 1 depicts Will's (1983) model of secondary transition.

The three bridges of support include (a) no special services, where students with disabilities are capable of transitioning to postsecondary employment by themselves; (b) time-limited services, where students with disabilities may need assistance for a limited time to acquire the necessary skills for job-readiness and job-continuation; and (c) ongoing services, where students with disabilities are continuously supported during their employment tenure to be successful. Although Will's (1983) model of secondary transition was a significant contribution to the secondary transition literature, many researchers in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, were concerned that other outcomes, including postsecondary education, independent living, and community participation (e.g., recreation, leisure roles) needed to be included in the secondary transition planning process to ensure a seamless passage from high school to adulthood (Stodden et al., 2018). This prompted the development of Halpern's (1985) revised model of secondary transition, taking into account the many concerns of the prominent researchers in the field.

Figure 1

Will's (1983) Model of Secondary Transition



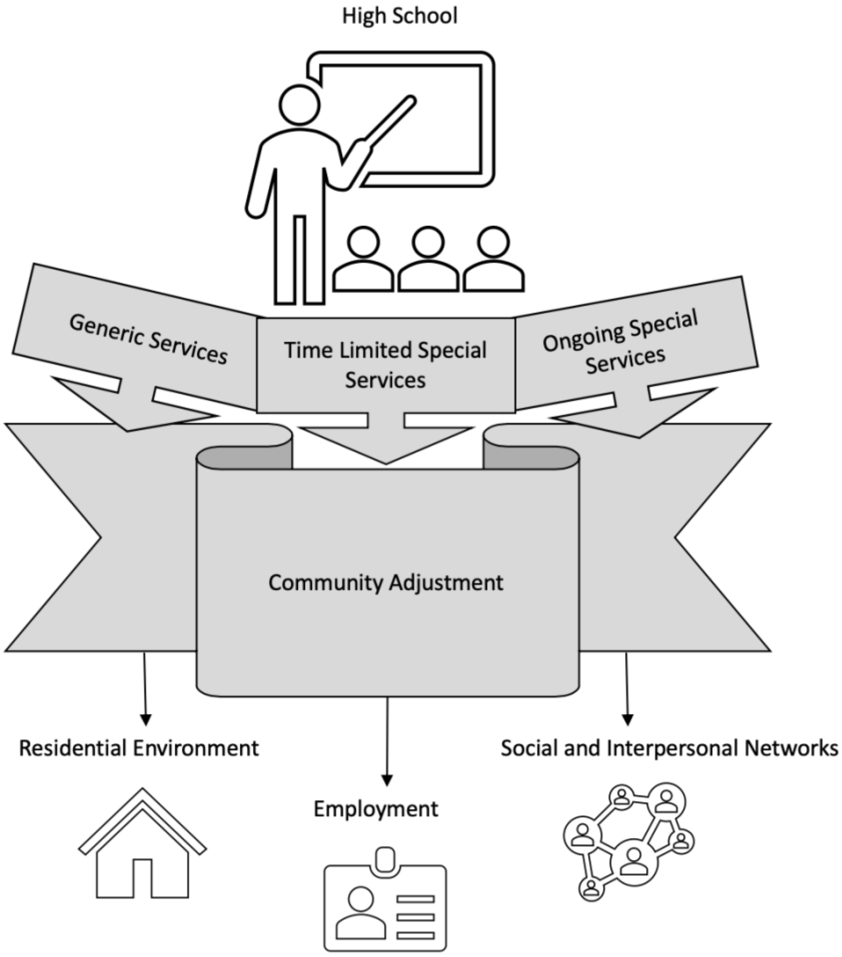
Note. From "OSERS Programming for the Transition of Youth with Disabilities: Bridges from School to Working Life," by M. Will, 1983, p. 7 (https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED256132.pdf). Copyright 1983 by the Office of Special Education Rehabilitative Services.

Building upon Will's (1983) model, Halpern (1985) postured community adjustment as the chief tenet of secondary transition for students with disabilities. He acknowledged the importance of Will's (1983) model of secondary transition, but restructured it. Community adjustment functions as a foundation to the myriad of postsecondary environments students with disabilities are active participants. For these students to successfully partake in adult roles including (a) residential environment, (b) employment, and (c) social and interpersonal networks, they must adjust to the community in which they choose to live (Stodden et al., 2018). Halpern (1985) acknowledged that focusing on employment only, as Will's (1983) model suggested, was too limited when considering the secondary transition of students with disabilities. Figure 2 depicts Halpern's (1985) revised model of secondary transition.

These models of secondary transition (Halpern, 1985; Will, 1983) provided a guide for teachers of students with disabilities to follow when instructing them in the classroom environment. Furthermore, they set the stage for policy and regulatory mandates associated with the intentional programming and instruction in secondary transition of students with disabilities.

Figure 2

Halpern's (1985) Revised Model of Secondary Transition



Note. From “Transition: A Look at the Foundations,” by A. S. Halpern, 1985, *Exceptional Children, 51*(6), p. 480 (https://doi.org/10.1177/001440298505100604). Copyright 1985 by the Council for Exceptional Children.

Most notably, the reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA, 1975) to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990) updated its policy language, which mandated the focus on quality secondary transition education in high school connected to postsecondary environments, including education and employment (Stodden et al., 2018) in the school and classroom environments. This legislation advanced minimal progress in terms of the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities.

For instance, by the mid-1990s and early 2000s, 57% of individuals with disabilities 18-29 years of age were employed (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). This was a slight increase of 3% as reported in Hasazi et al.’s (1985) study. In contrast, the employment rate of individuals without disabilities was 72% (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). In addition, three to five years after high school graduation, individuals with disabilities lagged behind their counterparts without disabilities in relation to being competitively employed (57% vs. 69%, respectively; Fabian et al., 1998). When considering those students with significant support needs, 25% were employed, with only 8% of students with profound disabilities employed (LaPlante et al., 1996). Furthermore, only 27% of students with disabilities were enrolled in postsecondary education, while 68% of their peers without disabilities were enrolled (Fabian et al., 1998). Despite the updated secondary transition mandates to IDEA (1990), the poor postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities continued to spotlight “what it truly meant to be disabled” (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009, p. 161).

Significance of the Study

In response to the poor postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities documented in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, multiple iterations of IDEA (1997, 2004) took place, which resulted in language specific to the secondary transition education of students with disabilities. IDEA (2004) defined secondary transition services as

> a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is (1) designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (2) is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences and interests; and (3) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (Turnbull et al., 2009, p. 15)

A challenge facing teachers of students with disabilities today is the utilization of best practices to develop and implement secondary transition programming in the school and classroom environments, which subsequently can improve the postsecondary outcomes of their students (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Through a call to action, Wagner et al. (2006) declared the need for researchers to study programs and practices during high school and the early transition years that are associated with positive postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities. To answer this call, researchers in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, have been working to identify and provide teachers with in-school practices intended to improve the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009).

One such endeavor took place in 2009, when the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) conducted two systematic reviews of secondary transition literature. Two teams of researchers identified a number of evidence-based practices (EBPs) and evidence-based, in-school predictors of postsecondary success (hereafter predictors) in relation to the secondary transition education of students with disabilities (Test, Fowler et al., 2009; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Furthermore, Mazzotti et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of the literature and identified four new predictors: (a) goal setting, (b) parent expectations, (c) travel skills, and (d) youth autonomy/decision making. These EBPs and predictors are meant to bolster the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living. Albeit a well-developed literature base exists in relation to secondary transition EBPs and predictors of postsecondary success (Haber et al., 2016), little is known of the newly identified predictor—parent expectations—and how those expectations relate to the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities (McConnell et al., 2018).

The Council for Exceptional Children’s (CEC) Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) published a position paper on the advancement of knowledge of secondary transition EBPs and predictors (Mazzotti et al., 2013). They acknowledged recommendations for researchers to increase the quality and quantity of research revolving around this issue. This included conducting rigorous qualitative research in the realm of secondary transition EBPs and predictors. Qualitative research can assist in the delivery of information on secondary transition programmatic practices in their naturally occurring environments, which can help to inform practice and policy and “provide the perspectives of individuals involved in implementing and receiving EBPs [and predictors]. This rich detail can help practitioners select, implement, and adapt EBPs [and predictors] to fit the context of their school or classroom" (Mazzotti et al., 2013, p. 148).

Research Purpose

While an abundant of knowledge exists (Haber et al., 2016) on the empirically validated EBPs and predictors of postsecondary success for students with disabilities (Test, Fowler et al., 2009; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009), a gap in the literature exists in relation to a newly identified predictor of postsecondary success—parent expectations (Mazzotti et al., 2016)—specifically, parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and if those expectations align with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. Past research has examined in-school expectations (Epps & Myers, 1989; Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1992; Stone, 1997; Wiener & Sunohara, 1998) and postsecondary expectations (Epps & Myers, 1989; Kausar et al., 2003; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Masino & Hodapp, 1996; Newman, 2005; Tilson & Neubert, 1988) parents place on their children with disabilities across disability categories. However, a chasm appears in the secondary transition literature investigating and affording voice to parents of secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and the expectations they place on them in relation to their postsecondary environments.

Therefore, this qualitative exploration, in hopes of filling the gap in the literature-base, studied parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and if those expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. In addition, I explored if and how parent expectations varied across the level of supports needed for their children (see Table 1 for the operational definitions of the three levels of support explored in this study). Finally, I explored any underlying factors which may have shaped and influenced those postsecondary expectations. Couching these experiences in reality can provide descriptive and procedural knowledge (Brantlinger et al., 2005) to embolden researchers to develop new and innovative secondary transition EBPs related to parent expectations; thereby, empowering teachers to positively leverage parent expectations and enhance the postsecondary outcomes of their students with disabilities with high support needs.

Table 1

Operational Definitions of Three Levels of Support

Level of Support	Support Duration	Support Frequency	Support Setting	Amount of Assistance
Limited	When required, but occasionally continuing	Frequent, but prevalence varies	Many settings, but not generally all	Occasional or regular contact
Extensive	Typically continuing	Frequent, but prevalence varies	Many settings, but not generally all	Regular contact (i.e., at least once a week)
Pervasive	Possibly over the lifespan	Frequent or nonstop	Generally all settings	Continuous contact and monitoring

Note. From “Intellectual Disability: Definition, Classification, and Systems of Supports (11th ed.),” by R. L. Schalock, S. A. Borthwick-Duffy, V. J. Bradley, W. H. E. Buntinx, D. L. Coulter, E. M. Craig, S. C. Gomez, Y. Lachapelle, R. Luckasson, A. Reeve, K. A. Shogren, M. E. Snell, S. Spreat, M. J. Tassé, J. R. Thompson, M. A. Verdugo-Alonso, M. L. Wehmeyer, and M. H. Yeager, 2010, pp. 105-166 (https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED509596). Copyright 2010 by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Research Questions

To address the gap in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?
2. Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?
3. How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Throughout the history of educating students with disabilities, parents took it upon themselves to lay the groundwork by leading the charge for those ignored (i.e., their children with disabilities) and focusing on the necessity of educating them in the American public education system (Yell et al., 2016). With the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, parents and their children with disabilities achieved a watershed victory—the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for children with disabilities; this entailed meeting their individualized educational needs and preparing them for in-school success (Yell et al., 2016). However, it was not until later amendments of the EAHCA (1975), which required schools to frequently inform parents of their children's progress in meeting their individualized education needs, that parents became equal partners in the education of their children (Yell et al., 2017). At the onset of equal partnerships, parents recognized the need to advocate for the postsecondary welfare of their children with disabilities. Parents play a significant role in the education of their children with disabilities: "Parental involvement is crucial to successful results for students and indeed this provision has been, and continues to be, one of the cornerstones" (Yell et al., 2017, p. 63) of the law.

In order to understand the impact of parents on legislation relative to the education of their children with disabilities and how the function of parent expectations and involvement impacts the postsecondary outcomes of their children, this review of literature, through a historical lens, will (a) provide the evolution of special education couched through parental actions, (b) introduce secondary transition education, (c) present the origins of evidence-based practices (EBPs), (d) introduce EBPs and predictors in secondary transition education, and (e) provide current trends of evidence relative to parental involvement and parent expectations in relation to the postsecondary environments of their children with disabilities. Finally, this review of literature will provide an impetus for the much needed research in the area of parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs.

Compulsory Attendance Laws

Historically, students with disabilities have typically been excluded and/or segregated in the American public education system (Yell et al., 1998). In the early 20th century, compulsory attendance laws were crafted and initiated by each state, requiring school attendance for children of certain ages (Yell et al., 2016; Yell et al., 1998). By 1918, all states (n = 48), excluding Alaska and Hawaii until 1959, adopted the compulsory attendance laws. However, despite compulsory education laws in place across the country, children with disabilities continued being excluded from public education (Yell et al., 2016).

As early as 1893, children with disabilities deemed “weak in mind” (Yell et al., 1998, p. 220), whom could not profit from academic instruction, were bothersome to their peers, and incapable of taking “ordinary, decent, physical care of himself [or herself]” (Yell et al., 1998, p. 220) were dismissed from public school (*Watson v. City of Cambridge*, 1893). Laws enacted by the courts continued this sentiment of excluding children with disabilities from the public school system (e.g., *Beattie v. Board of Education*, 1919). As recent as 1958, courts upheld legislation by withholding children with disabilities from public education; this included the *Department of Public Welfare v. Haas* (1958), which confirmed Illinois’ existing compulsory education laws did not safeguard those students deemed “feeble minded . . . [or] mentally deficient” (Yell et al., 2016, p. 36). In addition, in 1969, North Carolina criminalized parent pursuit of demanding the attendance of their children with disabilities despite their child’s exclusion from public school by making such actions against the law (Weber, 2008).

Notwithstanding the barriers presented to parents and their children with disabilities (i.e., states litigating the exclusion of them from the American public education system), parents challenged these barriers head-on by defining their role as advocates in demanding the educational rights of their children with disabilities (Yell et al., 2016). The history of special education and its resulting laws are a direct response to the grassroots efforts led by parents, through the formation of advocacy groups, to advocate for the integration of their children with disabilities in the public school system (Turnbull et al., 2015; Yell et al., 2016). To counter the low expectations society placed on students with disabilities, which resulted in their exclusion and/or segregation from the public school system, parents of children with disabilities united together by the high expectations they held for their children with disabilities demanding integration.

The Formation of Parent Advocacy Groups and State Litigation

In response to the educational inequities their children with disabilities encountered, parents began organizing to advocate on behalf of their children’s educational rights (Yell et al., 2016); thus, demonstrating holding higher expectations than that of the American education system. In 1933, the first group formed; the Cuyahoga County Ohio Council for the Retarded Child consisted of five mothers who objected to the exclusion and isolation of their children with intellectual disability from public school (Levine & Wexler, 1981; Turnbull et al., 2015; Winzer, 1993). With their dissent on the exclusion and isolation of their children, the mothers established a special class, which afforded their children with academic instruction. These special classes were often held in church basements and community buildings and financially supported through charitable organizations (Turnbull et al., 2015). This initial parent advocacy group catalyzed the formation of similar parent advocacy groups across the nation during the 1930s and 1940s; however, it was not until the 1950s that parent advocacy groups began organizing at the national level (Yell et al., 2016). The national assembly of these parent organizations embodied the high expectations those five mothers set for their children in the early 1930s and further exemplified this necessary tenet (i.e., high expectations) to spring-board children with disabilities into integrated classroom settings. For example, the National Association for Retarded Citizens (now the Arc of the United States) was founded in 1950 by citizens and parents concerned for individuals with intellectual disability and improving the services for those individuals (Roos, 1977; Yell et al., 2016). Today, the Arc of the United States and other parent organizations (e.g., Autism Society of America, Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Learning Disabilities Association of America) continue to have a palpable presence in advocating for the educational rights of individuals with disabilities (Hallahan et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, despite the organization of parent advocacy groups at the national level in the 1950s and early 1960s and their efforts to integrate their children with disabilities into the American public education system, policy, public attitudes, and low expectations around disability produced an isolating effect (Pulos & Martin, 2018; Ward, 1988). However, the tone of the civil rights movement, specifically the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954; hereafter *Brown*), influenced the disability rights movement by providing the underpinnings for further litigation on the segregation of children with disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2007; Yell et al., 2016). In *Brown* (1954), the court argued because "of the importance of education in our society, the stigmatizing effects of racial segregation, and the negative consequences of racial segregation on the education of those against whom segregation was practiced, *segregated public schools* *denied equal educational opportunities* [emphasis added]" (Yell et al., 2016, p. 39). A chief outcome of *Brown* (1954) included the equal protection doctrine extending to a "class" of people (i.e., racial minorities; Turnbull et al., 2007).

In the wake of *Brown* (1954), parent advocacy groups cited *Brown's* (1954) equal protection doctrine, contending their children with disabilities were a "class" and had the same rights to an education as those children without disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2007). *Brown* (1954) mobilized the efforts of parent advocacy groups across the nation by providing the stimulus to fight for and ensure the educational rights for children with disabilities (Yell et al., 2016). In reaction to *Brown* (1954), a series of landmark court cases brought together parent advocacy groups and individuals with disabilities in support of children with disabilities to challenge and require remedy for analogous inequities found in *Brown* (1954) for their children with disabilities (Katsiyannis et al., 2001). These court cases included *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972).

Court Case #1

In 1971, the *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens* (hereafter *PARC*) brought a class action suit against the *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, arguing children with intellectual disability were not receiving publicly funded education (Yell et al., 2016). *PARC* (1972) contended four critical points: (a) all children with intellectual disability benefited from education; (b) as an outcome, results-oriented approach, education is not only related to academic experiences but functional experiences as well (e.g., clothing, feeding); (c) since the *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* undertook the provision of providing a free public education to all children, they could not deny a free public education for children with intellectual disability;

and (d) earlier schooling (i.e., preschool) was a predictor for increased learning for children with intellectual disability (Levine & Wexler, 1981; Zettel & Ballard, 1982). *PARC* (1972), by consent agreement, ruled all children with intellectual disability, between the ages of 6 and 21, were entitled to a free public education and, whenever possible, should remain educated with their peers without disabilities rather than segregated from the general education population (Horrocks et al., 2008; Levine & Wexler, 1981; Zettel & Ballard, 1982).

Court Case #2

Shortly after *PARC's* (1972) decision, a class action suit was filed in the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia (Yell et al., 2016). Known as *Mills v. Board of Education* (hereafter *Mills*; 1972), parents and guardians of seven children with a range of disabilities, including behavior problems, intellectual disability, and physical impairment, argued their children's rights to be included in the public education system (Yell et al., 2016); subsequently, necessitating the demand for expectations to be raised relative to the integration into the American public school system for this population of students. Certified as a "class" (Turnbull et al., 2007) and representing more than 18,000 children with disabilities denied or excluded from the public education system in Washington, D.C., *Mills* (1972) challenged the exclusion of students with disabilities was taking place without due process of law (Yell et al., 2016). The court, likening the judgement rendered in *Brown* (1954), suggested segregation in public education based on race was unconstitutional; therefore, the exclusion in public education based on disability was also unconstitutional (Zettel & Ballard, 1982). As a result, *Mills* (1972) adjudicated three decisions: (a) a publicly supported education will include all children with disabilities, (b) the provision of due process safeguards, and (c) an outline to be followed for due process procedures (Horrocks et al., 2008; Zettel & Ballard, 1982).

Federal Legislation and the Right to Education

Prior to 1975, education was deemed a privilege, rather than a right for children with disabilities (Huefner, 2005). However, with *PARC* (1972) and *Mills* (1972) setting precedent for similar court cases across the country, the vast majority of children with disabilities were still denied a public education, with only 20% educated in the 1970s (Yell et al., 2017; Yell et al., 2016). With schools across the country blocking the education of children with disabilities, involvement at the federal level was needed (Yell et al., 2016). On November 29, 1975, Congress legislated P.L. 94-142 (hereafter EAHCA; Yell et al., 2017).

Enacted by Congress, the EAHCA (1975) (a) ensured children with disabilities received FAPE, (b) protected the rights of parents and their children with disabilities, and (c) assisted state and local education agencies in their efforts to carry out such services (Yell et al., 2017). To aid in these efforts, the federal government provided grants to states adhering to the newly passed law (i.e., providing FAPE to children with disabilities); by 1985, all states across the country complied with the mandates set forth by EAHCA (Yell et al., 2017; Yell et al., 2016). These mandates ensured children with disabilities had the right to FAPE as determined by a group of individuals, including parents and their children with disabilities, in an Individualized Education Program (IEP; Yell et al., 2016). The EAHCA of 1975 strengthened parent rights to partake in the educational decision making of their children with disabilities (Yell et al., 1998). With the EAHCA (1975), children with disabilities began receiving FAPE to bolster in-school achievement. Nonetheless, with the growing advocacy, involvement, and high expectations expressed by parents of children with disabilities, “transition services” (Mcmahan & Baer, 2001, p. 170) were introduced with the mandate to include parents in the transition planning process.

Parents serve as a chief role in supporting their children in achieving the transition from school to adult life (Johnson et al., 2002).

Secondary Transition Education and the Law

With the 1990 reauthorization of the EACHA (1975), renaming it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990), Congress added a requirement—the IEP needed to address the preparation of students with disabilities for postsecondary life through secondary transition education (Norlin, 2010; Petcu et al., 2014). With this new amendment, and in response to follow-up studies reporting poor postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities (e.g., Hasazi et al., 1985; McDonnell et al., 1986; Mithaug et al., 1985), IEPs were to include transition services (Prince et al., 2014). The 1990 reauthorization of IDEA required "a statement of needed transition services in the IEP for students age 16 or younger . . . It also required efforts by the Local Educational Agency (LEA) to involve students, *parents* [emphasis added], school personnel, and adult service providers in this process" (Mcmahan & Baer, 2001, p. 170). In addition, students with disabilities were to receive instruction to best prepare them for postsecondary environments. Subsequent amendments of IDEA in 1997 and 2004 reinforced these provisions (Petcu et al., 2014), bolstering the required mandate of secondary transition planning across the country (Prince et al., 2014) and successively preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary life.

During its 2004 reauthorization, IDEA defined transition services as

> a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is (1) designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including

> supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (2) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences and interests; and (3) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (Turnbull et al., 2009, p. 15)

The reauthorizations of IDEA (1990, 1997, 2004) promoted a number of chief criteria when designing transition services for students with disabilities (Mcmahan & Baer, 2001). First, transition services must be grounded in students' needs, taking into account their strengths, preferences, and interests (Mcmahan & Baer, 2001; Turnbull et al., 2009). Second, a plan of action, including a series of steps, must be present, identifying the blueprint for a student to reach their desired postsecondary aspirations. Third, transition services must consist of a coordinated set of activities "encompassing a broad range of services and supports including those provided by the school, the *family* [emphasis included], the community, the adult service system, and by postsecondary environments" (Mcmahan & Baer, 2001, p. 171). Finally, all services must promote the movement from in-school to postsecondary environments of students with disabilities, including the development of needed supports extending into adulthood through agency and natural support linkages (Mcmahan & Baer, 2001; Turnbull et al., 2009).

The Genesis of Evidence-Based Practices in Secondary Transition Education

The successful transition of students with disabilities from high school to adulthood should be a priority for teachers in special education (Petcu et al., 2014). The preceding postsecondary follow-up studies detailing poor outcomes in the 1980s (e.g., Hasazi et al., 1985; McDonnell et al., 1986; Mithaug et al, 1985) catalyzed the secondary transition movement, which led the way for legislative mandates to detail the expected postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities (i.e., IDEA, 1990). These legislative mandates paved the way in assisting teachers in preparing their students for life post-high school—a life that is significant, fulfilling, and worth living (Landmark et al., 2010; Morningstar et al., 2016). However, even after the regulation of transition services by IDEA (1990), follow-up studies continued reporting students with disabilities demonstrating poorer postsecondary outcomes than students without disabilities (e.g., Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Wagner et al., 2005) in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) community participation (DeStefano & Wagner, 1991; Johnson & Halloran, 1997).

With these inconsistencies across populations of students with disabilities, the federal government established and funded a number of initiatives to identify effective practices in special education, specifically in the area of secondary transition (Landmark et al., 2010). These initiatives included the Educate America Act of 1994, Goals 2000, Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, and the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (Johnson et al., 2002). In addition, the Office of Special Education Programs and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) was called to assist states in promoting the positive school to work transition of students with disabilities. Intended to enhance positive postsecondary outcomes for all students (i.e., with and without disabilities), the practices revealed within these initiatives (i.e., Educate America Act of 1994, Goals 2000, Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994) were espoused as “best,” “valued,” or “effective” (Landmark et al., 2010). However, many had no underpinning empirical evidence to support these claims.

Kohler (1993) prominently displayed this when she published her seminal article reviewing substantiated and implied practices in secondary transition. From a search of the literature, Kohler (1993) obtained 49 documents, from 1985 to 1991, claiming best practices in secondary transition. These documents included follow-up studies, pseudo- and quasi-experimental studies, and theory-based or opinion articles of students with disabilities. Kohler (1993) evaluated the published practices based on the following criteria: (a) strong empirical evidence substantiated by study results or (b) mere implications by the authors. She found many of the practices were implied rather than empirically substantiated. Nevertheless, the practices considered substantiated through empirical evidence included daily living skills training, employability skills training, employer input, integration (i.e., least restrictive environment, mainstreaming), paid work experience, parent involvement, social skills training, and vocational training. With the results of her review coupled with additional research on secondary transition practices, Kohler developed the *Taxonomy for Transition Programming* (1996), which provided a framework to assist teachers in utilizing substantiated practices in the classroom environment to improve the postsecondary outcomes of their students with disabilities.

With subsequent reauthorizations of IDEA in 1997 and 2004, combined with the ever-evolving field of secondary transition, the expectation for students with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to postsecondary environments is no different than their peers without disabilities (Landmark et al., 2010). Students with disabilities across the country have postsecondary aspirations, desires, and goals similar to their peers without disabilities (Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). Recognized as an educational milestone, the foundational groundwork teachers contribute relative to secondary transition planning for their students with disabilities is paramount—this planning nurtures students' skills and cultivates their transition from high school to postsecondary life, producing productive citizens of society (Repetto et al., 2011).

Therefore, IDEA (2004) is clear—the purpose of special education is to prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living (Martin & McConnell, 2017; Yell et al., 2016). To remedy the issues of poor postsecondary outcomes, the 2004 legal updates of IDEA focused the field of secondary transition by mandating special education teachers use scientifically-based instruction (Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016). This produced a number of studies and systematic reviews of the literature to unpack additional practices, coined as EBPs (Cobb et al., 2013; Odom et al., 2005; Test, Fowler et al., 2009). In a special issue of *Exceptional Children*, Odom et al. (2005) employed the term "evidence-based practice" to indicate effective practices in special education based on high-quality research. "Due to the numerous espoused best practices in transition and the current focus on results-oriented transition services" (Landmark et al., 2010, p. 166) relative to IDEA (2004), it is vital research guides the practice of teachers in the classroom environment (Mazzotti et al., 2016).

However, even with EBPs in place, a common theme across research suggests the implementation of these practices by teachers as not occurring. For instance, Boardman et al. (2005) held focus groups with teachers of students with disabilities to assess the degree to which research-based practices were utilized in their classroom environment. Findings suggested these practices were not an important criterion for selection when implementing curricula. Next, Burns and Ysseldyke (2009) used a 12-point Likert-type survey to glean the various practices used in special education. Survey respondents included 174 special education teachers and 333 school psychologists. Of the eight special education practices surveyed (i.e., applied behavior analysis, direct instruction, formative evaluation, mnemonic strategies, modality training, perceptual-motor training, psycholinguistic training, and social skills training), respondents reported using practices with little empirical evidence (i.e., modality training) as frequently as those with ample evidence of effectiveness (i.e., applied behavior analysis). Finally, Hess et al. (2008) found similar findings. Using a web-based survey to identify practices used in education for students with autism spectrum disorder, they found teachers were using practices lacking a research-base (e.g., sensory integration and cognitive behavioral modification).

Evidence-Based Practices and Predictors in Secondary Transition

At the forefront of IDEA (2004), and a chief focus of evaluation by researchers in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, is the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities. With the early identification of EBPs (Cobb et al., 2013; Kohler, 1993, 1996; Odom et al., 2005; Test, Fowler et al., 2009), it seems logical students with disabilities would achieve better postsecondary outcomes in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living. However, data suggest otherwise—students with disabilities continue leaving high school unprepared for the challenges of adult life, attaining success at lower rates than their peers without disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2013).

To ameliorate these issues, in 2009, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) identified EBPs (Test, Fowler et al., 2009) and evidence-based, in-school predictors of postsecondary success (hereafter predictors; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009) to support the successful transition of students with disabilities from high school to postsecondary life. Two systematic reviews of secondary transition literature were conducted, identifying 16 predictors (e.g., career awareness, inclusion in general education, parental involvement; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009) from high quality correlational research (Rowe et al., 2015) and 32 EBPs (e.g., social skills training, teaching parents and families about transition) from the experimental literature

(Test, Fowler et al., 2009). Please refer to Table 1 for a list of EBPs associated with secondary transition education.

Table 1

Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) Associated with Secondary Transition Education

Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 Domain	Evidence-Based Practice
Family Engagement (*n* = 1) • Family Empowerment • Family Involvement • Family Preparation	Teaching parents and families about transition
Interagency Collaboration (*n* = 0) • Collaborative Framework • Collaborative Service Delivery	—
Program Structures (*n* = 3) • Policies and Procedures • Program Characteristics • Program Evaluation • Resource Development and Allocation • School Climate • Strategic Planning	Implement *Check & Connect* programs for students with disabilities Provide community-based instruction Structure program to extend services beyond secondary school
Student Development (*n* = 25) • Academic Skills • Assessment • Employment and Occupational Skills • Instructional Context • Life, Social, and Emotional Skills • Student Supports	Social skills training Teaching banking skills Teaching completing a job application Teaching cooking skills Teaching employment skills using community-based instruction Teaching food preparation skills Teaching functional math skills Teaching functional reading skills Teaching grocery shopping skills Teaching home maintenance skills Teaching job-related social community skills Teaching job-specific employment skills Teaching job-specific employment skills using computer-assisted instruction Teaching leisure skills Teaching life skills

	Teaching life skills using community-based instruction Teaching life skills using computer-assisted instruction Teaching life skills using self-management Teaching purchasing skills Teaching purchasing using the “one more than” strategy Teaching restaurant purchasing skills Teaching safety skills Teaching self-advocacy skills Teaching self-determination skills Teaching self-management for employment skills
Student-Focused Planning (*n* = 3) • Individual Education Program (IEP) Development • Planning Strategies • Student Participation	Involving students in the IEP meetings *Self-Advocacy Strategy* *Self-Directed IEP*

Note. — = no evidence-based practices (EBPs) identified for this category. From “Evidence-Based Practices in Secondary Transition,” by D. W. Test, C. H. Fowler, S. M. Richter, J. White, V. Mazzotti, A. R. Walker, P. Kohler, and L. Kortering, 2009, *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 32*(2), pp. 119-122 (https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0885728809336859). Copyright 2009 by the Hammill Institute on Disabilities.

Moreover, Mazzotti et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) secondary analyses to further extend the findings of Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) and potentially identify new predictors. In addition to adding evidence to nine of the identified predictors by Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009), Mazzotti et al.’s (2016) analysis identified four new predictors: (a) goal setting, (b) parent expectations, (c) travel skills, and (d) youth autonomy/decision making. Please refer to Table 2 for a crosswalk of each predictor identified through the existing literature linked with their respective postsecondary outcome areas (i.e., education, employment, and independent living).

Table 2

Predictors of Postsecondary Success for Students with Disabilities

Predictors	Outcome Area
Career Awareness	Education, Employment
Community Experiences	Employment
Exit Exam Requirements/High School Diploma Status	Employment
Goal-Setting	Education, Employment
Inclusion in General Education	Education, Employment, Independent Living
Interagency Collaboration	Education, Employment
Occupational Courses	Education, Employment
Paid Employment/Work Experience	Education, Employment, Independent Living
Parent Expectations	Education, Employment, Independent Living
Parental Involvement	Employment
Program of Study	Employment
Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination	Education, Employment
Self-Care/Independent Living	Education, Employment, Independent Living
Social Skills	Education, Employment
Student Support	Education, Employment, Independent Living
Transition Program	Education, Employment
Travel Skills	Employment
Vocation Education	Education, Employment
Work Study	Employment
Youth Autonomy/Decision-Making	Education, Employment

Note. From "Predictors of Post-School Success: A Systematic Review of NLTS2 Secondary Analyses," by V. L. Mazzotti, D. A. Rowe, J. Sinclair, M. Poppen, W. E. Woods, and M. L. Shearer, 2016, *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 39*(4), pp. 203-212 (https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2165143415588047). Copyright 2016 by the Hammill Institute on Disabilities.

Given the current emphasis on EBPs and predictors in special education, it is important research informs the curricula and instructional practices of teachers across the country (Mazzotti et al., 2016). As a means to drive secondary transition program expansion, enhancement, and evaluation (Rowe et al., 2015; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009), teachers should consider those predictors and subsequently those EBPs supporting those predictors in the classroom environment; thus, ensuring the opportunity for positive postsecondary outcomes of all students with disabilities (Rowe et al., 2015). However, this does not seem to be the case.

Students with disabilities are dropping out of high school at higher rates, pursuing postsecondary education and employment at lower rates, and living independently at lower rates (Newman et al., 2011; Prince et al., 2018). Chapman et al. (2011) reported the dropout rate of students with disabilities in high school compared to their peers without disabilities as approximately twice as large (15.5% vs. 7.8%, respectively). In addition, Newman et al. (2011) reported for those who do graduate from high school, 60% of students with disabilities enroll in postsecondary education within eight years of graduating; however, only 23% complete their program of study. Most recently, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) reported students with disabilities were less likely to attain postsecondary education as compared to those students without disabilities. Compared to students without disabilities (37.2%), 14.3% of students with disabilities attained a bachelor’s degree or more in 2017 (Houtenville & Boege, 2019). Across all levels of education, including (a) no high school diploma, (b) high school diploma, (c) an associate degree or some college, and (d) a bachelor’s degree or higher, students with disabilities were less likely to attain gainful employment as compared to students without disabilities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Furthermore, in 2018, 19.1% of individuals with disabilities were employed, while 65.9% of individuals without disabilities were employed. Across all age groups (i.e., > 16 years of age), individuals with disabilities were less likely to be employed as compared to their counterparts without disabilities. Finally, the unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities in 2018 was more than twice the rate of those than individuals without disabilities (8.0% vs. 3.7%, respectively).

With these poor aforementioned outcomes, the odds of students with disabilities living at a threshold of poverty increases exponentially (Prince et al., 2018). For instance, a report put out by the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability suggested in 2017, 29.6% of individuals with disabilities, 18 to 64 years of age, lived in poverty (Houtenville & Boege, 2019). In contrast, 13.2% of individuals without disabilities were living in poverty. Therefore, the poverty gap between individuals with and without disabilities was 16.4%.

It is evident more work needs to be accomplished in relation to the understanding, identification, and implementation of in-school practices promoting the positive postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities. A position paper by the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT; Mazzotti et al., 2013) on the promotion of secondary transition EBPs and predictors acknowledged recommendations for researchers to increase the quality and quantity of research revolving around this issue. These recommendations consisted of (a) conducting rigorous qualitative and quantitative research in the realm of secondary transition, (b) focusing on areas of Kohler's Taxonomy (Kohler, 1996; Kohler et al., 2016) with little to no evidence supporting its practice, (c) including all students with disabilities from differing disability categories, and (d) examining secondary transition practices over time via longitudinal research (Mazzotti et al., 2013).

Parental Involvement

Over three decades ago, Schalock et al. (1986) reported the employment and independent living status of students with learning and developmental disabilities who had graduated from a rural school environment between 1979-1983. Their findings suggested that with moderate to high levels of parental involvement, the success rate of attaining employment increased significantly compared to those students with disabilities with little to no parental involvement in the transition planning process. In addition, Powers et al. (2007) surveyed 202 students with disabilities to “investigate [their] perceptions of the value of transition promotion experiences identified as effective by professionals, and to examine the level at which youth with disabilities participate in those experiences” (p. 45). Their findings indicated family encouragement and help was identified as the chief factor among students with disabilities when it came to their transition success.

With the significance parental involvement has on the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities (Powers et al., 2007; Schalock et al., 1986) and the identification of research-based practices and predictors of postsecondary success relative to parental involvement, the field of secondary transition acknowledges the impact parental involvement has on students with disabilities (Cobb et al., 2013; Kohler, 1993, 1996; Kohler et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Test, Fowler et al., 2009; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Corroborating these claims are a number of systematic reviews highlighting the many benefits students gain from parental involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Chao, 2009). These benefits include both in-school and postsecondary success: (a) improved academic performance (Finn, 1989), (b) better attendance (Falbo et al., 2001), (c) increased homework completion (Callahan et al., 1998), (d) less maladaptive school-behavior (Domina, 2005; Gonzalez, 2002), (e) higher graduation rates (Rumberger et al., 1990), (f) attending postsecondary education (Chiang et al., 2012), and (g) being employed (Carter et al., 2012). A recent Delphi study conducted by researchers in the field of secondary transition operationalized the predictors of postsecondary success and defined parental involvement as “parents/families/guardians [whom] are active and knowledgeable participants in all aspects of transition planning (e.g., decision making, providing support, attending meetings, and advocating for their child)” (Rowe et al., 2015, p. 122).

The IDEA (2004) affirms the utility of parental involvement across a student's education and mandates "state and local education agencies are required to provide, as part as ongoing services to support positive outcomes for students with disabilities, parent training and informational activities" (Hirano et al., 2016, p. 3538). These trainings and activities foster ongoing collaborative and dialogic partnerships between parents, their children with disabilities, and the schools serving them. Per the criteria for levels of evidence set forth by NTACT (2018) and their quality indicators, one research-based practice exists for fostering parental involvement in their child's transition planning (Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016). This includes the utilization of instructional modules to promote parental involvement in the transition planning process of their children with disabilities (Boone, 1992; Cancio et al., 2004; Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Young et al., 2016).

Despite IDEA's (2004) mandates and one research-based practice to foster parental involvement (Boone, 1992; Cancio et al., 2004; Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Young et al., 2016), parent-teacher partnerships to increase parental involvement at the secondary level remain elusive (Kalyanpur et al., 2000). Factors contributing to this may be the increase of complexity in high school systems (Adams & Christenson, 2000) or the emergence of autonomy among students with disabilities (Hirano & Rowe, 2016). "Parents' desire to support and protect their children may be incongruent with youths' burgeoning demands for self-determination and independence" (Powers et al., 2009, p. 133). In addition, another factor includes the lack of training, access to, and preparedness to implement research-based practices associated with parental involvement (Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016). As a means to foster these partnerships, the IEP of students with disabilities is the brick and mortar on which these unions are formed (Hirano et al., 2016). Nevertheless, research documents the attendance of parents

(Wagner et al., 2012) as passive in nature, providing little to no input on their child’s educational plan (Newman, 2005).

For example, to determine the extent to which participants in IEPs spoke, Martin et al. (2006) observed 109 middle and high school IEP meetings where administrators, family members, general education teachers, special education teachers, students, and support staff were present. The study’s results suggested special education teachers talked 51% of the time, while family members only talked 15% of the time during the IEP meetings. This substantiates Garriott et al.’s (2001) study suggesting parents as the recipients of information rather than the sharers of information. Finally, Martinez et al. (2012) investigated parent channels of accessing information relative to the transition planning process of their children with disabilities and to determine the extent to which schools played a part in this process. Of the parent participants, 60% (*n* = 36) indicated their children as not having transition plans as part of their IEPs and many of them (i.e., the parents) were unaware of the transition planning process. In addition, parents reported often feeling overwhelmed, where predetermined transitional outcomes were provided by their children’s teachers, rather than developed through collaborative dialogue. To remedy these issues, parents indicated “involvement in their [children’s] transition planning often necessitated accessing information independent of the school” (Martinez et al., 2012, p. 285). The examination of parent expectations of their children with disabilities may prove advantageous in providing a better understanding of the tenuous parent-teacher partnerships mentioned above and reported in the existing literature (e.g., Cooney, 2002; Griffin et al., 2010); therefore, providing best practices to cultivate them. However, prior to examining the above, it would first be prudent to examine the expectations of students with disabilities relative to their postsecondary environments.

Postsecondary Expectations of Students with Disabilities

Affirmed by IDEA (2004), the education of students with disabilities is made more effective through high expectations. With high expectations, students with disabilities have improved opportunities to access general education environments to meet the developmental goals necessary to live independent and productive lives after high school. A main interest of researchers is the alignment of IDEA's (2004) high expectations clause to personal aspects of student-level expectations relative to their postsecondary environments, including their attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and self-efficacy (e.g., Akey, 2006: Anderson et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2006; Tuckman, 1999). The attitudes of students with disabilities are an important component for a successful transition from high school to postsecondary environments (Wagner et al., 2007).

For instance, positive high school outcomes and adulthood successes are predicated on the future aspirations of students (Nurmi, 1991; Wyman et al., 1993). In addition, when students have greater expectations for their future, higher levels of student engagement and academic success takes place in the high school environment (Hudley et al., 2002; Murdock et al., 2000). Furthermore, "higher expectations of academic and career success is related to higher high school completion rates . . ., thereby avoiding the negative impact on employment and postsecondary education attainment associated with dropping out" (Wagner et al., 2007, p. 65). Finally, goals of college- or university-level education correlate with better attendance rates relative to postsecondary education (Durham et al., 1999).

As part of the NLTS2 research team, Wagner et al. (2007) conducted interviews of students with disabilities, 15 to 19 years of age, on their perceptions and expectations in relation to their future aspirations. On the transitional precipice of adulthood, Wagner et al. (2007) questioned, "As [these students looked] toward their future adult roles, what [were] their academic, occupational, and independence expectations?" (p. 65). They reported (a) differences in expectations across disability categories and (b) compared the perceptions and expectations of students with disabilities to the perceptions and expectations of their parents.

Educational Attainment Expectations

On a 4-point Likert-type scale, students with disabilities were surveyed on the likelihood they expected to attain certain educational targets: (a) graduating high school with a regular diploma; (b) attending postsecondary education; (c) completing postsecondary technical, trade, or vocational school; (d) graduating from a 2-year college; and (e) graduating from a 4-year college (Wagner et al., 2007). Across all disability categories, 84.8% of students answered they definitely expected graduating high school with a regular high school diploma, while 11.7% answered probably would, and 3.5% expected to not graduate high school with a regular high school diploma. In addition, 52.4% of students with disabilities stated they expected to attend postsecondary education, 34% probably would, and 13.6% would not.

Albeit 52.4% of students with disabilities stated they expected to attend postsecondary education after high school, they reported being less confident about the type of postsecondary education they would graduate from or complete (Wagner et al., 2007). Only 25.8% expected to complete postsecondary technical, trade, or vocational school, while 34.1% answered probably would, and 40.1% expected they would not. In addition, 33.9% of students with disabilities stated they expected to graduate from a 2-year college, 38.7% probably would, and 27.4% would not. Finally, for those students surveyed in relation to graduating from a 4-year college, 25.2% expected to graduate, 35.6% would probably graduate, and 39.2% expected to definitely not graduate from a 4-year college.

Employment Expectations

In addition to their educational attainment expectations, students with disabilities reported their employment expectations: (a) finding paid employment and (b) being financially self-supporting (Wagner et al., 2007). Of the students surveyed, 94.8% expected attaining paid employment, 4.3% would probably attain paid employment, and 0.9% expected they would not attain paid employment after high school. In addition, 65.3% of students with disabilities expected they would be financially self-supporting, 29% would probably be financially self-supporting, and 5.7% expected to not be financially self-supporting.

Independent Living Expectations

Finally, students with disabilities reported their independent living expectations: (a) attaining a driver's license, (b) living away from home without supervision, and (c) living away from home with supervision (Wagner et al., 2007). Across all disability categories surveyed, 80.9% of students expected to attain a driver's license, 14.1% expected probably attaining a driver's license, and 5% expected to not attain a driver's license. In relation to future residential independence, 72.3% of students with disabilities expected to live away from home without supervision. In addition, 22.2% expected probably living away from home without supervision, while 5.3% did not expect to live away from home without supervision. Of those students surveyed who did not expect they would live away from home without supervision (5.3%), 15.6% of students expected living away from home with supervision, 36.2% expected they would probably live away from home with supervision, and 48.2% expected they would not live away from home with supervision.

Differences in Expectations Across Disability Categories. Across Wagner et al.'s (2007) data set, differences in expectations across disability categories emerged.

Educational Attainment Expectations. Statistically significant differences relative to expectations to attend postsecondary education after graduating from high school were found (Wagner et al., 2007). For instance, 79.9% of students with hearing impairment expected to attain postsecondary education after high school graduation, while only 47.2% ($p < .01$) of students with autism spectrum disorder, 47.1% ($p < .01$) multiple disabilities, and 37.7% ($p < .001$) intellectual disability expected attaining any postsecondary education. Furthermore, students with intellectual disability were less likely to expect to continue their education after high school graduation as compared to students with visual impairment (69.9%, $p < .001$), traumatic brain injury (66.9%, $p < .01$), orthopedic impairment (62.2%, $p < .01$), speech or language impairment (58.8%, $p < .01$), or emotional and behavioral disorders (56.2%, $p < .01$).

In addition, Wagner et al. (2007) found statistically significant differences across students' responses on the type of postsecondary education from which they expected to graduate: (a) graduating from a 2-year college and (b) graduating from a 4-year college. Students with intellectual disability (22.5%) were less likely to expect to graduate from a 2-year college as compared to students with traumatic brain injury (52.6%, $p < .01$). A wider variation across disability categories was seen with "expectations for 'definitely' graduating from a 4-year institution" (Wagner et al., 2007, p. 73). Students with hearing impairment (47.2%) expected to graduate from a 4-year college; this is in stark contrast to students with emotional and behavioral disorders (26.8%, $p < .01$), specific learning disability (25.2%, $p < .01$), other health impairment (22.6%, $p < .001$), autism spectrum disorder (20.6%, $p < .01$), and intellectual disability (16.1%, $p < .001$). Finally, students with intellectual disability (16.1%) reported they were less likely to expect to graduate from a 4-year college as compared to students with traumatic brain injury

(42.9%, $p < .01$), visual impairment (39%, $p < .01$), orthopedic impairment (38.7%, $p < .01$), or speech or language impairment (35.2%, $p < .01$).

Employment Expectations. Statistically significant differences were found on students' reported employment expectations: (a) finding paid employment and (b) being financially self-supporting (Wagner et al., 2007). Other than autism spectrum disorder (77.7%), more than 80% of students with disabilities, across all disability categories, expected to attain paid employment. Compared to students with autism spectrum disorder (who were less likely to expect to attain paid employment), a statistically significant difference was found between students with specific learning disability (97.1%, $p < .01$), hearing impairment (96.1%, $p < .01$), speech or language impairment (95.7%, $p < .01$), and orthopedic impairment (83.8%, $p < .01$). Moreover, students with emotional and behavioral disorders, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, visual impairment, and traumatic brain injury were statistically significantly more likely to expect being financially self-supporting as compared to their counterparts with intellectual disability (37.1%), autism spectrum disorder (34.3%), and multiple disabilities (29.2%).

Independent Living Expectations. Finally, statistically significant differences were reported across students' independent living expectations: (a) attaining a driver's license, (b) living away from home without supervision, and (c) living away from home with supervision (Wagner et al., 2007). Students with deaf-blindness (25.2%) and visual impairment (12.4%) were less likely to expect to attain a driver's license in comparison to all of the disability categories surveyed. In addition, students with intellectual disability (57.9%), orthopedic impairment (57%), autism spectrum disorder (54%), and multiple disabilities (53.1%) were statistically significantly less likely to expect to definitely attain a driver's license as compared to the other disability categories surveyed (range = 80.7-91.5%). Furthermore, students with emotional and behavioral disorders (78%), specific learning disability (76.7%), other health impairment (76%), traumatic brain injury (75.8%), speech or language impairment (69.2%), and visual impairment (68.7%) were statistically significantly more likely to expect to live away from home without supervision than those students with intellectual disability (48.8%), autism spectrum disorder (45.8%), and multiple disabilities (40.8%).

Comparison to Parent Expectations

Two years prior to interviewing students with disabilities, Wagner et al. (2007) surveyed their parents to glean their perceptions and expectations of the aforementioned transitional milestones (i.e., educational attainment, employment, and independent living) of their children. On the same 4-point Likert-type scale used during the student interviews, parents tended to have lower expectations as compared to their children with disabilities across all disability categories and transition domains regulated by IDEA (2004). "Youth were 7 to 26 percentage points more likely than their parents to expect they 'definitely' [would] attain education[, employment,] and independence outcomes" (Wagner et al., 2007, p. 70). For example, while 84.8% of students with disabilities answered they expected to definitely graduate high school with a regular high school diploma, only 59.2% of their parents expected the same. In addition, 52.4% of students with disabilities stated they expected to attend postsecondary education after high school; however, only 29.1% of their parents expected them to attend postsecondary education. Furthermore, only 47.2% of parents expected their children to achieve financial self-sufficiency, while 65.3% of their children expected they would be financially self-sufficient. Albeit divergent, the smallest percentage difference between expectations of parents and their children with disabilities was related to the expectation of attaining paid employment; 94.8% of students with disabilities expected to attain paid employment, with 87.9% of their parents expecting the same outcome.

Wagner et al.'s (2007) Findings Compared to the Existing Literature

Parental involvement is paramount for the successful transition of their children with disabilities; however, "the impact of involved parents may depend upon the extent to which parents and students have a shared view of which transition goals and experiences are most important, suitable, and realistic" (Powers et al., 2009, p. 134). Although this area has not been well researched, Wagner et al.'s (2007) findings suggest parents and their children with disabilities deviate on their expectations and perceptions about the future. Thompson et al. (2000) reported similar findings. Utilizing a qualitative approach and interviewing 22 high school students with specific learning disability and their parents, they reported all participants (i.e., parents and their children with disabilities) anticipated students would find success in the three transition domains mandated by IDEA (2004): (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living. However, parents projected concern relative to the prospect of their children leaving and living outside the family home after graduating from high school. Furthermore, a wide discrepancy was evident between the expectations and perceptions of parents and their children with disabilities in relation to the types and level of supports each student would need to be successful postsecondary; parents expected more supports, while students expected less supports. Finally, Hogansen et al. (2008) investigated the "influence of gender on the transition goals and experiences of female students with disabilities" (p. 215). Data were gathered from females with disabilities and their parents (i.e., $n = 67$ and 34, respectively) utilizing focus group interviews. Results suggested participants' expectations for the future differed. For example, the young women communicated their postsecondary aspirations of wanting to expand their social capital and networks and increase their opportunities to experience workplace options. However, their parents articulated the need to restrict these opportunities in order to preserve their children's safety. Moreover, the young women expressed desires of starting families and becoming mothers in early adulthood. In contrast, their parents voiced concern, stating "early motherhood could stifle their daughters' future opportunities or that they would have to care for a grandchild if their daughter could not" (Powers et al., 2009, p. 134).

The comparison to parent expectations and the expectations of their children with disabilities on the postsecondary outcomes reported by Wagner et al. (2007) are reflective of the existing literature (Hogansen et al., 2008; Powers et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2000) and compounded by a multitude of variables. For example, Whitney-Thomas and Hanley-Maxwell (1996) reported parents expect the transition of their children with disabilities from high school to postsecondary life to be challenging, which leads parents to feel "greater discomfort and pessimism" (p. 75) toward the future. In addition, parents tend to be concerned about the ability of their children with disabilities to manage their own transition planning process, while also effectively articulating and advocating for their unique needs to the IEP team members around the table (Powers et al., 1999); thus, potentially generalizing these poor in-school behaviors to postsecondary environments. Although parents of children with disabilities have a vision of the future for their children, the above variables make it difficult for parents of children with disabilities to surrender control and influence over their children's lives (Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1995). This adversely impacts and lowers expectations for their children's future, which diverges from the future aspirations of their children and, ultimately, hinders their postsecondary success.

Parent Expectations

While researchers acknowledge the chief importance of parental involvement (Cobb et al., 2013; Kohler, 1993, 1996; Kohler et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Test, Fowler et al., 2009; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009), little is known about parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs (Grigal & Neubert, 2004) and if those expectations align with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. Often, research into the expectations parents place on in-school instructional areas focuses solely on specific disability categories (Grigal & Neubert, 2004). Past research suggests parent expectations differ contingent on the age of their child (Epps & Myers, 1989) and different support needs of their child (Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1992). For students with specific learning disability, research has focused on parent perceptions of their children's abilities and skills in the areas of math, English, and study skills (Stone, 1997), or their perceptions of their children's social capital (i.e., in-school friendships; Wiener & Sunohara, 1998).

In addition to the in-school expectations, previous research has focused on transition planning and parent expectations of the postsecondary environments of their children with disabilities prior to the reauthorization and updated transition mandates in IDEA of 2004 (Epps & Myers, 1989; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Tilson & Neubert, 1988). For example, parents of children with low-incidence disabilities did not expect their children to be employed (i.e., competitively) following high school graduation; rather, they expected them to work in a day activity center or sheltered workshop (Epps & Myers, 1989; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001). Furthermore, after high school graduation, they expected their children to live at home, in a group home, or institution (Epps & Myers, 1989). However, parents strongly desired and hoped for a normalized life for their children with low-incidence disabilities (Kausar et al., 2003).

Parents of students with high-incidence disabilities expected their children to work competitively; albeit, in low-paying, entry-level jobs (Tilson & Neubert, 1988). Moreover, only 13% of parents expected attendance of postsecondary education for their children with high-incidence disabilities.

Masino and Hodapp (1996) investigated the effects of disability on the postsecondary educational expectations parents placed on their middle school children with disabilities. By using an existing database, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS; Ingels et al., 1990), four disability categories were included in their analysis: (a) deafness (n = 38), (b) hearing impairment (n = 126), (c) orthopedic impairment (n = 61), and (d) visual impairment (n = 97). Results indicated the school performance of their children with disabilities and parents' level of educational attainment predicted the future occurrence of the postsecondary education (i.e., college) success of their children. Simply put, when their children were succeeding academically in the middle school environment, and parents, themselves, attended college, a statistically significant predictor emerged. "Desires and expectations of parents for their [children's] transition into adulthood are value-laden, influenced by their cultural experiences, and affect how they engage with the transition planning team" (Martinez et al., 2012, p. 280). Masino and Hodapp's (1996) findings suggested this very sentiment—parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their children with disabilities were influenced by their past experiences. Kraemer and Blacher (2001) and Newman (2005) validated these findings, where they suggested the level of severity of a student's disability may ultimately influence the expectations of their parents, which can negatively impact the trajectory of their children's postsecondary outcomes. Although these findings suggested parent expectations were influenced by their past experiences, a gap appears to be in the literature in relation to how parent expectations are shaped over time; thus, providing stimulus for an exploratory investigation to unpack the myriad of factors influencing these expectations.

With parent expectations identified as a new predictor of postsecondary success (Mazzotti et al., 2016), after the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process, only surface-level parent expectations have come to light. Mazzotti et al. (2016) determined five studies supporting parent expectations as a new predictor of postsecondary success: (a) Carter et al. (2012) conducted an exploratory analysis of NLTS2 data and found parent expectations of their children with low-incidence disabilities relative to employment outcomes was a statistically significant predictor; parents expected them to (a) definitely have a paying job, (b) probably have a paying job, (c) definitely be self-supporting, and (d) probably not be self-supporting; (b) Chiang et al. (2012) conducted an exploratory analysis of NLTS2 data and found parent expectations as a statistically significant predictor of students with autism spectrum disorder attending postsecondary education; (c) Doren et al. (2012) conducted an a priori analysis of NLTS2 data and found parent expectations as a statistically significant predictor of education and employment outcomes when parents expected their children with disabilities to get a paid job; (d) Papay and Bambara (2014) conducted an exploratory analysis of NLTS2 data and found parent expectations of students with intellectual disability was a statistically significant predictor of postsecondary education and employment; and (e) Wagner et al. (2014) conducted an exploratory analysis of NLTS2 data and found parent expectations of students with disabilities was a statistically significant predictor of postsecondary education.

The preceding studies shed light on surface-level parent expectations. However, it is important to note, all data were gleaned from an extant database (i.e., NLTS2) and correlative in nature. As such, currently no research- or EBPs exist for teachers to use to increase parent expectations in relation to the postsecondary environments of their children with disabilities. With surface-level understanding of parent expectations, the field of secondary transition is struggling to understand this construct and its impact as it relates to the postsecondary success of students with disabilities (McConnell et al., 2018). Examining and unpacking the gamut of facets related to parent expectations may provide beneficial opportunities and assist in designing interventions aimed at factors likely to influence parent expectations of their children with disabilities; thereby, affording teachers research- and EBPs related to parent expectations and providing students with disabilities opportunities for enhanced postsecondary outcomes. With an understanding of the dimensions of parent expectations, this may assist in forging the parent-teacher partnership and aid in overcoming barriers relative to parental involvement in the transition planning process.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 2: Review of Literature was to (a) provide the evolution of special education couched through parental actions, (b) introduce secondary transition education, (c) present the origins of EBPs, (d) introduce EBPs and predictors in secondary transition education, (e) provide current trends of evidence relative to parental involvement and parent expectations in relation to the postsecondary environments of their children with disabilities and (f) provide an impetus for much needed research in the area of parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs.

A chief role in student success is the high expectations placed on their learning and performance relative to their academics (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Muller & Kerbow, 1993;

Newman & Cameto, 1993; Phillips, 1992; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998). “Such expectations are no less important for youth with disabilities . . . but finding the appropriate balance between high expectations . . . and a realistic assessment of aptitude and potential . . . may be particularly challenging” (Newman, 2005) for parents. Nonetheless, understanding parent expectations can help teachers support the actions of parents in assisting in the transition planning process of their children with disabilities. This can aid in mitigating the often reported tenuous parent-teacher partnerships during the IEP meeting (e.g., Cooney, 2002; Garriott et al., 2001; Griffin et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2006; Martinez et al., 2012; Newman, 2005). The expectations of parents is a powerful indicator for the postsecondary achievements of their children with disabilities in the areas of education, employment, and independent living (Newman, 2005).

With the exploration, isolation, and understanding of the variables related to parent expectations, researchers in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, can begin developing interventions to implement in school and classroom environments that are aimed at factors likely to positively influence parent expectations of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs; subsequently, affording teachers research- and EBPs related to parent expectations and providing students with disabilities opportunities for enhanced postsecondary outcomes in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment and (c) independent living. With an understanding of these dimensions, the forging of the parent-teacher relationship in the IEP meeting can strengthen; consequently, aiding in overcoming the barriers relative to parental involvement in the transition planning process.

Chapter 3

Methodology

To ameliorate the poor postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates teachers use scientifically-based instruction with their students with disabilities (Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016). However, with the complex nature of special education, specifically the variability of behavior between students with disabilities and the countless number of educational stakeholders supporting those students (e.g., parents, teachers), the necessity of multiple methodologies to produce knowledge in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, is required (Trainor & Graue, 2014). Qualitative research, a methodology utilized to explore processes in their natural environments, can support researchers to glean information that cultivates novel research questions where true experimentation is possible (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Trainor & Graue, 2014). Hence, qualitative research provides a spring-board toward producing research- and evidence-based practices (EBPs) to instruct students with disabilities, particularly in those cases where little is known about the phenomenon under exploration. As Trainor and Leko (2014) noted, "qualitative research [is vital to] the expansion of theoretical and empirical work addressing some of our most enduring challenges" (p. 263).

For an understanding as to how best to prepare students with significant disabilities for postsecondary environments, ongoing investigation must continue. The purpose of this study was to bridge an understanding of parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and if those expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. As a newly identified evidence-based, in-school predictor of postsecondary success (hereafter predictor; Mazzotti et al., 2016; National Technical Assistance Center on Transition [NTACT], 2015), the field of secondary transition is struggling to understand this predictor and its impact as it relates to the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities (McConnell et al., 2018). Through qualitative inquiry, my hope was to explore parent expectations in their natural environments (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Trainor & Graue, 2014). This may assist in designing interventions aimed at factors likely to influence parent expectations in relation to the postsecondary outcomes of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities; thereby, affording teachers with research- and EBPs related to this phenomenon and providing these students opportunities for improved postsecondary success.

To address the gap in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, as it relates to parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs, I applied a general qualitative inquiry research design (Creswell & Poth, 2017) and addressed the following research questions:

1. What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?
2. Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?
3. How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

Theoretical Framework

Prior to stating my beliefs about the nature of reality, it is important to define ontology. "Ontology is the study of being. It is concerned with 'what is', with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such" (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Important to research, four elements inform one another, which provide the researcher with a blueprint to follow when developing a line of qualitative inquiry: (a) epistemology, (b) theoretical perspective, (c) methodology, and (d) methods. Ontology, when introduced to this blueprint, would sit alongside epistemology, providing another piece to the puzzle by guiding one's exploration and grounding it through their theoretical lens (Crotty, 1998; Shannon-Baker, 2016). Ontology falls on a large spectrum, from the epistemology of positivism where individuals hold the notion an external reality exists, capable of being understood and seized, to the epistemology of constructionism where individuals hold the notion reality is relative, where it is locally and specifically constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Particularly, knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, historical context, and society and none are absolute; thus, always changing based on the transaction between subject and object and the contextuality of that transaction (Schutz et al., 2004).

Therefore, my ontological and epistemological posture affords a medium (i.e., blueprint) to choose and develop my qualitative exploration, which revolves around its yoked paradigms (Greene, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Looking through a window of scholarship relative to my beliefs about the nature of reality, I establish myself as an objectivist and constructionist—harmonized as one, which co-constructs the reality in which I live. This ontological and epistemological stance bears heavily on my acquisition of knowledge. However, as Crotty (1998) suggested, the mere mention of the above stance is not enough; it is critical to "identify, explain and justify the [ontological and] epistemological stance we have adopted" (p. 8). Thus, I accept Crotty's (1998) posit on objectivism—within our world, meaning resides in objects independent of awareness and understanding. Through social sciences research, investigation can extrapolate and obtain "objective truth and meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 6) of our reality, affording the subject awareness and understanding of the truth around them.

While important, the acquisition of "objective truth and meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 6) through an objectivist lens only resides on one side of my ontological and epistemological stance and my beliefs about the nature of reality. Once "objective truth and meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 6) have been discovered, the impact of intentionality takes hold, which cultivates a fundamental relationship between "conscious subjects and their objects" (Crotty, 1998, p. 79). As conscious subjects in our human world, we engage with the realities that are discovered through an objectivist lens (i.e., social sciences research; Crotty, 1998). This allows us to construct, manipulate, and transact with those objective realities (i.e., between subject and object) through a window of rich contextuality (i.e., culture, historical context, and society; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schutz et al., 2004). Thus, albeit the discovery of knowledge takes place through scientific research (i.e., social sciences research) through an objectivist lens, that discovery of knowledge provides conscious subjects the benefit of interacting, constructing, and manipulating their realities within the sphere of their lived experiences.

The aforementioned ontological and epistemological posture informs my theoretical perspective and beliefs about the nature of the knower and knowledge. "Knowers are enmeshed within their complex and layered sociohistorical context" (Schutz et al., 2004, p. 272). Accordingly, through this "complex and layered sociohistorical context" (Schutz et al., 2004, p. 272), my knowledge is co-constructed through an objectivist and constructionist lens. I adopt critical realism as the chief theoretical paradigm driving my qualitative exploration (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2011). Critical realism, cultivating the union between the etic and emic inquiry, links a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Critical realism facilitates discourse and cooperation between my yoked paradigms (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2011); however, critical realism treats my realist ontology (i.e., truth) "with a good measure of caution and suspicion" (Crotty, 1998, p. 71). Thus, an external world exists independent of our constructions, perceptions, and theories; however, our understanding of the world around us is ineluctably constructed from our own perceptions and transactions within those objective realities (Creswell & Clark, 2018). "If we lay aside the prevailing understanding of those [realist ontological truths]" (Crotty, 1998, p. 78), new meaning can transpire, affording the researcher to construct novel meaning or authenticate and/or enhance former meaning. One's beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the nature of the knower shapes their beliefs about the nature of inquiry. Therefore, the knowledge of our worldview predicates the research problem(s) we choose to investigate, the methods we employ, and the conclusions we report (i.e., interpretations and theorizations; Schutz et al., 2004). Hence, I situate my qualitative exploration through a critical realism orientation and purpose—the objective of my research is to predict and understand by taking part in the meaning-making process of the phenomenon under exploration (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2011).

Research Design

"Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Characteristics of qualitative inquiry have evolved over time; however, common threads of these characteristics, as espoused by qualitative methodologists, have maintained through the everchanging field for supporting rigorous qualitative research (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Creswell & Poth, 2017). For my qualitative exploration I employed a general qualitative inquiry design prescribed by Creswell and Poth (2017). The rational underlying this design to best answer my research questions can be unpacked into five components: (a) reflexivity, (b) researcher as key instrument, (c) context-dependent, (d) complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic, and (e) holistic account. First, through my reflexivity, I positioned myself to my readers by informing them of my background and intent of the present study (see Appendix A for my subjectivity [i.e., reflexivity] statement). Second, in terms of the key instrument employed in this qualitative exploration, I did not rely on instruments or questionnaires developed by other researchers; rather, I collected data myself through in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Esterberg, 2001). Interviews took place in the context of my participants experiences, which afforded me the understanding as to how their "events, actions, and meaning[s] are shaped by the unique circumstances in which they occur" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30). Once all interviews were transcribed, I utilized inductive and deductive processes to make sense of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This provided me the cognitive mechanism to work from the "bottom-up" and triangulate my findings to cultivate the trustworthiness of my qualitative exploration. Finally, with the procedures of this research design to unpack the significance of my data, I developed a holistic account of the phenomenon under exploration through multiple parent perspectives.

Sampling, Recruitment, and Participants

I employed a purposive sampling procedure, including criterion sampling and snowball sampling, to recruit and select participants for my qualitative exploration. Criterion sampling "seeks cases that meet some criterion" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 159). Inclusion criteria for my qualitative exploration required parents of secondary-age children (a) with disabilities with high support needs, which may require ongoing services and support for postsecondary success; (b) 16 to 21 years of age; (c) enrolled in a high school setting or 18-21 school-affiliated transition program; (d) on an Individualized Education Program (IEP); and (e) with an intelligence quotient (IQ) of less than 70 (as reported by their parents). With the inclusion criteria established, snowball sampling, my second sampling procedure, was employed. Because I chose a specific phenomenon of interest for my qualitative exploration, snowball sampling was imperative to identify “cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 159).

With Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval obtained through the University of Oklahoma’s Office for Human Research Participant Protection, recruitment commenced (see Appendix B for the IRB outcome letter). To recruit participants, I created a recruitment letter (see Appendix C for the recruitment letter) with information about the study, including the study’s purpose, inclusion criteria for the study, a link to an online survey (developed through Qualtrics©, an online survey program housed out of the University of Oklahoma) to gain informed consent and contact information of participants (see Appendix D for informed consent and the Qualtrics© survey), and my contact information. This was distributed through email to a multitude of entities: (a) two listservs, housed out of the University of Oklahoma’s Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment, with active account users of educational stakeholders across the United States; (b) parent groups and disability organizations (e.g., Center for Parent Information & Resources, Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], Division on Career Development and Transition [DCDT], The Arc); and (c) social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter). After participants consented to participate in the study, the survey gleaned demographic attributes of parent participants and their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs to ensure inclusion criteria was met. In addition, the emails and phone numbers of parent participants were recorded to schedule interviews. To guarantee a representative sample of participants from a cross-section of the parent population of secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs, I was purposive in the parents I chose to interview. Thus, not all consenting participants were interviewed. I attained a sample size of 16 participants (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017). For parent participant characteristics, please refer to Table 1. For child characteristics, please refer to Table 2. It is important to note, all participants and their children were given pseudonyms; these pseudonyms were utilized throughout this document.

Table 1

Parent Participant Characteristics

Parent	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Employment	Child
Becky	—	Female	White	4-year degree	Part-time accountant	Andrew
Elizabeth	49	Female	Other/Cherokee	Doctorate	State developmental disabilities council	Hank
Nora	52	Female	Two or more races	4-year degree	Not employed	Erik
Ellen	60	Female	White	Professional degree	Medical director	Isaac
Jack	50	Male	White	4-year degree	Operations manager	Mackenzie
Jeremy	47	Male	White	Professional degree	Transition specialist	Jacob
Kathy	47	Female	White	4-year degree	Project manager	John
Lucy	53	Female	White	2-year degree	Regional coordinator (Sooner SUCCESS)	Riley

Amanda	50	Female	White	Professional degree	Professor	Jude
Anna	56	Female	White	4-year degree	—	Amelia
Audrey	40	Female	Two or more races/Hispanic/Latino	2-year degree	K-12 special education paraeducator	Sam
Daisy	42	Female	White	4-year degree	—	Daniel
Dawn	54	Female	White	2-year degree	Family support specialist (UCEED)	Ethan
Kristin	48	Female	White	Professional degree	Special education teacher	Ezra
Sarah	51	Female	White	Doctorate	Director (special education)	Jaxon
Sharon	—	Female	White	Professional degree	Not employed	Rylan

Note. Education = highest level of educational attainment; Employment = current employment placement; — = not reported.

Table 2

Child Characteristics

Child	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade	Disability	LoS
Andrew	18	Male	White	12th	ID	Limited
Hank	17	Male	Other/Cherokee	11th	OHI	Limited
Erik	17	Male	Two or more races	12th	ASD	Limited
Isaac	21	Male	White	18-21	ID	Extensive
Mackenzie	19	Female	White	18-21	ID	Extensive
Jacob	20	Male	White	12th	ASD	Extensive
John	18	Male	White	11th	ID	Extensive
Riley	17	Male	White	10th	ID	Extensive
Jude	17	Male	White	11th	ASD	Pervasive
Amelia	16	Female	Asian	10th	ID	Pervasive
Sam	16	Male	Two or more races/Hispanic/Latino	10th	MD	Pervasive
Daniel	18	Male	White	12th	ASD	Pervasive
Ethan	20	Male	White	18-21	OHI	Pervasive
Ezra	19	Male	White	12th	ASD	Pervasive
Jaxon	18	Male	White	18-21	MD	Pervasive

Rylan	21	Male	White		12th	MD	Pervasive

Note. LoS = level of support; 18-21 = 18-21 school-affiliated transition program; ID = intellectual disability; OHI = other health impairment; ASD = autism spectrum disorder; MD = multiple disabilities.

Data Source and Collection

The data source was derived from in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Esterberg, 2001). The purpose of in-depth, semi-structured interviews is to “explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words” (Esterberg, 2001, p. 87). Because little is known about parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs in relation to the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process, conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews provided me the means of exploring the phenomenon in detail. Furthermore, by utilizing this interview approach, an organic exchange between myself and participants took place, which supported me to “move beyond [my] own experiences and ideas and to *really* understand the other person’s point of view” (Esterberg, 2001, p. 87).

Data collection consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews taking place over the phone. The average length of the interviews were 48 min 3 s (range = 30 min 55 s - 62 min 32 s) and recorded through an audio recorder. I utilized an interview protocol to ensure question fidelity within and across participants (see Appendix E for my interview protocol). To offer an example, the following interview questions were utilized: “What are your expectations for your child’s education outcomes after high school?” and “What made you hold those expectations?” At the point of saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), data collection ceased (*n* = 16). With the collection of an ample data set through participant interviews, one can assume that similar patterns will begin to emerge—this is saturation (Shank, 2002). As Shank (2002) suggested, once saturation is reached, “you are free to begin the microanalysis of your data, since you have made sure that you have staked out all the macro boundaries” (p. 132).

Data Analysis

The recorded raw data was transcribed verbatim by me (*n* = 2) and Temi© (*n* = 14), a speech-to-text transcription service, for each participant. Related to the cognitive processes of qualitative analysis, Morse (1994) postulated qualitative analysis as “a creative process of organizing data so that the analytic scheme will appear obvious” (p. 25). With the guidance of Morse’s (1994) cognitive processes of qualitative analysis, I subjected all transcripts to inductive and thematic analysis developed by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) and Shank (2002). Thematic analysis is about examining the data for patterns (Shank, 2002). For this to transpire, each research question was treated as an unit of analysis (Yin, 2017) to allow for segmenting of the data into “divisions that retain their natural integrity . . . [and] are the means for reducing data to divisions manageable for manipulation” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 241). First cycle coding took place (Saldaña, 2015) through constant comparison methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As the chief intellectual endeavor underlying most analysis in qualitative inquiry, Tesch (1990) endorsed

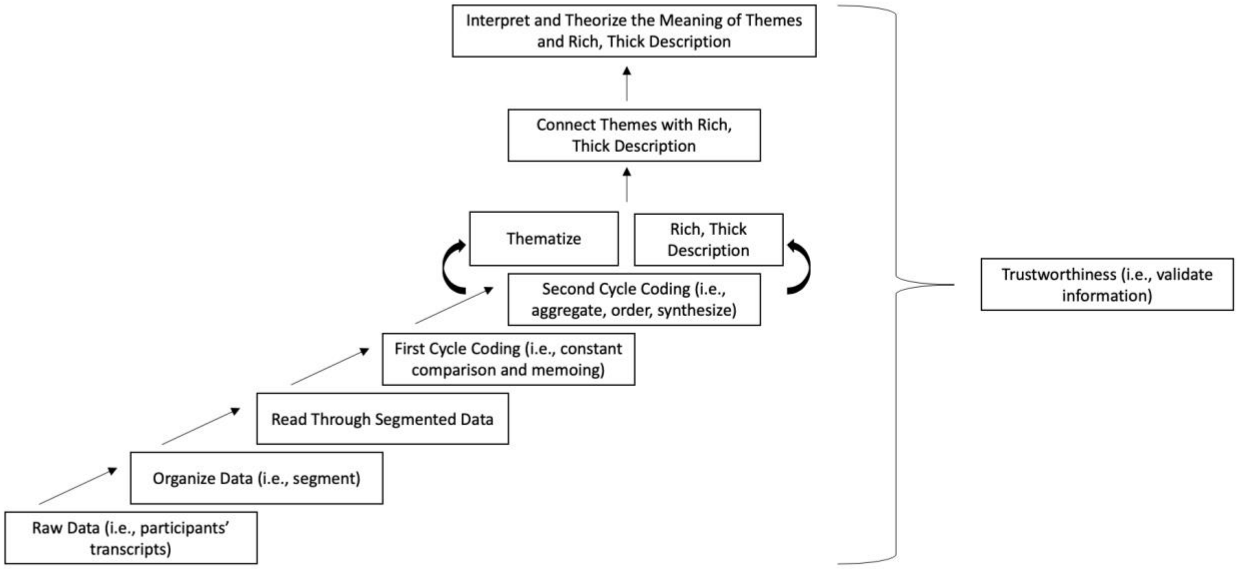
> The main intellectual tool is comparison. The method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns. (p. 96)

Constant comparison methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) promoted comparing and contrasting of the data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) through a lens of incident and theoretical comparison (Shank, 2002) to foster code generation and provide the initial underpinnings of developing categories. Incident comparison refers to later incidents during the data analysis to inform codes, categories, and conclusions rendered from previous incidents during the data analysis. However, when new incidents are not easily compared to earlier incidents, theoretical comparison considers those new incidents and the categories to which they may belong. During first cycle coding (Saldaña, 2015), memoing also took place, which Charmaz (2006) posited as "the pivotal intermediate step between [coding] and [the first draft of the complete analysis]" (p. 72).

Next, second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2015) or categorizing took place to afford aggregation, ordering (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), and synthesizing (Morse, 1994) of the data. The categorization process provided me the means of decontextualizing the data by moving from the particular case to the general and merging several experiences together; thus, providing a vehicle to thematize or describe a composite pattern of behavior or responses through the lens of the phenomenon under exploration (Morse, 1994). These patterns of behavior or responses emerging inductively from the original data set refined the theory building process through logical chains of evidence (Shank, 2002), which established linkages and relations to speculate and make inferences about future occurrences (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Finally, I recontextualized the data to ensure transferability of the findings were applicable to other populations and settings for whom this exploration might be related (see Figure 1 for a visual representation of my data analytic schema for my qualitative exploration; Morse, 1994).

Figure 1

Visual Representation of the Data Analytic Schema for the Qualitative Exploration



Note. From "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)," by J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, 2018, p. 197. Copyright 2014 by Sage Publications.

Trustworthiness

Within qualitative inquiry, there are a variety of ways to validate trustworthiness of one's study. This includes credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). On the outset of this qualitative exploration and throughout the research process, I put procedures into place to ensure trustworthiness. To guarantee the composition and analysis of the experiences of my parent participants, I utilized credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the early part of the 21st century, credibility was reconceptualized as transactional validity (Cho & Trent, 2006), which is "an interactive process between the researcher, the researched, and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus by means of revisiting facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted" (p. 321). First and foremost, I built trust with my parent participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Without this endeavor, they would not have revealed to me their innermost secrets. To form trust, I provided each of them an informed consent document, which highlighted their anonymity through the de-identification of data, that no hidden agendas on my part were being served, and their experiences would be honored through the write-up and dissemination of my findings. In addition to building trust, I employed reflexive member checking (Cho & Trent, 2006) throughout the interview process. This included asking clarifying questions and checking for understanding and providing a detailed summary of the experiences my parent participants relayed to me at the end of each interview. Finally, I employed a strategy known as deviant case analysis, which I used to ensure I accounted for all known cases without omission (Kidder, 1981). For example, although I theorized all my parent participants would hold postsecondary expectations for their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs, some did not. Instead of omitting these cases, I highlighted them in my findings.

Second, I utilized transferability to ensure the trustworthiness of my qualitative exploration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Due to the nature of qualitative research, transferability relies on the appliers, not the researcher. Simply put, I did not provide an "index of transferability;" rather, I reached saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and produced a thick, rich description of the phenomenon under exploration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because my database and findings were context-dependent, it is the appliers job to determine transferability judgements and then decide the context, populations, and circumstances to which my findings are appropriate.

Third, to ensure confirmability of my qualitative exploration, I employed an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail consists of a number of records produced from a qualitative study. The records produced from my inquiry included (a) raw data, audio recordings of the interviews with my parent participants; (b) data reduction and analysis products, ongoing memoing procedures; (c) data reconstruction and synthesis products, coding, categorization, and thematizing and write-up of the final report (i.e., findings and discussion); (d) materials relating to intentions and dispositions, subjectivity statement; and (e) instrument development information, interview protocol. This audit trail informs the key decisions I made throughout the research process (Carcary, 2009). In addition to leaving an audit trail, I triangulated my data, which included multiple perspectives; specifically, I utilized researcher triangulation and data triangulation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). To ensure the construction of my analysis was well developed, I met bi-monthly with a researcher in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, to discuss the processes related to my data analytic schema (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Shank, 2002). Through an iterative approach, we corroborated my interpretations through a means of referring to a number of data sources; these data sources were the transcripts of my parent participants (i.e., inductively) and the established literature-base on parent expectations in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition (i.e., deductively; Brantlinger et al., 2005; Creswell & Clark, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017). These meetings permitted me to stay honest with my interpretations because I was able to verify and check specific facts across data sources (Cho & Trent, 2006).

Finally, I employed dependability to increase the trustworthiness of my qualitative exploration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability in qualitative research is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research; that is, dependability relates to the consistency of data collected across research participants. The consistency of data can be achieved “when the steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). To offer an example, I documented similar responses from my parent participants related to the supports they anticipated their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs as needing in their postsecondary environments, which were dependent on their level of support needs.

Ethical Considerations

"Human science researchers are guided by the ethical principles on research with human participants" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 109). Thus, precautions were taken to ensure ethical issues were addressed prior to the commencement of this qualitative exploration and throughout the research process. This included (a) adhering to all procedures of the university's IRB where the qualitative exploration took place, (b) requiring informed consent prior to the interview from each participant, and (c) developing procedures for ensuring "full discloser of the nature, purpose, and requirements of the research project" (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 109-110) to all participants.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 3: Methodology was to provide an overview of my ontological and epistemological posture as it relates to the nature of reality and nature of knowledge. This theoretical framework informed my (a) methodology, (b) methods, and (c) data analytic schema to address the following research questions:

1. What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?
2. Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?

3. How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

The intent of this study was to produce descriptive and procedural knowledge (Brantlinger et al., 2005) of a newly identified predictor of postsecondary success—parent expectations (Mazzotti et al., 2016). With the assistance of my data analytic schema, I interpreted and theorized, utilizing rich, thick description for a neglected area of research. It is my hope that the results of this study will foster interventions meant to influence parent expectations of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs; thereby, affording teachers with research- and EBPs related to parent expectations and enhancing their students postsecondary outcomes in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living.

Chapter 4

Findings

This qualitative exploration aimed to study parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and if those expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. In addition, I explored if and how parent expectations varied across the level of supports needed for their children. Finally, I explored any underlying factors which may have shaped and influenced those postsecondary expectations. To assist me in the meaning-making process, I positioned myself as a critical realist (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2011), employed a general qualitative inquiry research design (Creswell & Poth, 2017), utilized in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Esterberg, 2001), and subjected all transcripts to a data analytic schema (i.e., inductive and thematic analysis) akin to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) and Shank (2002).

Because the answers of my parent participants were not linear in fashion and occurred in a highly iterative manner, as expected from in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Esterberg, 2001) and to unpack the phenomenon under exploration, I decontextualized, evaluated, and transformed their raw experiences into a product worthy of my parent participants. Through my data analytic schema (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Shank, 2002), an emergence of themes and sub-themes occurred associated with each unit of analysis (i.e., research questions one, two, and three, respectively; Yin, 2017). All themes and sub-themes are presented in relation to their corresponding unit of analysis:

1. What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?
2. Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?
3. How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was designed to evoke responses relative to the expectations my parent participants placed on the postsecondary education, employment, and independent living environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. Three themes and two sub-themes emerged, which painted a portrait of those postsecondary expectations. The three themes included (a) magnitude across and within postsecondary environments, (b) employment first, and (c) leaving the nest. The two sub-themes included (a) educational training for employment success and (b) college experience.

Theme #1: Magnitude Across and Within Postsecondary Environments

Theme 1, *magnitude across and within postsecondary environments,* denoted the distribution of frequency across and within the postsecondary environments required by IDEA (2004) and the significance my parent participants placed on them. Magnitude across postsecondary environments represented the number of times each code was inductively extracted from the transcripts of my parent participants; within postsecondary environments represented the percentage of transcripts from my parent participants that yielded an in vivo text corresponding to each code. Based on inductive analysis (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Shank, 2002), I developed five codes, which corresponded to the postsecondary education environment. These included (a) type of educational placement, (b) type of education, (c) needs-based education, (d) setting high expectations, and (e) hopes for the future. Across my parent participants, type of educational placement (e.g., 2- and 4- year colleges and universities, Think College-type experiences) was mentioned 16 times by 68.8% of participants; type of education (e.g., additional education in financial literacy) was mentioned two times by 12.5% of participants; needs-based education (e.g., job training to develop communication and social skills) was mentioned five times by 25% of participants; setting high expectations (e.g., challenging secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs every day) was mentioned three times by 18.8% of participants; and hopes for the future (e.g., hoping to retain academic behaviors) was mentioned three times by 18.8% of participants.

I developed five codes, which corresponded to the postsecondary employment environment. These included (a) employment aspirations, (b) free choice vs. forced choice, (c) creating opportunities, (d) setting high expectations, and (e) hopes for the future. Across my parent participants, employment aspirations (e.g., animated film critic, half-time, part-time, full-time employment) was mentioned 24 times by 87.5% of participants; free choice vs. forced choice (e.g., affording choice) was mentioned three times by 12.5% of participants; creating opportunities (e.g., creating opportunities beyond the traditional postsecondary employment options, helping in the attainment of in-school employment) was mentioned seven times by 25% of participants; setting high expectations (e.g., informing their secondary-age children they would work and earn their own money) was mentioned three times by 18.8% of participants; and hopes for the future (e.g., participating in the community of their choose, having friends) was mentioned one time by 6.3% of participants.

I developed one code, which corresponded to the postsecondary independent living environment. This included independent living aspirations. Across my parent participants, independent living aspirations (e.g., living at home, living with roommates, living in an apartment) was mentioned 28 times by 93.8% of participants.

Theme #2: Employment First

Theme 2, *employment first*, considered the expectations my parent participants placed on the postsecondary employment environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. Although employment for students with significant disabilities has gained national attention through the mandate of transition services (IDEA, 2004) and the four goals of disability policy, including (a) equality of opportunity, (b) full participation, (c) independent living, and (d) economic self-sufficiency (Kiernan et al., 2011), the participation in the labor force for these students post-high school remains poor (Winsor et al., 2018). Therefore, it was important to evoke parent responses relative to the expectations they placed on the postsecondary employment environments of their secondary-age children to determine if they played a part in the aforementioned poor postsecondary employment outcomes.

Two of my parent participants, Sharon and Anna, did not hold postsecondary employment expectations for their secondary-age children, while the rest of my parent participants did. For Sharon, she simply stated, “I do not have any employment expectations.” However, for Anna, her postsecondary employment expectations were a direct response to her secondary-age child, Amelia. Amelia, a 16 year old sophomore with intellectual disability, was indicated as requiring a pervasive level of support need by Anna. When I probed Anna to further unpack the postsecondary employment expectations she placed on Amelia, she stated,

> Well, this is currently a hot topic for me. Developmentally, [Amelia] is seven years old. Would you make a seven year old work? . . . There seems to be a [disconnect. For example,] they [graduate] from high school on one extreme, they go to a home, you know, they go to a nursing home or some sort of full-time care facility. On the other extreme, [higher functioning kiddos] go do some type of work . . . I just don't think [Amelia] will ever be there . . . The emphasis seems to be on work, and I think that's great for higher functioning kiddos, but there are those kiddos in the middle that, you know, don't want to go to the home and they're not really quite ready to work. So, it would be nice to have something in the middle.

The views of Anna are justified. Reported across the literature-base, students with significant disabilities exiting high school are typically placed in a small continuum of postsecondary environments with little middle ground—activity centers, segregated enclaves, sheltered workshops, or they stay at home where they rely on family members and/or paid staff to take care of them (Brown et al., 2006). At no fault to their parents, these are classically the only options available to their children with significant disabilities post-high school.

Across all other parent participants, an expectation for some type of postsecondary employment outcome for their secondary-age children was disclosed. This included simple statements to nuanced statements, which comprised of postsecondary employment expectations related to the number of hours their secondary-age children would work to the kind of postsecondary employment environments and the types of postsecondary employment their secondary-age children would best be suited. Jack stated, "I think we're very open-minded to anything and everything as part of [Mackenzie's] transition [to employment]" to Nora stating, ". . . best case scenario would be that [Erik] is able to, you know, hold a job." For Lucy, she was precise in the postsecondary employment expectations she set for her son, Riley—he would work either a part-time or full-time job.

I observed this pattern across my parent participants, where many of them disclosed half-time, part-time, or full-time postsecondary employment as ideal for their secondary-age children. The number of hours their secondary-age children would work was dependent on the level of support needed by each of their secondary-age children. Ethan, a 20 year old in the 18-21 school-affiliated transition program at his school and diagnosed with other health impairment, was indicated as having a pervasive level of support need by his mother, Dawn. She stated,

> So, my husband and I have talked about this extensively . . . [right now, Ethan] is working 1.5 hours twice a week . . . it is very taxing because [of] his metabolic disorder. He gets easily fatigued. So, this morning, he went off to work. [After work,] he's going to come home and then he's got to go to school for six hours. He's exhausted at the end of the day, and he needs a day to recuperate . . . sometimes, I've had to keep him home from school . . . [So,] I can't see him holding a full-time job [or] even a 20 hour a week job. [It is] very questionable.

As a gatekeeper, participating in half-time, part-time, or full-time postsecondary employment could spring-board these secondary-age children toward success in the other postsecondary environments directed by IDEA (2004).

> We want Riley to have a good life, and setting at home in front of the TV or the computer every day, all day, is not a good life . . . I want him to be out in the community, have friends, have, you know, access to the same things that every young adult has, and I feel like employment is a way to attain those.

The literature-base corroborates the feelings of Lucy about postsecondary employment and the obtainment of tangential outcomes; being employed post-high school provides additional benefits to students with significant disabilities. These benefits include (a) a sense of achievement and self-worth; (b) the promotion of self-determined behaviors; and (c) the acquisition of professional workplace relationships, which may generalize into the personal life of students with significant disabilities as ongoing social capital and social networks (Lee & Carter, 2012; McConnell et al., 2018).

My parent participants listed an array of postsecondary employment environments and postsecondary employment types for their secondary-age children: (a) working in criminal justice, (b) working as an animated film critic, (c) collecting grocery carts, (d) working as a greeter at Walmart, (e) working as a farmhand, and (f) working with the Boeing aerospace company. Elizabeth communicated to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team of her son, Hank, that he aspired to be an animated film critic. "For the last 10 years, [Hank] has said I want to be an animated film critic . . . he really watches some intensive film critics on YouTube and things like that and has an expertise in that . . . And, we have said that in his IEP for the last 10 years." Elizabeth personifies the spirit of IDEA (2004)—the IEP is a collaborative effort among parents and teachers, where parents view themselves as equal and valued contributors to the educational goals of their children with disabilities (Reiman et al., 2010).

When considering those postsecondary employment environments and postsecondary employment types, many of my parent participants reflected on the strengths (e.g., cleaning, turning on and off switches), preferences (e.g., working in criminal justice, loving animals), and interests (e.g., working as an animated film critic, working as a farmhand, working as a custodian) of their secondary-age children. Chiefly important to the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, considering the strengths, preferences, and interests of students with significant disabilities can help pinpoint those postsecondary employment environments they are most attracted to pursue. Ultimately, this bolsters productive citizens (Yamamoto et al., 2018) and nurtures job satisfaction, which impacts job longevity (Akkerman et al., 2014).

Some of my parent participants felt the need to go a step further and seek out job placements, matching the strengths, preferences, and interests of their secondary-age children once they graduated from high school. Kathy disclosed how she would ensure her son, John, would gain employment.

> So, right now [John] wants to work in criminal justice . . . I know he can't be a police officer, but I want to reach out to the criminal, you know, the police departments, the sheriff's, and the, and all that and see if we can't find him a position where he could support the police officers and sheriff's deputies and [is] in their environment and feels a part of it.

When I asked her why this was important, Kathy replied, ". . . I want [John] to choose what he does. I don't want him to choose it based on this is the only place that will employ you."

Another example of this principle (i.e., strengths, preferences, interests, and choices) came from Sarah. Her son, Jaxon, was an 18 year old identified with intellectual disability. He was a student in the 18-21 school-affiliated transition program at his school, and Sarah indicated his level of support need as pervasive. The preferences and interests of Jaxon included switches and turning them on and off. Sarah considered this to be one of his strengths.

> If I could carve a job for [Jaxon] . . . It would be going to Boeing . . . [and] turning off all the lights and all the computers cause, like, he loves, even though he's deaf and blind, he loves switches and loves cutting everything off . . . And, so I think a perfect job for him would be to go through Boeing when all the employees are gone and just go room by room and turn all the lights off. One, because it's not health dependent. If he is too sick to show up that day, Boeing's not going to care. But, he's going to save them money every day he can show up . . . I think he'd have fun doing it . . . [Jaxon] and another kid could just wheel through the building and just have a blast.

The practice of parents facilitating choice and securing job placement for their secondary-age children with significant disabilities post-high school is common (Petner-Arrey et al., 2016). It would seem once the secondary-age children of my parent participants transitioned from middle school into high school and/or adulthood, they would have acquired an in-depth understanding of who their secondary-age children are; therefore, being central to the acquisition of meaningful postsecondary employment.

Sub-Theme #1: Educational Training for Employment Success. It has been well documented that secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs have unique learning characteristics (Stuart & Smith, 2002; Wehman & Kregel, 2020). These characteristics include (a) learning at a slower pace, ultimately learning less over time; (b) difficulties maintaining what they have learned across time; and (c) problems generalizing what they do learn across environments (Ryndak & Alper, 1996). Sub-theme 1, which emerged from my data analytic schema (LeCompte & Preissle; 1993; Shank, 2002) included *educational training for employment success*. Sub-theme 1 denoted the importance my parent participants placed on the acquisition and/or maintenance of skills for the postsecondary employment environment success of their secondary-age children post-high school.

Many of my parent participants expressed their desire for educational training to take place during the intermediate shift from high school to the postsecondary employment environment for their secondary-age children. For example, Becky stated, "I would expect [Andrew] to finish high school . . and do the next thing in line . . . to get some sort of education or some sort of skill set that [he] can get a job with." Kristin had a similar outlook for her son, Ezra; however, she was detailed in the skills Ezra would need to acquire for postsecondary employment success. She stated,

> Well, my expectations are that [Ezra] would be able to attend a sheltered workshop and continue his education in an area of job training in order to be able to . . . gain communication skills and, um, social interaction skills . . . I want [Ezra] to be able to continue to grow and learn.

Indicated by employers of students with disabilities, communication skills and social interaction skills, a form of soft skills, are an important skill set for postsecondary employment (Lindsay et al., 2014). This umbrella term (i.e., soft skills) incorporates the countless number of relational qualities, personal characteristics, and personal skills utilized to traverse the postsecondary employment environment (Phillips et al., 2016; Robles, 2012). Essential to the workplace, the soft skills the secondary-age children of my parent participants would attain during the intermediate shift from high school to the postsecondary employment environment would complement those hard skills (i.e., job-specific skills) to encourage positive postsecondary employment achievement.

Sub-Theme #2: College Experience. Sub-theme 2, *college experience,* designated the expectations my parent participants placed on the postsecondary education environments for their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. These expectations ranged from traditional 2- and 4-year colleges and universities to Think College-type experiences, which are college experiences for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is important to note, 2- and 4-year colleges and universities are degree-bearing, where Think College-type experiences typically do not afford degrees, but rather certificates of completion to their students (VanBergeijk & Cavanagh, 2012).

For her son John, Kathy stated, “So, [he’ll probably] go to a 4-year [university]. We’re starting to explore cause [John’s] a junior, and his current high school requires him to travel to two different colleges.” The expectation set by the school to visit two college campuses provided the impetus for Kathy and John to start the educational exploration process. However, for Jack, the impetus for his postsecondary education expectations were based on the aspirations his daughter, Mackenzie, set for herself. “We anticipate [Mackenzie] . . . taking classes at the, at the local community college on a part-time basis.” When I asked Jack if that was his expectation for the postsecondary education environment of his daughter, he stated, “I think expect[ation] is the wrong word. I think . . . if it works out that way . . . [we would] support her 100% . . . the priority from [Mackenzie] is, is to go to college.” Becky had the same stance toward her son, Andrew.

“[Andrew] talked about wanting to go to college, and . . . from our family standpoint, we would support him in that endeavor if that’s the way he wants to go.”

Lucy and Dawn described their postsecondary education expectations for their secondary-age children as attending a Think College-type experience. For Lucy, her postsecondary education expectations for her son, Riley, were for him to continue to be able to read, write, and do basic math after graduating from high school. Her perception surrounding Think College-type experiences and the education afforded to its students would best suit the academic needs of Riley. This transition for Riley would take place immediately post-high school. However, for Ethan, his transition from high school to a Think College-type experience would take much longer. Dawn stated,

> . . . we do have a program here in [our northeast state] . . . [for] children with intellectual disability, and I can see [Ethan] doing that. But, not right now, meaning in the next five years . . . because I don’t think that he’s ready.

A number of my parent participants did not hold postsecondary education expectations for their secondary-age children. Simply put, this was due to the nature of disability and the level of support needed by each secondary-age child. For example, Daisy stated,

> Um, well, . . . [Daniel] is kind of lower functioning, so . . . I will be happy if [he] can get any kind of job, whether that’s collecting grocery carts, or . . . greeting people at Walmart . . . I don’t really have very high expectations in terms of academics.

Theme #3: Leaving the Nest

“The right to live independently in one’s community of birth or choice is one of the core principles in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 . . . and the Supreme Court’s Olmstead decision” (Ross et al., 2013, p. 338). In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Olmstead decision mandated by the Supreme Court affirming the importance of postsecondary independent living in IDEA (2004), I sought to understand the expectations my parent participants placed on the postsecondary independent living environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. A wide variety of responses were documented, with one theme emerging—*leaving the nest*.

Three of my parent participants, Sharon, Daisy, and Anna, did not hold postsecondary independent living expectations for their secondary-age children. As indicated by them, the level of support need required by their secondary-age children was pervasive. Sharon stated, "[Rylan] will never live independently . . . he'll always be with us, so he will never live independently outside of our home." In addition, Anna stated, ". . . I don't think [Amelia] will ever be able to live on her own. She will need 24/7 supports." Daisy held a parallel outlook toward the postsecondary independent living expectations she placed on her son, Daniel. Furthermore, she disclosed that she and her husband had guardianship of Daniel. ". . . at the moment, [Daniel's] gonna be staying with us. We have guardianship of him already. Um, and he will probably stay living with us until we're too old to take care of him."

Across all other parent participants, postsecondary independent living expectations were established. A variation of responses were recorded, where some of my parent participants only mentioned they expected their secondary-age children to live independently to several of my parent participants providing context as to what that postsecondary independent living expectation encompassed. For example, Becky stated, ". . . I have pretty high expectations at this point in time. I have high hopes that [Andrew will] be able to live, um, independently." In addition, Jeremy stated, "[My expectation for Jacob is to] continue living at the, you know, the [daily living support] home." Jacob, a 20 year old senior with autism spectrum disorder, was placed in a daily living support home due to the challenging behaviors he demonstrated in the home of his family. Through the developmental disabilities services division in their southwest state, Jeremy and his family were granted a mercy waiver, which afforded them a supported living arrangement for Jacob. He will continue living there post-high school.

Other postsecondary independent living expectations detailed by my parent participants included (a) living at home, (b) living with roommates, (c) living with siblings, (d) living in an apartment, (e) living in a group home, (f) adding an apartment onto a preexisting home to live in, (g) living in elderly disabled housing, (h) building a new home with a medical wing to live in, and (i) living in a long-term care facility. For Kathy, the postsecondary independent living expectations she set for her son, John, were embedded in him living in a normalized world (Wolfensberger, 1972).

> . . . [it is] our dream that [John lives independently] and not living with mom and dad forever because we won't live forever. So, he needs to be able to support himself . . . have his family, have his friends, have a support system that isn't dependent on mom and dad . . . [John] needs to be able to live on his own and have a self-fulfilling life . . . it is my fondest hope that he doesn't have to live in a group home. I want him to live in the typical world, but he's gonna need supports doing it.

A report put out by the National Council on Disability (n.d.) indicated in 2009, 469,123 individuals with significant disabilities were receiving services and supports while living in a small number of environments. These environments included (a) nonstate institutions, (b) nursing facilities, (c) small congregate residential settings, (d) state institutions, and (e) their own homes. Historically, the institutionalization of individuals with significant disabilities functioned as a way to congregate, isolate, and separate (Thorn et al., 2009). However, with the deinstitutionalization movement of individuals with significant disabilities to the integration of these individuals into community-based living environments, the current landscape of availability of these community-based living environments remains limited. While many individuals with significant disabilities do not live in institutions, they still express leading institutional lives (National Council on Disability, n.d.).

The limited number of postsecondary independent living options available did not appear to worry my parent participants as many of them provided realistic postsecondary independent living expectations, which always considered the strengths, preferences, interests, and choices of their secondary-age children. For example, Jack stated, " . . . right now, [in Mackenzie's] mind, she doesn't want to have a roommate. She doesn't want to share a living space [after she graduates from high school]." Comparably, Lucy said,

> You know, it's going to be whatever [Riley] wants to do. Um, if [Riley] wanted to go live, you know, in an apartment with someone, great . . . if [Riley], you know, doesn't want to live with me and [wanted] to go live in a group home, I [would definitely] support that. Um, if that's what he wanted to do. If he's sick of mom and wanted to be out on his own and have more independence, [I would support him].

Amanda and Elizabeth spoke about the importance of independence and being away from their secondary-age children, Jude and Hank, respectively. For Amanda and Jude, his independence was dependent on leaving his family home and no longer being exclusively reliant on his parents. Amanda disclosed having control issues and needing to be with Jude at all times. A perceived fear constantly revolved around letting Jude independently explore the outside world. This was holding him back, and Amanda saw the importance of affording her son time away from his parents. This would allow for growth on both their parts.

> . . . I think for our family, [Jude] needs to live in another home somewhere . . . I'm realistic to the idea that he does need to live outside of the house . . . it would be important for his independence and for, for mine and my husband's independence away from him.

Elizabeth, in a playful manner, held a similar viewpoint toward her son, Hank. She stated, "No, listen, I don't even plan to be around forever. [I've] got my own shit I want to do. I am done being a mother. [Hank's like,] oh, one day you'll die. I'm like, no, one day I'll release [you]." By affording Hank the opportunity of spreading his wings and leaving the nest to live independently, Elizabeth was excited for the idea of an empty nest and the next great adventure awaiting her.

Finally, two unexpected postsecondary independent living expectations were made in relation to adding an apartment onto a preexisting home to live in and building a new home with a medical wing to live in. Ellen stated,

> . . . I added onto my house . . . over the garage, [I added a] 1,000 square foot apartment with a full kitchen, sleeping area, [and] full bathroom. It's fully furnished . . . [Andrew] could be in the apartment.

Sarah indicated,

> . . . we're actually thinking about building a new house with a medical wing and hiring live-in people, but to literally have two separate houses, one for [Jaxon] and maybe have, have a roommate that [helps] pay rent. And, then we have a medical team and then my husband and I have our, have our house on the same property.

By thinking outside the box, Ellen and Sarah demonstrated the innovative problem solving and resourcefulness to which many parents must resort (Wilgosh & Scorgie, 2006). to help ensure their secondary-age children gain equity in their postsecondary independent living environments.

I detailed a range of responses relative to parent expectations on the postsecondary independent living environments of their secondary-age children. Although three parent participants did not hold postsecondary independent living expectations for their secondary-age children, the remainder of my parent participants did. Based upon their answers, the expectation for their secondary-age children was for them to live as independently as possible, while also taking into consideration their level of support needs.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was developed to understand if parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs varied across the level of supports needed by their secondary-age children and if so, how? Schalock et al. (2010) differentiated between the terms supports and support needs: (a) supports include resources and strategies to support well-being and improve individual functioning; and

(b) support needs as “a psychological construct referring to the pattern and intensity of supports necessary for a person to participate in activities linked to normative human functioning” (p. 105). Across the three levels of support needs (i.e., limited, extensive, and pervasive), three themes emerged: (a) variant of postsecondary education supports, (b) variant of postsecondary employment supports, and (c) variant of postsecondary independent living supports.

Theme #1: Variant of Postsecondary Education Supports

Theme 1, *variant of postsecondary education supports,* represented the supports voiced by my parent participants for their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs to find success in the postsecondary education environment. A wide and diverse response pool exemplified that expectations my parent participants set varied across the level of supports needed by their secondary-age children in the postsecondary education environment. The two sub-themes emerging from Research Question 1, (a) *educational training for employment success* and (b) *college experience*, denoted the postsecondary education environments my parent participants anticipated their secondary-age children attending. Many of the supports indicated by my parent participants resembled the supports afforded to their secondary-age children by their IEP which in high school.

Limited. My parent participants indicating their secondary-age children as needing a limited level of support detailed peer supports as a necessary and required for their children in a postsecondary education environment. Becky expected her son, Andrew, to need peer supports in the postsecondary education environment. “. . . I think [Andrew’s] going to have to have some peer [supports] that could be somebody who moves in the dorm that could be a peer mentor.” In addition to these peer supports, she mentioned Andrew needing access to adults, which would support him in situations students his own age were incapable of achieving.

> . . . but also some adults . . . and I [know] people going to college are adults, but I mean people who are out of college . . . that he could access, whether it be by phone, whether it be, uh, in person, so that if he has something that he has multiple people that he could ask . . . for help if he's in a particular situation.

In addition, for Nora, she stated Erik would need peer supports during the intermediate period between his high school graduation and postsecondary employment attainment. This is when Erik would receive educational training on the acquisition and/or retention of those skills already learned for the postsecondary employment environment. She was unwavering; after the instruction in this area, Erik would "get some sort of job."

Extensive. Kathy mentioned teacher supports as critical for the success of her son John in his postsecondary education environment. John, an 18 year old junior with intellectual disability, was identified as needing an extensive level of support in most of his environments.

> A teacher that coordinates with him. So, [John goes] there one hour a day . . . or every other day actually, and they work on anything that he needs a little extra help on . . . It has to be that the teachers are willing to participate in his education.

With an increase in attendance and participation in 2- and 4-year colleges, universities, and Think College-type experiences from students with significant disabilities post-high school (Scott, 2019), it seems appropriate a pattern around teacher supports would arise for their secondary-age children indicated as needing an extensive level of support by my parent participants. When teachers at the university-level have increased awareness and knowledge of the characteristics and needs of students with significant disabilities, success can take place (Getzel, 2008).

In addition to teacher supports, and similar across the three levels of support, Kathy mentioned the need of peer supports for her son, John. However, she was specific in the type of peers she would like John to be supported by in his postsecondary education environment. "I'm hoping to find a college that will have, like, peer mentorships and peer support, and it [would] be typical peers that help integrate into this larger school setting." For Kathy, those peer mentors would develop into best friends for John. The reliance of those peer supports by John in his postsecondary education environment mirrored her postsecondary independent living expectations; they were situated in John living in a normalized world (Wolfensberger, 1972).

Across my parent participants and their secondary-age children identified with an extensive level of support needs, other peer supports included helping with course assignments, taking classroom notes, and being available for check-in. Lucy stated, "So, when [Riley] goes off to college . . . he is probably going to need to be able to check-in with someone . . . probably once a day." After extrapolating the supports needed in the postsecondary education environment essential for their secondary-age children, I asked my parent participants how long they anticipated those supports needing to be in place. Similar across responses, Lucy exemplified the perception of many of my parent participants on their secondary-age children indicated as needing an extensive level of support. ". . . I do believe [Riley] is gonna need some level of support for the rest of his life . . . [however], I'm hoping that that level of support lessens over time."

Pervasive. For Amanda and her son, Jude, peer supports were critical for his postsecondary education attainment. Without them, the likelihood of Jude attending a postsecondary education environment was small. Jude, a 17 year old junior with autism spectrum disorder was identified with a level of support need as pervasive, which requires continuous contact and monitoring from day-to-day.

> . . . [Jude] needs, uh, an aid . . . he can't be alone ever. So, he will need constant support . . . Jude's a little unique in that he needs a communication partner and that's like a relationship . . . finding the right person to do that long-term for that kind of education is hard to find.

Similar to those parents of secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs requiring an extensive level of support, Dawn agreed with the fading of supports. However, this would only take place for one aspect in the postsecondary education environment for her son, Ethan. “[Ethan] would be able to navigate the campus once he was, once he was taught where to go. So, I think that, um, one-on-one at the beginning with, um, you know, uh, those, um, supports being pulled back for navigation.” When I asked Dawn about the other supports in place for Ethan in his postsecondary education environment, she stated, “. . . I think that [Ethan will] always need an extensive amount of support.” The response from Sharon approximated the same as Dawn; when I asked Sharon if her son, Rylan, would need an ongoing support system to be successful in his postsecondary education environment, she answered, “Absolutely.”

Big Picture. Across the three level of supports (i.e., limited, extensive, and pervasive) peer supports were addressed by all my parent participants. Peer supports ranged from student peers to adult peers to help the secondary-age children of my parent participants navigate their postsecondary education environments. Adult peers would assume more responsibility in the assistance they provided. Both peer supports and adult supports could be faded across the limited and extensive level of support categories; however, not for the pervasive level of support category. Those supports would need to be ongoing to ensure the postsecondary education attainment of the secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as requiring a pervasive level of support by my parent participants. Interestingly, only teacher supports were mentioned for those secondary-age children with disabilities requiring an extensive level of support. This included those teachers intentionally being a part of their education and helping with coursework.

Theme #2: Variant of Postsecondary Employment Supports

Theme 2, *variant of postsecondary employment supports*, illustrated the supports deemed most important by my parent participants for the successful integration of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs into the postsecondary employment environment. Across my parent participants and the level of support need they indicated for their secondary-age children, a variation of responses occurred.

Limited. A reoccurring support across the postsecondary education environment and the postsecondary employment environment included peer supports. Similar responses across my parent participants of secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as needing limited and extensive level of supports were recorded. For Hank, a 17 year old junior with other health impairment, Elizabeth insisted he would need peer supports for “staying on-task with certain [job-related] things.” Similarly, for her son Erik, Nora stated, “. . . I would say that he . . . does need support . . . I would say he needs, you know, close to either, uh, one-on-one support or, um, you know, ratio one-to-two [support].” Nora indicated the day-to-day supports Erik would need as regularly occurring for assistance in many of the environments he participates.

An additional postsecondary employment environment support surfacing across my parent participants and their secondary-age children requiring a limited level of support need included safety. A common theme in the literature-base highlighted the importance parents of students with significant disabilities place on safety in the work environment (Migliore et al., 2008). A shared perception of parents of students with significant disabilities included the notion sheltered workshop environments were safer in comparison to their integrated employment counterparts; though, this is not necessarily the case. Furthermore, these perceptions may limit the expectations of students with significant disabilities when only provided with one such employment option.

Across the aforementioned parent participants, safety was highlighted; however, they did not limit the scope of their postsecondary employment expectations to segregated work environments. All safety concerns and those supports needed were couched within an integrated employment setting for their secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as needing a limited level of support. For example, Becky was concerned for the potential negative influence of others on her son, Andrew. Andrew was still in the process of understanding the differences between private and public environments; that is, being able to discriminate between what he can do in one environment versus another. To amend this worry, having a co-worker to help Andrew work through those safety concerns would be ideal.

> So, it’s, it’s a little more street smarts, I guess I would say, um, that having somebody near [Andrew] initially to say, here’s what we do in those situations, um, might be helpful. And, again, when he first starts to work, having somebody closer to him versus just accessible is going to be imperative.

Extensive. Similar to those parent participants of secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as requiring a limited level of support, similar responses occurred for those parent participants of secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as requiring an extensive level of support in relation to peer supports in the postsecondary employment environment. For John, an 18 year old junior indicated as needing an extensive level of support, Kathy stated he would “. . . need someone with him a lot to help him learn the job [and] learn what his expectations are, and the goals are.”

Across my parent participants of secondary-age children with limited and extensive level of support needs, all agreed peer supports could ultimately fade over time; however, this was dependent on the level of support needs required by their secondary-age children. For example, Kathy stated, “ . . . as time goes on, [John] will need less and less immediate support.” When I asked her to elaborate on this, Kathy said,

> [John] will always need someone he can go to or someone to oversee [to] make sure he's where he's supposed to be and that sort of thing . . . so, he's 18 [years old] and . . . everything he's learned, he's learn[ed] at a slower pace. So, I feel by the time he's 30 [years old], he's probably going to be really, uh, employment savvy, ready to work full-time, ready to be responsible, ready because we expect it. So, um, I just feel like he's going to need more help at first, but then as time progresses, he'll need less support as, you know, as he gets more comfortable with what he's doing.

Ultimately, this is a goal for many individuals with significant disabilities and their service providers in the postsecondary employment environment—the fading of contrived supports to natural supports. For Jacob, Jeremy relayed this scenario as ideal. "[At first, the job coach would] teach him the job and . . . figure out [the best] way to accommodate [Jacob. From there, the job coach could leave and] a coworker [or] colleague [could] prompt him." With a paucity of long-term public funding to help support students with significant disabilities post-high school in the postsecondary employment environment, establishing job-related supports such as natural support agents is critical (Lee & Carter, 2012). For this to transpire, Hagner and Cooney (2005) suggested a three-tiered approach: (1) coworker support (i.e., natural support), (2) supervisor support (i.e., natural support), and (3) vocational specialist support (i.e., service support). By focusing on the natural supports listed above, the secondary-age children of my parent participants may have improved chances for longevity at their place of employment.

Pervasive. However, for the secondary-age children of Amanda and Audrey, natural supports would not suffice. Jude, a 17 year old junior with autism spectrum disorder and Sam, a 16 year old sophomore with multiple disabilities, were identified as needing a pervasive level of support across the environments they participate. This included frequent support, generally in all settings, and with continuous contact and monitoring. For example, Amanda stated,

> Again, if I, you know, looking at this from my perspective today, it is a person that's not a colleague because, um, he still needs physical, you know, he might need help in the bathroom . . . a colleague won't do that. Um, you know, he might need help eating. A

> colleague wouldn't do that. So, I still see that as an aid kind of situation. Um, so right now, that's what it looks like.

For Sarah and her son Jaxon, safety was important because of his diagnosis of multiple disabilities, which exacerbated a variety of health problems for him. This included significant seizures; which were variable and adversely impacted his overall quality of life. Due to those medical reasons, a searing question haunted her and her family—how does safety play a role in the postsecondary employment environment for Jaxon?

> . . . [Jaxon] needs shots within five minutes of the onset of the seizure . . . I'm pretty sure a CNA can do it, it can be delegated from a nurse to a CNA . . . He will need a qualified person who has his medical, has a medical understanding of what needs to happen within a close proximity.

Big Picture. Similar to the postsecondary education environment, my parent participants anticipated their secondary-age children needing peer supports in their postsecondary employment environments. I documented this across the limited and extensive level of support categories. These peer supports could ultimately fade over time into natural supports for those secondary-age children; however, this was dependent on the level of need by each of them. For my parent participants and their secondary-age children indicated as needing a pervasive level of support, contrived supports (i.e., paid support staff) would always need to be in place within the postsecondary employment environment. No fading of these supports could happen.

Safety was an additional support voiced by my parent participants, and it differed across the three level of support categories (i.e., limited, extensive, and pervasive). For those secondary-age children indicated as requiring a limited level of support, safety supports revolved around environmental modifications. However, for those secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as needing a pervasive level of support, safety supports were directly related to those medical decisions that might arise when in the postsecondary employment environment. Safety supports were not mentioned by my parent participants in the extensive level of support category.

Unique Postsecondary Employment Supports. Many other supports came to light, which were categorized under a general code of employment supports. Unlike the postsecondary employment environment supports listed above, which formed common patterns across my parent participants, employment supports with provisions unique to each secondary-age child did not produce any patterns but were still important to highlight. Like scaffolding on the side of a building as it is being constructed, additional scaffolding is needed where there is less structure or building; this is analogous to disability—as the level of support need increases (i.e., less structure or building), so do the supports to promote well-being and ameliorate individual functioning (i.e., additional scaffolding; Schalock et al., 2010).

A set of simple supports could be put in place for Hank and Erik to garner postsecondary employment success, which were identified as having a level of support need as limited. For Hank, Elizabeth stated, ". . . he will need help with sort of the HR stuff. Like, if there's benefits . . . and understanding his paycheck and understanding how you clock-in and clock-out and things like that." For Nora, her son Erik would benefit from someone he could ask questions about the employment environment when necessary. With this assistance, Erick could be sure he was correctly initiating and accomplishing his job-related tasks. When moving up the level of support need to extensive, Jack declared the colleagues or customers Mackenzie would work amongst would need to be cognizant of her processing time.

> Well, the thing with her disability is she needs time to process things. So, if you give her a set of instructions, generally she needs to process those instructions . . . like, if somebody's talking to [Mackenzie] and they don't know anything about her and they ask her a question, generally she will not answer that question in a timely manner . . . She has to really take her time [to] process . . . what words she's hearing.

Finally, for those secondary-age children identified with a level of support need as pervasive, having a job would be dependent on the proactive approach of correctly identifying and establishing those supports with the onset of hire. Without them, the likelihood of gainful employment would not happen. For example, Daniel, the son of Daisy, was an 18 year old senior with autism spectrum disorder. A unique characteristic associated with autism spectrum disorder is the aversive response when the need requires one to adapt to modifications in day-to-day routines (Rodger & Umaibalan, 2011).

> . . . [Daniel] does really well with routine. Uh, if it's the same thing every single day and you show him once or twice how to do something, not tell him but show him, he can do what you ask him to do.

Similarly, Jaxon, the son of Sarah, was an 18 year old in the 18-21 school-affiliated transition program at his school. He was diagnosed with multiple disabilities. In addition, Sarah indicated his level of support need as pervasive. "He'll need one-on-one support . . . because he's deaf-blind, he needs someone who can interpret." Without an interpreter in place to meet the needs of Jaxon, Sara believed the likelihood of him participating in any postsecondary employment environment was nonexistent.

Theme #3: Variant of Postsecondary Independent Living Supports

The final theme nested under Research Question 2, *variant of postsecondary independent living supports*, designated the supports necessary for the secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs of my parent participants to live as independently as possible post-high school. Although common patterns of postsecondary independent living environment supports arose, they were dependent on the level of support need indicated for each secondary-age child (i.e., limited, extensive, and pervasive).

Limited. A shared support across my parent participants for their secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as requiring a limited level of support need was daily living supports. For Elizabeth,

> [Hank] will always have to live in some sort of supported setting. Now, that doesn't mean a group home. That doesn't mean with his mother. Maybe he'll live with a bunch of roommates, or he lives with his sister, or he lives in an apartment. We have some monitoring there, right?

When I asked Elizabeth to clarify her question, she answered,

> One of the things that I said about, you know, [Hank] living on his own by monitoring [through] technology gives parents such a great sense of relief. So, [Hank] can stay at home by himself right now because my house has got cameras everywhere and [they] have speakers on them. So, if [Hank] puts a corn dog in the microwave for 16 minutes, I can go and say go turn it off. We can see who can open the door. So, technology really helps, but that technology has to be accessible and affordable for all parents.

The 21st century has seen the exponential rise of technology to assist individuals with significant disabilities in their day-to-day lives (Braddock et al., 2004). However, with this rise also comes an increase in cost for the very technologies Elizabeth insisted as needing to be "accessible and affordable for all parents" and their secondary-age children post-high school. Nevertheless, barriers exist for this population: (a) many of these individuals with significant disabilities live on a threshold of poverty (Prince et al., 2018) and (b) inadequate private insurance and Medicaid/Medicare policies related to coverage and payment (Braddock et al., 2004).

Becky had similar postsecondary independent living environment support expectations for her son, Andrew. She expected Andrew to live independently with a roommate with additional supports from her family or a caregiver. However, like Elizabeth, this would not be full-time; these daily living supports would become available as situations arose for Andrew. "Like, somebody wouldn't have to be there full-time, but just that maybe somebody helps him get, you know, uh, taking care of [himself], or . . . transportation."

In addition to daily living supports, I documented safety supports across these parent participants. For instance, having viable options of technology for security purposes was imperative for Elizabeth. She was firm in making sure Hank would be safe in his postsecondary independent living environment.

> [We] would want some sort of security on [Hank's] so that not everybody can come in and out. So, for example, we put thumb print locks on all of our house so that [Hank] doesn't have to use a key. Um, but that kind of level of technology where he can secure his setting.

Extensive. For the secondary-age children indicated as needing an extensive level of support of my parent participants, postsecondary independent living environment supports were focused on a higher level of in-home care as compared to those secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as needing a limited level of support. For Isaac, Ellen expected him to need moderate supports across his postsecondary independent living environment. "I don't see [Isaac] being able to prepare a meal out of like something that is microwaveable." Again, this was similar to Elizabeth and her son Hank. He would need support with cooking. "I mean, if you leave it to [Hank], he's not going to eat well. So, I would definitely want to be all up in his business there." Although Elizabeth mentioned she would shoulder this support, it was different for Ellen. For these supports, Ellen said, "I think someone can live with [Isaac to] oversee [his day-to-day needs]." When I asked her who this person could be, she responded, ". . . [a] family member, or maybe a house mother, or, you know, house supervisor."

In addition to those daily living supports, I document safety supports for my parent participants' secondary-age children indicated as needing an extensive level of support. These included (a) assistance in making medical decisions, (b) knowing who to contact when problems arise in your home (e.g., plumbing issues), (c) having a plan in place if something were to happen to one of my parent participants (e.g., death), and (d) utilizing an alternative augmentative communication device to express safety concerns.

Pervasive. Similar to the postsecondary independent daily living supports required for secondary-age children indicated as needing an extensive level of support, for those indicated as needing a pervasive level of support, those supports intensified to supporting the secondary-age child over their lifespan. This went from family and friend support to paid staff support. For example, Sarah, who was interested in building a new house with a medical wing for her son, Jaxon, stated she anticipated “maybe [having] a renter with him so that there’s, he has somebody else besides us and have that 24 hour care, so that we can still retire and have fun, but make sure he’s taken care of.” This paralleled the response from Audrey about her son, Sam.

> Oh, [Sam] would need like the high need. He would need 24 hour people on staff in order to make sure, um, he is a safety risk, he will lock [you] out of doors. Um, you know, so he definitely needs that 24 hour supervision.

In addition, these parents included the necessity of safety supports (e.g., medical supports) for their secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as needing a pervasive level of support. Furthermore, they were worried about the maltreatment of their secondary-age children from the nondisabled population. Safety supports would be necessary to counter this maltreatment. For example, Dawn stated,

> So, um, safety. Um, I think that, uh, [Ethan], um, does not understand that there are mean people out there. Um, so if somebody was to knock on the door, he would open it up and if they said, you know, I’m here to look at your gas meter, he would let them in, um, because they looked like nice people. Um, if somebody was to come by, like a neighbor, and ask him if he has some money to borrow from him because they couldn’t make it until the end [of the week], he would give that to them. Um, um, those types of things . . . is just scares me because of that safety. He just doesn’t know that there [is] mean people. He may hear it. [We] go over it a lot in social stories, but he doesn’t, it doesn’t really connect with him. He just can’t imagine somebody being mean.

Amanda was also uneasy about the treatment of her son Jude from others in his postsecondary independent living environment. ". . . I worry about the treatment that he could receive from someone, um, in these group homes. Safety. I'm very concerned about safety." The fears of Dawn and Amanda are valid; the maltreatment of individuals with significant disabilities has been documented (Horner-Johnson & Drum, 2006). When compared to individuals without disabilities, maltreatment is higher for individuals with significant disabilities. In addition, the prevalence rate is higher for those individuals with significant disabilities across disability categories.

Big Picture. Daily living supports were recorded across the three level of support needs (i.e., limited, extensive, and pervasive). As level of support needs increased, so too did those daily living supports. For example, the secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs indicated as needing a limited level of support by my parent participants, their daily living supports would come from their families in the postsecondary independent living environment. However, for those secondary-age children under the pervasive level of support category, paid support staff would be required for their postsecondary independent living attainment.

In addition to daily living supports, I documented safety supports. Again, as the level of support need increased for the secondary-age children of my parent participants, safety supports increased. For those secondary-age children with disabilities indicated as needing a limited level of support, the utilization of technology to monitor their safety in their postsecondary independent living environment was important to my parent participants. However, for those secondary-age children under the pervasive level of support category, safety supports would need to be put in place to ensure medical decisions were made and that maltreatment from the nondisabled population was not occurring.

Research Question 3

I designed Research Question 3 to gain a wholistic understanding as to how the postsecondary expectations of my parent participants were shaped and influenced. Past research has suggested parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs are influenced by their past experiences (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Masino & Hodapp, 1996; Newman, 2005). However, these studies produced a one-dimensional understanding of this phenomenon. For instance, Masino and Hodapp (1996) only considered parents participation in a college setting as influencing the expectations they placed on their secondary-age children for attending postsecondary education. Furthermore, Kraemer and Blacher (2001) and Newman (2005) only considered the severity of disability as directly influencing parent postsecondary expectations. Although these are important to consider, I theorize many more factors have the impact of shaping and influencing parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children. It is important to note, across my parent participants, a range of positive and negative factors were recorded, which shaped and influenced the postsecondary expectations they placed on their secondary-age children. A number of themes emerged: (a) postsecondary expectations shaped by my secondary-age child, (b) postsecondary expectations shaped by outside forces, and (c) postsecondary expectations shaped by in-school interactions.

Theme #1: Postsecondary Expectations Shaped by My Secondary-Age Child

Theme 1, *postsecondary expectations shaped by my secondary-age child*, indicated the influence secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs had on the postsecondary expectations set forth by their parents. Many of the postsecondary expectations my parent participants held were positively influenced when their secondary-age children excelled in areas they thought not possible. These occurrences of achievement increased their expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children. It is important to note, this can be taxing for students with significant disabilities; oftentimes a presumption of competence is only adhered to after some sort of success takes place. This encompasses both academics and functional skills. For example, Kathy said,

> . . . sometimes my level of expectation, [John] can prove me very wrong . . . sometimes I say [John] can't do that. There was no way [John] could do that . . . for example, when he started . . . algebra, and the teacher said no, he's [in] inclusion. This is an inclusion program. I want him in algebra. And, I'm like, okay, whatever you say, I'm for it . . . but I just don't know that he will get algebra. Turns out . . . [John] understood the processes and he understood how to get the answers and he understood how to work a computer to find how to get the answers. So, there was so much about that algebra that I thought he would never get that he prove[d] to me 100% I was, you're wrong mom, I can do this.

Daisy responded similarly. ". . . [Daniel] surprises us all the time . . . he'll randomly show up with skills . . . I think I expect less of him, then he surprises me and my expectations kind of change, too." When I asked Daisy if she could provide an example when Daniel surprised her, she answered, ". . . I've seen him learn how to cook on his own. He surprised us one morning by making breakfast . . . he'd be[en] watching me. I didn't know he [had] been watching that." Across my parent participants, these cases where their secondary-age children arose to the challenges of everyday life and went beyond the initial expectations my parent participants had set for them catalyzed affording their secondary-age children to shoulder their own future aspirations; thus, letting them take the lead of their lives, while my parent participants followed beside them. Kathy exemplified this.

> I want to try to be as open as I can to any possibility of what [John's] dreams could be. And, I'll go out and find them for him. If, you know, if he says I want to be a, you know, a rocket launcher person, then I'll go figure out a way to at least let him intern or something because that's [why] I've been put on this Earth[, to] help him find his dream.

Relatedly, Jack had the same response about the postsecondary employment outcomes for his daughter, Mackenzie. ". . . so, [Mackenzie] knows we're just kind of following her lead and so just kind of see[ing] how it plays out." Many of my parent participants affirmed letting their secondary-age children take the lead on the goals they set for themselves in relation to the postsecondary environments authorized by IDEA (2004). These aspirations were communicated by their secondary-age children through a multitude of means: (a) verbalizing aspirations, (b) showing through example, and (c) utilizing an alternative augmentative communication device to communicate future aspirations. When I posed the question, what if the postsecondary goals of their secondary-age children were not being met, many of my parent participants responded with one stipulation—if goals were not being met, they would need to pull back and regroup. This pulling back and regrouping would be imperative for the success of their secondary-age children post-high school.

Ethan, the son of Dawn, was a 20 year old in the 18-21 school-affiliated transition program at his school. His level of support need was indicated as pervasive. Even with his significant metabolic disorder, which leaves him tired after just working "1.5 hours twice a week," that does not get in the way of his determination for the future. ". . . [Ethan] is highly motivated . . . he drives himself to want to do something and be productive . . . [that] holds our expectations of that . . . we're trying to be supportive of it." Finally, when I asked Dawn why it was important to follow the postsecondary aspirations of her son, Ethan, she responded, " . . . it's about his life and not about mine."

Although a number of positive influences on the expectations set forth by my parent participants were shaped by their secondary-age children, so too was a negative influence—the disability of their secondary-age children restricted the postsecondary expectations they established. This pattern was recognized across my parent participants. With these responses, I thought it important to highlight the responses of my parent participants who indicated not having any expectations across the postsecondary environments, including (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living (IDEA, 2004). For Sharon and Anna, employment would not be an option for their secondary-age children, Rylan and Amelia, respectively. Sharon stated, ". . . with [Rylan's] level of disability . . . the family will become totally responsible for [him] . . . he's not gonna get a job." Similarly, Anna said, "Developmentally, [Amelia] is seven years old. Would you make a seven year old work?" Indicated with a pervasive level of support need by both their parents, the disability of Rylan and Amelia restricted any expectations their parents placed on them related to the postsecondary employment environment, so much so that no postsecondary employment expectations were developed.

Similar responses for expectations related to the postsecondary education environment occurred. For example, the disability of Daniel had a direct impact on the postsecondary education expectations his mother, Daisy, set for him. When I probed Daisy how the disability of her son impacted her expectations, she responded, "Oh, he hasn't been very successful so far . . . he also didn't score very high on the IQ test recently." When I asked her to unpack those characteristics related to the disability of her son, which restricted her postsecondary education expectations, she answered,

> . . . it just became obvious as he got older that he can't focus. Um, he has a hard time standing still. His communication is a real big problem. He doesn't understand directions. Um, but I, I would say that probably the biggest, biggest reason why I think he, he can't really do a lot of academics is because he, he can't seem to attend at the same thing other people can, like other people will be looking at a math problem, and he'll be looking at the ceiling fan.

In addition to the response from Daisy, Sarah shared an analogous response.

> So, [Jaxon] has a very rare condition. He has, um, so he's, he's under multiple [disabilities] because he's deaf-blind, and he has a significant health condition that impacts his ability to live. So, he has breathing [issues]. He has, um, severe seizures. He has cyclical vomiting because the seizures, um, aren't your typical seizure. They set off a, um, it's a seizure of the GI track, which makes him vomit violently and so much so that, he vomits up blood. So, depending on his, his ability level [any] given day, he could go out and do a job. But, I will tell you this school year has been a disaster. He has been having seizures every four days. We get him to school, he has a seizure within 30 minutes of getting in the door, can't even get to a job site. He has seizures on the bus, can't even get to the place and ends up coming home and needing just several days to recover . . . [Jaxon’s] health condition has restricted everything.

Finally, for the postsecondary independent living environment, Sharon, Daisy, and Anna did not hold any postsecondary expectations for their secondary-age children. These responses ranged from being completely dependent on someone for all basic needs to the safety and dangers of living independently with a pervasive level of support need. Anna mentioned, “Um, well, I mean [Amelia], it’s a safety [and danger thing] . . . you wouldn’t leave a seven year old by herself, [would you]?” Across the postsecondary environments, the responses I documented from Anna were directly related to the current level of functioning (i.e., a seven year old) of her daughter, Amelia. This resembled the responses from Sharon and Daisy. Many individuals with significant disabilities face barriers related to their disability and the postsecondary opportunities afforded to them. Because disability is a complex phenomenon and no longer considered an inherent quality; rather; an interaction between individual and their environment, a reasonable approach would be to look at ways to modify the environment, which could ultimately accommodate the needs the secondary-age children with pervasive levels of support need of my parent participants, leading them toward postsecondary goal attainment (Batavia & Schriner, 2001).

Theme #2: Postsecondary Expectations Shaped by Outside Forces

Theme 2, *postsecondary environments shaped by outside forces*, illustrated those community-based entities influencing the expectations my parent participants placed on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. A myriad of positive and negative influences were recorded. Positive influences included parents uniting through disability organizations to understand the unique needs of their secondary-age children, and employment in the world of disability broadens one’s expectations. Negative influences included societal restraints and medical field expectations.

While still in utero, many of my parent participants received news their babies would be born with significant disabilities. This time of confusion produced feelings of anxiety, shame, and uncertainty for my parent participants, specifically around what the future would hold for them and their children. Instead of receiving reassurance from their doctors, many doctors put the blame on my parent participants. For example, when Kathy found out her son, John, would be born with Down syndrome, the doctor told her, “It’s all your fault.” Similar responses from doctors across my parent participants included (a) your son will never have an intelligence quotient (IQ) level high enough to hold competitive employment, (b) your son will never walk, and (c) he is going to have problems his entire life, so the best thing to do is to terminate your pregnancy. When Audrey heard this, she responded with resolute authority, “. . . I knew that if I was going to have [Sam] . . . I would have to speak [up] for [him].” Although my parent participants faced adversity, they found their strength and persevered even when medical doctors told them to do otherwise. Had they listened, a very different outcome may have come to fruition for these secondary-age children.

As their children aged, many of the expectations my parent participants placed on them relative to the postsecondary environments have been suppressed due societal restraints. Simply put, my parent participants expressed the limited number of postsecondary options for their secondary-age children in their communities, which confined their postsecondary expectations.

Lucy stated, “You know, one program is not going to be suitable for all students.” Dawn voiced similar concerns. “. . . I guess my only thing would be the lack of, um, opportunities. There’s not many opportunities. It’s either this or nothing. And, that is very frustrating for us.”

Sharon, who did not hold any postsecondary employment expectations for her son, Rylan, said, “There’s nothing available for severe and profound [children]. . . I just know that there, there isn’t, not one place that would hire [Rylan] with the severity of his disabilities.” When I asked her if she had gone out into the community to explore potential options, she replied, yes. “. . . in our community, there is not, uh, any, any possible options [for Rylan] . . . I have not seen anyone . . . willing to hire anyone with [his type of] support needs.”

While speaking with Sharon, I heard distress in her tone. In the field of positive psychology, positive and negative emotions have been extensively researched, detailing the impact they have on individuals. “Where negative emotions narrow the focus to facilitate immediate action” (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008, p. 139), positive emotions broaden the focus and support immediate action. Therefore, I was interested in how those societal restraints made Sharon feel, which may provide a glimpse into the “narrow” postsecondary employment expectations she set for Rylan.

> . . . I just think . . . our society, even as, as a society we're, we're lacking in, um, providing anything available for, I mean, sometimes it kind of hurts your feelings. It's like, because he's a person, too. And, I would like for him to be treated that way, just like anyone else where, um, I, I know that he will not go to college and he doesn't, he will never have a, you know, certain job opportunities. But like you said, even as a volunteer, just for someone to say, oh yeah, here bring him in for a couple hours. Uh, we'd love to work with him and have him help us. And, you know, I, it just, um, it is, it's just heartbreaking that, um, it's just almost like when they finish school, okay, that's it. Now they can just sit at home and they're just forgotten. And it's just, um, and I, and I don't, I don't think it's done intentionally or maliciously. I just think it's uneducated, we need to be more educated in . . . severe disabilities . . . we have a long ways to go [for] kids with severe and profound disabilities.

Across my parent participants, a number of emotions were voiced: (a) discouragement, (b) frustration, and (c) loss of hope. These emotions were a direct response to the limitations society placed on the secondary-age children of my parent participants. As parents began navigating the world, it would seem the pressures of society influenced and produced limiting postsecondary expectations. However, as Kathy stated, "We allow the society around us to place expectations and lower them . . . I'm like, no, stop, stop limiting [our children] . . . stop changing [their] expectations to fit yours." In direct opposition to the expectations set forth by their medical doctors and the limitations of society, my parent participants took it upon themselves to unite together through disability organizations to understand the unique needs of their secondary-age children; thus, providing them a springboard to raise the postsecondary expectations they placed on them.

Being a member of or taking part in a disability organization provided my parent participants with the information they needed to raise the postsecondary expectations they set for their secondary-age children. With these learning environments came a plethora of information relative to the world of disability. When I asked Elizabeth the impetus for joining a disability organization, she stated,

> . . . so, when [Hank] was in the hospital as a newborn, there was a little girl next to him named, [Molly]. [Molly] had a heart condition, also. She was about a year older than [Hank], and [Molly's] mother had taken Partners in Policymaking, and [Molly's] mother was not going to get off my ass until I went and did it.

This response paralleled many of my parent participants—members of the disability community and disability organizations reached out to my parent participants early on in the diagnosis of their secondary-age children to offer help, provide education, and reinforce high expectations. For Kathy, being a part of a disability organization helped her find her voice for her son, John. In addition, it provided a moment of clarity for Elizabeth. "And, there was a very, very painful moment where I realized the biggest disability in my kid's life was me . . . I was holding [Hank] back."

Although the conversations held within the walls of these organizations can be quite revealing, where many of my parent participants felt exposed, the intention was to work collectively to do what was best for their secondary-age children. As indicated by my parent participants, it was a safe place to learn and grow. Disability organizations provide an invaluable amount of education. This education includes (a) learning to advocate on behalf of your child, (b) information on the developmental disabilities services divisions across the country, (c) social security income, (d) secondary transition programs, (e) inclusion, (f) how to help your child acquire academic skills, (g) natural supports vs. contrived supports, and (h) disability policy, and much more. When I asked my parent participants the most important educational takeaway from these disability organizations, a unanimous "parents educating parents" was heard. Daisy stated,

> Um, well, it was really nice because we, we actually had some more experienced parents in our group that would occasionally come, and I could hear from their experience what they had been through and what had happened and how some of their children were able to overcome different obstacles and, and, you know, that, that gave me hope that, that I shouldn't just give up on [Daniel]. That, you know, even with obstacles, there's ways of doing things.

The parent-to-parent educational sessions provided to my parent participants offered them a glimpse of the future—the postsecondary environment possibilities for their secondary-age children. For Elizabeth, it was important that people said to her to expect more of her son, Hank. Jack indicated, ". . . it opened my eyes and my wife's eyes to the possibilities." For Dawn, she assumed two roles in her disability organization—she was both the student and the teacher.

> I think, first of all, it justified that I was not going in the wrong direction because I was always worried that I was being unrealistic and expecting too many high expectations. Um, and so it definitely justified that I was on the right track. And second of all, I was able to share with other families what I had been through and how, um, they needed to raise their expectations. And, it's still a fight that I think I have with other families. Um,

> and I'm determined to change their minds as well . . . we need to have high expectations for our kids no matter what disability level they're at. Um, and I'm always learning. It's, um, every day I think I learned something new.

Elizabeth had always insisted that Hank be included in the general education environment. When I asked her who influenced this expectation for her, she replied, ". . . I would not have gotten there by myself, and I certainly would not have gotten there if my only educators were teachers." I asked her to elaborate on this.

> It frustrates me that we innately believe that a veteran wants to be trained by a veteran, right? [A] Police officer by a police officer. A nurse by a nurse. A parent wants to be trained by a parent. I don't want to be trained by a mother who has had a child that's not ever had one medical hurdle. I want to be trained by somebody else whose down in this trench with me. But, we will not afford parents really that privilege. We say that the people who have to train parents are pediatricians and child psych experts and teachers, and they are not the ones who are living with that child [365] days out of the year.

With the education afforded to my parent participants by being members of or taking part in disability organizations, this led many of them to assume employment in the world disability. Employment in the disability world fostered a broadening effect on the postsecondary expectations they set for their secondary-age children—their postsecondary expectations widened and comprised more possibilities. These jobs included (a) working for a state developmental disabilities council, (b) working for a university health sciences center to assist families raising children with disabilities, (c) supporting in pioneering the first Think College-type college experience to their state, (d) working as a special education teacher, (e) working for a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities as a family supports specialist, (f) returning to school to become an occupational therapy assistant, (g) working as a transition specialist for an inner city public school district, (h) working as a paraprofessional in a special education classroom, and (i) returning to school to attain a doctorate in special education and becoming a director of special education for a public school system. The capacity in which my parent participants were employed afforded them with a means of looking outside the box in relation to the everyday normal postsecondary expectations many hold for their secondary-age children. Their employment provided them with a glimpse of innovative ways for supporting their secondary-age children postsecondary; thus, positively influencing and increasing the postsecondary expectations they set for them.

Theme #3: Postsecondary Expectations Shaped by In-School Interactions

The final theme emerging under Research Question 3, *postsecondary expectations shaped by in-school interactions*, represented those damaging in-school exchanges, which moderated the postsecondary expectations my parent participants placed on their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. For many of my parent participants, teachers of their secondary-age children held negative in-school predetermined ideology. This was based on the disability of their secondary-age children or the assessment scores (i.e., IQ) produced by their secondary-age children. With these ideologies, many of their secondary-age children were bound by restrictive actions and perceptions; thus, limiting the participation in more inclusive environments and negatively influencing many of the postsecondary expectations my parent participants set forth. Across my parent participants, their secondary-age children (a) were placed in self-contained classrooms; (b) rarely received occasions to participate in the general education environment and/or with the general education curriculum; and (c) suffered deficit-based thinking from their teachers (i.e., general education and special education), which barred them from acquiring the skills necessary for postsecondary success. Kathy stated,

> . . . in [John’s] junior high year, they kept wanting to put him in a self-contained classroom. And, then when I met with the high school [and] because of his diagnosis, [they] immediately said, well, he’ll go in the life skills program. And, I’m like, you haven’t even met him. All you . . . know is he has Down syndrome. You don’t know if he [can] read, you know, at a high school level.

Similar to Kathy, Ethan, the son of Dawn, was limited due to his IQ score.

> . . . in those reports, it always said that [with his] IQ level . . .he would never be able to hold competitive employment. And, so I think that has always been key. It's actually been written into [his] IEP when [Ethan was] in high school. Um, and I was very angry about that because it was almost like they were automatically limiting him because of his IQ. Um, and I felt that was wrong because he has so much more to offer.

A surprising limitation arose out of my conversation with one of my parent participants, Amanda. Her son, Jude, a 17 year old junior with autism spectrum disorder, was indicated as requiring a pervasive level of support need. He was completely mainstreamed and supported within the general education environment by his general education teachers. One would assume his education would be exemplary, but like his counterparts in the special education environment, the general education teachers limited his potential.

> . . . we're very unique . . . because [Jude] is mainstreamed so he, he is in a general education program, and the general educators aren't special educators. And, so there is a lack of education there about the kids, and I think a lot of general educators just assume special ed[ucation] kids can't do what the gen[eral] ed[ucation] kids can do. I just think that's a very common thought process. And, so I think there's a lot of that plus . . . I think a lot of people have this same assumption when they see [Jude]. He's very [impacted] by his autism. And, so you make judgments based on the things he does and how he looks and it's until you can sit and really get him to regulate and type where you can see a different side of him. So, by appearances I think there's, there's an assumption that he can't do it.

A lack of education was a common response when I asked my parent participants what they perceived as the impetus for these negative in-school predetermined ideologies of their secondary-age children. Many of my parent participants expressed that general education teachers and special education teachers did not know how to educate their secondary-age children in the public school system or prepare them for postsecondary life. For those general education teachers, Elizabeth stated,

> . . . I feel like teachers who are not going in [the] special education track are somehow absolved of learning about students with disabilities, which sets up a horrible framework,

> right? We say IDEA, we say least restrictive [environment] and all that, but then we don't put teachers through that prepared to deal with students with disabilities.

On average, preservice general education teachers (i.e., those in the university setting) take 1.5 courses focused on students with disabilities as compared to their preservice special education teacher counterparts who take, on average, 11 courses dedicated to students with disabilities (Mader, 2017). Furthermore, the classes preservice general education teachers do take do not afford them the necessary skills to differentiate based on individual needs. With an influx of students with significant disabilities gaining access to and participating in the general education environment (U.S. Department of Education, 2020)—a high expectation in its own right—a need arises for general education teachers to be prepared to educate all students. In addition, with this need comes the importance of learning how to set high expectations for students with significant disabilities that align with their parents, or, in some cases, exceed the expectations the parents they serve set forth for their secondary-age children.

My parent participants voiced concern that the public school systems and special education teachers serving their secondary-age children were lacking in the necessary knowledge to educate their children or to inform them of post-high school options available to them and their secondary-age children. Sharon stated, "They need to be more educated on what's available and how to help parents with severe and profound children." Based on the responses of my parent participants, those public school systems and special education teachers severely lacked knowledge in this critical area.

When I questioned my parent participants what this education and information would entail, they responded with (a) being abreast of innovative disability supports to foster inclusion and independence, (b) being forthcoming about the rights of parents as prescribed by IDEA (2004), (c) working with parents to determine the best course of action as to best prepare their secondary-age children for postsecondary life, (d) doing what is most appropriate for their secondary-age children instead of what is most convenient for the public school system or special education teacher, (e) discontinuing the cookie cutter-type special education programming many public school systems adhere to, and (f) to always presume competence of their secondary-age children. When I asked my parent participants what this boiled down to, many of them believed it to be a lack of education and low expectations.

The low expectations my parent participants were confronted with by the general education teachers and special education teachers of their secondary-age children produced secondary effects; those low expectations had profound impact on many of my parent participants own postsecondary expectations they set for their secondary-age children. For instance, Kathy was told the expectations she held for her son, John, were too high—". . . one of the teachers told me that my expectation for him to go to college . . . was too high. My expectations were too high." In addition, Elizabeth stated the special education teachers who teach her son, Hank, were holding him back. ". . . I found that some of my biggest challenges have been getting the special education teacher to let [Hank] try more, do more and all that stuff." When I asked her what she thought formed this approach, she answered, "I think it's we teach people that children with disabilities are fragile and have to be protected."

Many of the low expectations my parent participants described were in relation to the general education teachers and special education teachers of their secondary-age children only focusing on day-to-day in-classroom academic instruction (i.e., preparing for the end-of-year state assessment) instead of thinking long-term and preparing them for post-high school life. Jack stated, ". . . they just wanted to get [Mackenzie] through high school. You know, let's just get her to graduation and then, you know, [we can] wipe our hands clean [of her]." Similarly, Kristin stated, ". . . their expectation is to get [Ezra] through high school, give him the required credits and then they don't care what happens to him after high school." This prompted a discussion about the transition planning process taking place in the public school systems of the secondary-age children of my parent participants.

For Sharon and her son, Rylan, the secondary transition planning process caused tension between her and the educational stakeholders that were part of the IEP team. Throughout the high school tenure of Rylan, Sharon continually requested secondary transition services to be implemented to prepare Rylan for postsecondary life. However, the IEP team said no and directed her to reach out to the vocational rehabilitation services in her state. The IEP team never spoke to Sharon about postsecondary employment options for Rylan. As such, Sharon did not have postsecondary expectations for Rylan in this area. This is comparable to Daisy and her son, Daniel. No dialogue took place in relation to the transition services Daniel was participating in to prepare him for life post-high school. His school referred him and his mother to the vocational rehabilitation services in his state, and his school solely relied on that agency to help him navigate his postsecondary life.

For those secondary-age children receiving transition services corresponding with their IEPs, those services (a) did not match the voiced concerns of my parent participants, or (b) were not being implemented. Anna disclosed worries about the postsecondary independent living environment for her daughter, Amelia. Although Anna did not expect her daughter to live on her own, as she will need "24/7 supports," she did expect Amelia to achieve simple self-care milestones. This instruction was not taking place in her classroom environment.

> . . . [Amelia's] school [is] working on . . . her folding washcloths . . . [I need Amelia to] learn how to brush [her] hair, to wipe her face, or, you know, take a shower. Um, I would get more benefit out of that than like, you know, sorting widgets or folding a washcloth.

Although a secondary transition plan was in place for Ezra, Kristin communicated to me that it was not being implemented.

> . . . one of my major concerns and major, major disappointments that I hope this study will illuminate is that I don't feel that [Ezra’s high school or] anyone that was associated with the development of his IEP or his transition services actually worked on his transition. I feel like they did the required paperwork and transition was just simply the word transition on the IEP paperwork. I don't think that anybody actually worked on his preparation for attending a sheltered workshop, thought about what kind of programming was going to be necessary at the high school in order to get him prepared to go to a sheltered workshop.

Summary

For Chapter 4: Findings, I decontextualized, evaluated, and transformed the raw experiences of my parent participants into their substance, which generated a multitude of themes and sub-themes corresponding to each unit of analysis (i.e., research question one, two, and three, respectively; Yin, 2017). By positioning myself as a critical realist (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2011), employing a general qualitative inquiry research design (Creswell & Poth, 2017), utilizing in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Esterberg, 2001), and subjecting all transcripts to a data analytic schema (i.e., inductive and thematic analysis) akin to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) and Shank (2002), I answered the following research questions:

1. What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?
2. Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?
3. How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities

with high support needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

Chapter 5

Discussion

Mazzotti et al. (2016) identified a new evidence-based, in-school predictor of postsecondary success for students with disabilities—parent expectations. Parent expectations are associated with postsecondary education, employment, and independent living success for students with disabilities. However, two limitations to Mazzotti et al.’s (2016) processes were identified: (a) all data were assembled from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, an extant database and (b) as such, all data were correlative in nature. With these limitations, the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, is struggling to understand this phenomenon and the impact it has on the postsecondary success of students with disabilities (McConnell et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study was to bridge an understanding of parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and if those expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. In addition, I explored if and how parent expectations varied across the level of supports needed for their children. Finally, I explored any underlying factors which may have shaped and influenced those postsecondary expectations. By utilizing a general qualitative inquiry research design (Creswell & Poth, 2017), my hopes were to examine and unpack the multitude of facets related to parent expectations; subsequently, providing beneficial opportunities in the development of novel research questions where true experimentation is possible (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Trainor & Graue, 2014) to assist in the development of interventions aimed at factors likely to influence parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. This can afford teachers research- and EBPs related to parent expectations and provide students with significant disabilities occasions for enhanced postsecondary outcomes. With an understanding of the dimensions of parent expectations, this may assist in forging the parent-teacher partnership and aid in overcoming barriers relative to parental involvement in the transition planning process (Garriott et al., 2001; Martin et al., 2006; Martinez et al., 2012; Newman, 2005; Wagner et al., 2012.).

Research Question 1

Research Question 1—What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?—was designed to evoke responses relative to the expectations parents placed on the postsecondary education, employment, and independent living environments of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. In addition, I was interested if those expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. Three themes and two sub-themes emerged: (a) themes included magnitude across and within postsecondary environments, employment first, and leaving the nest; (b) sub-themes were educational training for employment success and college experience.

In the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities has been subject to investigation in past research (Epps & Myers, 1989; Kausar et al., 2003; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Masino & Hodapp, 1996; Newman, 2005; Tilson & Neubert, 1988). However, those data were collected through survey research, which provided an incomplete analysis of this phenomenon. By affording a voice to parents and learning about the expectations they placed on their children in relation to their postsecondary environments, a wholistic picture of this phenomenon can emerge.

When quantitizing my qualitative data, my parent participants assigned greater significance on the postsecondary employment and independent living environments for their secondary-age children. Although postsecondary education environments were communicated to me, only one sub-theme paralleled that environment—the college and university setting. This resembled past research (e.g., Epps & Myers, 1989; Wagner et al., 2007). The other sub-theme corresponded to the educational training my parent participants anticipated their children needing, which linked to the acquisition and/or maintenance of job-related skills for the postsecondary employment environment. Because my parent participants placed lower importance on the postsecondary education environments, I will highlight the postsecondary employment and independent living environments in the following discussion.

Postsecondary Employment Expectations

While 12.5% of my parent participants did not hold postsecondary employment expectations for their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs, the majority of them did (i.e., 87.5%). For those parents not holding postsecondary employment expectations, the severity of the disability their secondary-age children had controlled those expectations. However, for those parents holding postsecondary employment expectations, those expectations included half-time, part-time, or full-time postsecondary employment. Prior to the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), parents of secondary-age children with significant disabilities rarely expected their children to participate in competitive and integrated employment post-high school (Epps & Myers, 1989; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001). Instead, they anticipated them participating in day activity centers or sheltered workshops.

However, for many of my parent participants, they disclosed expectations for several postsecondary employment environments and postsecondary employment types for their secondary-age children, which deviated from Epps and Myers (1989) and Kraemer and Blacher (2001). My parent participants placed importance on the attendance of and participation in the competitive and integrated postsecondary employment environments of their children. My study's findings validate Wagner et al's (2007) results, which suggested a majority of parents interviewed did expect postsecondary employment of their children post-high school. However, Wagner et al. (2007) did not illuminate what those postsecondary employment environments and types were by their respondents, producing a gap in the literature-base. It is important for teachers to understand the postsecondary employment environments and types parents expect of their children. Ultimately, this understanding can help align the postsecondary employment expectations of teachers with those of the parents they serve; thus, cultivating positive parent-teacher partnerships and, subsequently, favorably impacting the postsecondary employment attainment of students with significant disabilities.

My parent participants expressed a variety of postsecondary employment environments and types for their secondary-age children: (a) working in criminal justice, (b) working as an animated film critic, (c) collecting grocery carts, (d) working as a greeter at Walmart, (e) working as a farmhand, and (f) working with the Boeing aerospace company. To my surprise, the expectations they placed on the postsecondary employment environments and types of their children were outside the realm of those options typically existing for students with significant disabilities (Brown et al., 2006). This insight delivers critical information to teachers of students with significant disabilities; when developing postsecondary employment goals for the Individualized Education Program (IEP), teachers must begin looking outside the box of the standard postsecondary employment placements (e.g., activity centers, segregated enclaves, sheltered workshops) habitually available for these students. By doing so, they can begin aligning themselves with parents and working collaboratively to produce the best possible postsecondary employment outcomes for their students (Reiman et al., 2010).

The postsecondary employment expectations my parent participants set forth were a direct response to the strengths, preferences, interests, and choices of their secondary-age children. These expectations were often communicated to the IEP team on an annual basis; oftentimes, at a higher frequency. This is in stark contrast to Newman (2005), where she suggested parents provided little input on the IEP postsecondary goals of their children. My parent participants were adamant the IEP teams of their children were cognizant of the postsecondary employment goals of their children at the onset of their high school tenure. However, these exchanges did not produce meaningful results. Frequently, my parent participants were told their postsecondary employment expectations were too high. Furthermore, many of them felt the teachers of their children were holding their children back from revealing their full potential. The disregard felt by many of my parent participants fostered a self-determined approach to ensuring their children would be fruitful post-high school—they would pursue and secure gainful competitive and integrated employment for their children after graduation.

Although the assumption is that teachers are best trained to promote postsecondary employment of students with significant disabilities, it would seem an untapped resource is being overlooked and/or underutilized—parents. With the practice of parents facilitating choice and securing job placement post-high school for their secondary-age children with significant disabilities (Petner-Arrey et al., 2016), school-level efforts must be put into place to dismantle the barriers to positive parent-teacher partnerships (e.g., Cooney, 2002; Griffin et al., 2010). These efforts may improve the postsecondary employment outcomes of students with significant disabilities.

Postsecondary Independent Living Expectations

Across my parent participants, 81.3% held postsecondary independent living expectations for their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. For those not holding postsecondary independent living expectations for their children, this was due to the pervasive nature of their disability and the required level of support needed by each of them from day-to-day. This included the complete dependency on their parents and/or paid staff for all basic needs. Those parents indicated their secondary-age children would live with them until they could no longer take care of them. It is important to note, none disclosed where their secondary-age children would live once that occurred. One of them revealed guardianship had been secured for her son, while another stated she would request guardianship in the upcoming year. For those three parents, the postsecondary independent living expectations they set for their children indicated as requiring a pervasive level of support are common. Epps and Myers (1989) reported their parent respondents anticipated their children with the same level of support need to continue living at home after high school graduation.

However, for those parents who did place postsecondary independent living expectations on their secondary-age children, those expectations were vast. Zimmer-Gembeck and Mortimer (2006) suggested students with disabilities have the same postsecondary aspirations as their peers without disabilities. My qualitative exploration and analysis suggests the same; however, conversely, for parents instead of students. The bulk of the postsecondary independent living expectations my parent participants held for their children appeared to resemble those of parents of children without disabilities: (a) living at home, (b) living with roommates, (c) living with siblings, (d) living in an apartment, (e) living in a group home, (f) adding an apartment onto a preexisting home to live in, (g) living in elderly disabled housing, (h) building a new home with a medical wing to live in, and (i) living in a long-term care facility.

For many of my parent participants, the notion of their secondary-age children living in a normalized world (Wolfensberger, 1972) was evident by the postsecondary independent living expectations they set forth. Kausar et al.'s (2003) study produced similar conclusions, where a normalized life was essential for parents of children with significant disabilities. Albeit, the current landscape of availability for those "normalized" community-based living environments remains at an all-time low (National Council on Disability, n.d.), my parent participants held realistic postsecondary independent living expectations for their children, an important characteristic in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition. Comparably to the postsecondary employment expectations, my parent participants always considered the strengths, preferences, interests, and choices of their children.

An interesting finding emerging from my data analytic schema (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Shank 2002) included my parent participants articulating the importance of autonomy away from their secondary-age children. For example, for Amanda, this revolved around issues of control and the fear of letting her child, Jude, experience independent life without her. Common for parents, struggles arise when needing to surrender control and the influence over the lives of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities (Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1995). Amanda recognized the harmful impact of the low postsecondary independent living expectations she placed on Jude. Instead of surrendering power over to her feelings, she did not waiver. Amanda made the concerted effort of stepping out of her comfort zone; subsequently, she set high postsecondary independent living expectations where she could afford her son an opportunity to flourish and independently explore the outside world post-high school.

Finally, through their problem solving and resourcefulness, two of my parent participants, Ellen and Sarah, declared they would ensure their secondary-age children would gain equity in their postsecondary independent living environments. Wilgosh and Scorgie (2006) suggested this as an important attribute for many parents of secondary-age children with significant disabilities. It would seem, through their persistent grit of guaranteeing an exceptional postsecondary life for their children, my parent participants acquired a behavioral disposition akin to self-determination to positively transform the postsecondary independent living outcomes of their children.

Teachers must see these efforts as progressive. Parents of secondary-age children with significant disabilities are no longer taking a passive role in the education of their children (Wagner et al., 2012). They are actively pursuing quality education that prepares their children for optimal postsecondary outcomes. Through a strengths-based approach, teachers should consider leveraging the self-determined qualities of the parents they work with to enhance the postsecondary independent living outcomes of their children.

Parent Expectations Aligned with the Reauthorization of IDEA (2004)

High parent expectations have been deemed a powerful indicator for the postsecondary attainment and success in the areas of education, employment, and independent living for students with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Newman, 2005). In addition to unpacking the gamut of postsecondary expectations my parent participants placed on their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs, I was intrigued to observe if those postsecondary expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. IDEA (2004) defined transition services as

> a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is (1) designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (2) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences and interests; and (3) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (Turnbull et al., 2009, p. 15)

Three points specific to the results-oriented process are clear: (a) the focus must be on improving the academic and functional achievement of students with disabilities from school to postsecondary life, (b) is based on the needs of each student with a disability, including their strengths, preferences, interests; and (c) includes instruction to ensure the acquisition of skills for postsecondary life. Through my data analytic schema (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Shank 2002), I inductively produced a number of reoccurring patterns across my parent participants, exemplifying the three points specific to IDEA's (2004) results-oriented process.

First, my parent participants always reflected on the needs of their secondary-age children, embracing their strengths, preferences, interests, and choices when considering the postsecondary expectations they placed on them. This corresponds to the second point of the transition services definition. Second, to improve the academic and functional achievement of students with significant disabilities from school to postsecondary life, a goal must be established. In this case, the postsecondary expectations my parent participants placed on their children represents this goal and corresponds to the first point of the transition services definition. Finally, with my parent participants embodying points one and two prescribed in the transition services definition, classroom instruction by general education and special education teachers can begin to ensure the acquisition of skills for postsecondary life. This links to the third point of the transition services definition.

My parent participants stated a number of postsecondary employment and independent living expectations for their secondary-age children. Their postsecondary employment expectations included (a) working in criminal justice, (b) working as an animated film critic, (c) collecting grocery carts, (d) working as a greeter at Walmart, (e) working as a farmhand, and (f) working with the Boeing aerospace company. In addition, their postsecondary independent living expectations included (a) living at home, (b) living with roommates, (c) living with siblings, (d) living in an apartment, (e) living in a group home, (f) adding an apartment onto a preexisting home to live in, (g) living in elderly disabled housing, (h) building a new home with a medical wing to live in, and (i) living in a long-term care facility. All expressed these as high expectations.

Past research indicates parents of secondary-age children with significant disabilities did not expect their children to work in competitive employment (Epps & Myers, 1989; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001) nor live independently (Epps & Myers, 1989). Those postsecondary employment and independent living expectations are subpar at most and do not reflect result-oriented outcomes. This is expected as those expectations were reported prior to the reauthorization of IDEA (2004). Furthermore, they do not echo the very sentiment proposed by Zimmer-Gembeck and Mortimer (2006), where students with disabilities identified the same postsecondary ambitions as their counterparts without disabilities—a life that is significant, fulfilling, and worth living (Landmark et al., 2010; Morningstar et al., 2016).

Whether my parent participants were aware of it or not, the postsecondary employment and independent living expectations they placed on their secondary-age children personified the results-oriented process required by IDEA (2004). They embodied this declaration by developing high postsecondary employment and independent living expectations for their children. As Garriot et al. (2001) proposed, parents of children with disabilities tend to receive information rather than share information in relation to the IEP and educational goals set forth for their children. With this in mind, I recommend a fundamental shift take place—the teacher receives information, while the parent shares information.

With the low postsecondary expectations set forth by the general education and special education teachers, as communicated to me by my parent participants of their secondary-age children, it would seem practical those teachers take heed and begin listening to the expert advice parents have to offer. Parents can provide teachers quality postsecondary goals that they can then work toward together. Affording a family-centered planning approach and respecting the high expectations parents place on the postsecondary employment and independent living environments of their children may prove useful in combating the poor postsecondary outcomes reported about this population throughout the literature (Chapman et al., 2011; Houtenville & Boege, 2019; Newman et al., 2011; Prince et al., 2018; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). Furthermore, it may mitigate the often tenuous parent-teacher partnerships, where both parties can work together during the transition planning process.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2—Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?—was developed to understand if and how parent expectations on the education, employment, and independent living postsecondary environments varied across the level of supports needed by their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. Three themes emerged: (a) variant of postsecondary education supports, (b) variant of postsecondary employment supports, and (c) variant of postsecondary independent living supports.

For this qualitative exploration, three levels of support were contained in my inclusion criteria, which included limited, extensive, and pervasive. It was required for my parent participants to select the levels of support which reflected the day-to-day needs of their secondary-age children to participate in my study. Schalock et al. (2010) defined support needs as “a psychological construct referring to the pattern and intensity of supports necessary for a person to participate in activities linked to normative human functioning” (p. 105). This notion suggests as the level of support need increases, so do those resources and strategies to support well-being and improve individual functioning. However, students with significant disabilities face barriers related to their disability and the postsecondary opportunities afforded to them. Many believe disability is an inherent quality that must be fixed prior to the participation in postsecondary environments (Batavia & Schriner, 2001). However, I support Schalock et al.’s (2010) notion and affirm disability as an interaction between an individual and their environment (Batavia & Schriner, 2001). Therefore, we must consider ways to modify the environment in order to provide equitable opportunities for students with significant disabilities toward post-high school success (Batavia & Schriner, 2001). To fully unpack this and provide explicit guidance on those environmental modifications across the three level of support needs, I relied on my parent participants to reveal what supports they deemed most appropriate for their children within the postsecondary environments required by IDEA (2004).

Across my parent participants, a common pattern of the desire for their secondary-age children to live in a world of normalcy (Wolfensberger, 1972) surfaced. To achieve this, those supports most important to them, and documented across the education, employment, and independent living postsecondary environments, included (a) paid staff supports, (b) peer supports, (c) natural supports, (d) safety supports, (e) daily living supports, and (f) the fading of supports. While many of my parent participants agreed supports were necessary for their children to find post-high school success, those supports varied in nature and intensity; thus, reinforcing the notion that as the level of support need increases, so do those resources and strategies to support well-being and improve individual functioning (Schalock et al., 2010).

To illustrate this, Hank and John, who were indicated as necessitating limited and extensive levels of support, respectively, Elizabeth and Kathy indicated they would need peer supports in their postsecondary employment environment. Elizabeth stated Hank would need peer supports for “staying on-task with certain [job-related] things.” However, according to Kathy, John would “. . . need someone with him a lot to help him learn the job [and] learn what his expectations are, and the goals are.” These peer supports could fade over time. However, for those parents of children requiring a pervasive level of support, paid support staff would be compulsory for any postsecondary employment attainment. Those parents did not perceive peers supporting their children in the day-to-day needs required by their disability. In addition, they did not foresee those supports ever fading.

The examples above demonstrate how my parent participants perceived the supports needed by their secondary-age children, which varied in nature and intensity. The nature of supports included those accommodations and modifications set at the onset of postsecondary involvement necessary for their secondary-age children with significant disabilities to participate. Intensity of supports demonstrates how those accommodations and modifications are individualized to support the ongoing day-to-day attendance of and participation in the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children. With the alignment of support and support needs, enhanced postsecondary outcomes can take place; thus, supporting well-being and improving the individual functioning (Schalock et al., 2010) of the secondary-age children of my parent participants.

Though all of my parent participants varied on the supports needed for their secondary-age children across the postsecondary education, employment, and independent living environments, I documented a noteworthy pattern—many of them expressed that the supports put in place for their children could fade over time, where natural supports could take the lead in assisting their children. These findings conflict with past research. Thompson et al. (2000) suggested parents expected ongoing contrived supports for their secondary-age children. Although the scope of this qualitative exploration cannot determine this, I speculate my parent participants see the utility in the provision of natural supports based upon the conversations I had with them. Again, many reiterated the importance of their children living in a normalized world (Wolfensberger, 1972), where the participation of their children in their community of choice would resemble that of their peers without disabilities.

With this discernment provided by my parent participants, I would argue for the consideration of those natural supports in the postsecondary environments by those individuals (e.g., administrators, teachers, outside agencies) who take part in the IEP teams of secondary-children with significant disabilities when developing academic and functional goals for long-term success. This may alleviate those obstacles many students with significant disabilities face when transitioning from high school to postsecondary life (Braddock et al., 2004; Prince et al., 2018.)

Research Question 3

Research Question 3—How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high supports needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?—was designed to explore any underlying factors which may have shaped and influenced the postsecondary expectations my parent participants placed on their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. Three themes emerged: (a) postsecondary expectations shaped by my secondary-age child, (b) postsecondary expectations shaped by outside forces, and (c) postsecondary expectations shaped by in-school interactions.

Although past research suggests the learning history of parents can directly impact the postsecondary expectations they place on their children, only two factors appeared: (a) the participation of parents in a college setting influenced the expectations they placed on their children for attending postsecondary education (Masino & Hodapp, 1996) and (b) the severity of disability influenced the overall postsecondary expectations parents placed on their children (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Newman, 2005). When in conversation with my parent participants, I uncovered a multiplex of new factors. Those factors positively and negatively influenced their postsecondary education, employment, and independent living expectations.

Substantiating the current literature, the postsecondary expectations my parent participants placed on their secondary-age children were directly related to severity of their disability and the restrictions that disability placed on them in the participation of postsecondary environments (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Newman, 2005). Oftentimes, producing segregate effects, this bounded the postsecondary expectations my parent participants set forth. However, for many of them, their children surpassed those restrictions and excelled in areas my parent participants thought not possible, often surprising them. This extinguished the low expectations they placed on their children and shaped positive after-effects, where my parent participants allowed their children to champion their own future aspirations by letting them take the lead of their lives, while my parent participants followed beside them. For many of my parent participants, this set the stage for expanding the postsecondary expectations they held for their children.

While my parent participants followed the aspirations of their secondary-age children, an interference revealed itself—societal restraints. The communities in which my parent participants and their children lived were simply not including them in their day-to-day life. For example, Sharon stated, ". . . in our community, there is not, uh, any, any possible options [for Rylan] . . . I have not seen anyone . . . willing to hire anyone with [his type of] support needs." This suppressed many of their high expectations, so much so, a few did not hold any postsecondary education, employment, or independent living expectations. Albeit this took place, many of my parent participants shifted their response, with Kathy exemplifying this. "We allow the society around us to place expectations and lower them . . . I'm like, no, stop, stop limiting [our children] . . . stop changing [their] expectations to fit yours." By participating in disability organizations and acquiring knowledge about the world of disability, my parent participants developed a cognitive filter, which inspired them to reaffirm the high expectations for their secondary-age children. Those disability organizations produced ancillary effects, where my parent participants learned to be self-determined. They wielded agentic power and through their own volition, they kept high postsecondary expectations for their children.

Within these disability organizations, my parent participants detailed the importance of receiving education from parents of children with significant disabilities. This, too, was extremely important in impacting the postsecondary expectations they set for their secondary-age children. Those "parents educating parents" interactions justified many of the high expectations my parent participants already had set for their children. By leveraging the expertise of other parents and the past experiences of their children with significant disabilities, my parent participants took their low expectations and replaced them with high expectations. However, many of these were quelled by the negative in-school interactions they encountered.

Many limitations in the school environment were placed on the secondary-age children of my parent participants. These limitations were seen across the general education and special education environments. As such, the postsecondary expectations my parent participants placed on their children were considered too high or unrealistic by their teachers and thus, were never worked on in the classroom environments. Oftentimes, teachers would focus only on day-to-day academic instruction instead of thinking long-term by providing academic and functional instruction to meet the needs expressed by my parent participants for their children to prepare them for post-high school life. This often led to tenuous IEP meetings in relation to the transition planning process, which narrowed the postsecondary expectations many of my parent participants set for their children, or it rallied them to pursue the postsecondary expectations they set forth on their own. This begs the question, why are teachers not aligning themselves with parents of secondary-age children with significant disabilities to ensure the best possible postsecondary outcomes?

Implications for Practice

Parent expectations has been deemed a critical component to the successful postsecondary attainment of students with disabilities in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living (Mazzotti et al., 2016). My qualitative exploration provides implications for practice to teachers working with parents and their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. The IDEA (2004) affirms parental involvement across the educational tenure of their children; however, across the literature-base, parent and teacher partnerships have been documented as poor at best; consequently, producing lower levels of parental involvement (Garriott et al., 2001; Kalyanpur et al., 2000; Martin et al., 2006; Martinez et al., 2012; Newman, 2005; Wagner et al., 2012). I speculate parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities and the alignment to, or lack thereof, the postsecondary expectations teachers hold, assumes a confound in these partnerships. Therefore, I argue when the postsecondary expectations of parents and teachers align, parent-teacher partnerships increase, which result in better postsecondary outcomes for students with significant disabilities.

My parent participants placed greater significance on the postsecondary employment and independent living environments of their secondary-age children as compared to the postsecondary education environment. Many expressed the postsecondary employment expectations of their children as working in competitive and integrated placement. Furthermore, many of them expected their children living in community-based environments of their choosing. No longer can teachers of students with significant disabilities rely on the status quo, where postsecondary employment expectations are nested within the food, filth, and flower industries, or where postsecondary independent living expectations are couched in segregated environments. Teachers should focus on aligning their postsecondary expectations with the parents they serve. It would seem, based on my parent participants, those postsecondary expectations tend to look outside the cliché realms of employment and independent living, which should inform and provide guidance to teachers of students with significant disabilities. To help mitigate the aforementioned, professional development should be created to bridge the alignment of teacher and parent postsecondary expectations. Parents of secondary-age children with significant disabilities must be included in these professional development opportunities to help in-service teachers understand their students' families' expectations for the future. Through these intentional conversations, the postsecondary expectations teachers set for their students with significant disabilities can expand and begin aligning with the parents they serve.

My parent participants identified similar postsecondary expectations as their counterparts—parents of children without disabilities—where many of them articulated their desire for their secondary-age children contributing to and living in a normalized world (Wolfensberger, 1972). Those high expectations reflected the results-oriented process prescribed by IDEA (2004). To ameliorate parent-teacher partnerships, I propose teachers utilize a family-centered approach when developing IEP goals, specifically postsecondary goals. Although person-centered planning tends to be the main approach for lifespan planning of students with significant disabilities, utilizing a family-centered approach would include those nuanced perspectives where parents already planned to support their secondary-age child post-high school. This strategy can nurture parent-teacher partnerships by aligning teacher and parent expectations; thus, increasing parental involvement in the transition planning process of their children. Subsequently, teachers can then provide the necessary academic and functional instruction to students with significant disabilities to reach their desired postsecondary aspirations and achieve those desirable outcomes shouldered by both parents and their children.

However, none of the aforementioned can take place without ample preservice training at the college- and university-level for both general education teachers and special education teachers. General education teachers and special education teachers should receive the same training as it relates to working with and serving parents and their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. No longer can preservice general education teachers take, on average, 1.5 courses focused on students with disabilities (Mader, 2017). Their course load should match their preservice special education teacher counterparts—11 classes on average. As students with significant disabilities gain access to and participate in general education environments at higher rates than previous years (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), preservice general education teachers and special education teachers can acquire the necessary skills within their teaching behavioral repertoires, through their preservice instruction, to help them set the stage to work with parents and their secondary-age children with significant disabilities, successively producing positive post-high school outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and independent living (IDEA, 2004).

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

While the results of my qualitative exploration provided a snapshot of the expectations parents placed on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs, a number of limitations arose, which merits discourse. First, my parent participant sample size consisted of 16 individuals—14 women and two men. As such, much information was produced and gleaned by my female participants, with little information produced and gleaned by my two male participants. Future research should consider a more heterogenous sample to detect if there are subtle differences on the postsecondary expectations of secondary-age children with significant disabilities between the female and male parent population. This may prove advantageous when working with single parent households when constructing postsecondary goals during the transition planning process. Second, due to the significant nature of disability of their secondary-age children, many of my parent participants were thrust into employment relative to the world of disability. Their employment positively enhanced the postsecondary expectations they set forth for their children. Therefore, future research should consider affording a voice to parents not currently active in the disability world. This may illuminate differing or similar postsecondary expectations in relation to my parent participants. Finally, caution must be taken when trying to generalize my findings from my sample to the greater population of parents of secondary-age children with significant disabilities. This cannot take place, nor is it the purpose of qualitative research. Transferability of my findings can take place; however, they are, and should be, weighed as context-dependent. As such, for generalizability to take place, randomized control trials of experimental research should occur. Below, I offer additional future research suggestions to accomplish this.

Without any instruments developed in the realm of parent expectations directly related to the postsecondary involvement of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities, a need in the field of special education exists, specifically secondary transition, for a valid and reliable parent expectations instrument. This instrument can assist in measuring and producing objective knowledge (e.g., level of postsecondary expectations, postsecondary expectations aligned with the results-oriented clause [IDEA, 2004], calibration to reality of postsecondary expectations) on parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. Ultimately, this can help teachers intervene and/or align their postsecondary expectations with the parents and students they serve; thus, producing meaningful postsecondary goals as part of the IEP transition planning process.

To develop a parent expectations instrument, an exploratory sequential mixed methods design (i.e., QUAL → quan; Creswell & Clark, 2018) can be utilized. Unique to this design are three fundamental processes of analysis and development. First, qualitative data collection and analysis takes place, providing qualitative exploratory results. The aforementioned qualitative exploration has completed this. Providing an impetus from the underpinnings of the exploratory results, the researcher can transfer those results into the development of a quantitative feature. In the final phase, the researcher will quantitatively test the developed instrument. As a result of these processes of analysis and development, the researcher can objectively interpret "how the quantitative results provide a clear understanding because they are grounded in the initial qualitative perspectives of participants" (Creswell & Clark, 2018, p. 67). This research design can objectively develop a parent expectations instrument through an emic lens.

Once an instrument has been created, future research must consider developing interventions related to parent expectations. These interventions should reflect (a) level of postsecondary expectations (i.e., high or low), (b) alignment with the results-oriented clause by IDEA (2004), and/or (c) if those postsecondary expectations are calibrated with reality. Through replication, research- and EBPs can be established under the new evidence-based, in-school predictor of postsecondary success—parent expectations—a dire need in the field of secondary transition.

Conclusion

For this qualitative exploration, I studied parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and if those expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. In addition, I explored if and how parent expectations varied across the level of supports needed for their children. Finally, I explored any underlying factors which may have shaped and influenced those postsecondary expectations. It was my hope to produce new knowledge in the field of special education, specifically secondary transition, on a newly identified evidence-based, in-school predictor of postsecondary success—parent expectations (Mazzotti et al., 2016)—a necessity as the field continues to struggle in understanding this phenomenon (McConnell et al., 2018). Through the meaning-making process, I documented my parent participants holding high expectations related to the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. Those expectations were aligned to the results-oriented process as directed by IDEA (2004), resembling those postsecondary environments of students without disabilities. Teachers working with parents and their secondary-age children with significant disabilities should begin considering the postsecondary expectations parents place on their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. This can help align parent and teacher postsecondary expectations, facilitate and increase parent-teacher partnerships as part of the transition planning process, and promote the best possible postsecondary outcomes for students with significant disabilities.

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Appendix A

Subjectivity Statement

This qualitative exploration, through the approach of a general qualitative inquiry design (Creswell & Poth, 2017) and data analytic schema (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Shank, 2002), investigated parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs. This study was guided by three research questions: (1) What are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs?; (2) Do parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs vary across the level of supports needed by their children? If so, how?; and (3) How are parent expectations on the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, and independent living) of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs shaped (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

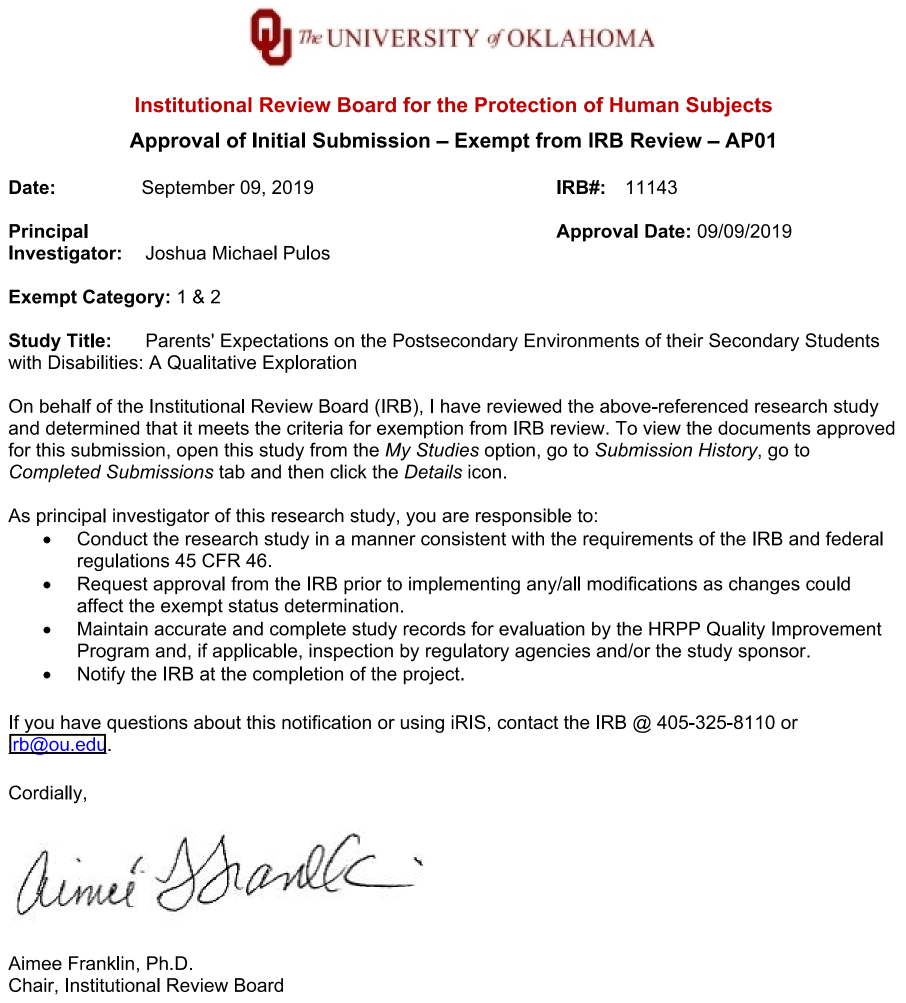
Albeit the current secondary transition literature reports the expectations of parents on the postsecondary environments of their children with disabilities, a gap in the literature exists in response to the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. Therefore, I explored parent expectations on the postsecondary environments of their secondary-age children with disabilities with high support needs and if those expectations aligned with the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which affirmed special education to be a results-oriented process. In addition, I explored if and how parent expectations varied across the level of supports needed for their children. Finally, I explored any underlying factors which may have shaped and influenced those postsecondary expectations. This research project utilized a representative sample of participants from a cross-section of the parent population of secondary-age children with significant disabilities to glean the full sequence of knowledge in relation to my research questions. Due to the parent population I studied, it is important to discuss who I am as the researcher in relation to my qualitative exploration. In particular, my actions, choices, experiences, and presuppositions relative to the world of disability, parent expectations, and the promotion of positive postsecondary success of secondary-age children with significant disabilities.

Direct experiences relative to my research topic originated in August 2011, when I began my career as a secondary special education teacher, educating a heterogeneous group of students (i.e., with and without disabilities) within a co-taught English classroom environment. Within a year of teaching, I was promoted to the Special Education Department Chair, which oversaw 15 special education teachers and 250 students with disabilities. Within this administrative capacity, I saw first-hand the myriad of disparities our students with disabilities were encountering on a daily basis. I quickly saw this as more than a school site issue when I transitioned into a central office position; I was hired as an Instructional Supervisor for Special Education Services. This new position afforded me the opportunity to work with teachers and students with disabilities across the school district on an array of special education topics: (a) alternate assessment preparation, (b) behavior-analytic strategies, and (c) secondary transition evidence-based practices (EBPs) and evidence-based, in-school predictors of postsecondary success. Often, many of the teachers I worked with would dismiss my views on the importance of infusing secondary transition EBPs and predictors into the already established school-wide curriculum. They often stated they did not have time to teach anything else, nor did they want to read the research literature to learn about secondary transition EBPs and predictors. These teacher behaviors had a direct impact on me and drove me to apply to the University of Oklahoma's Special Education Program to attain my Ph.D. in Special Education with a concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Secondary Transition Education.

With the knowledge building and opportunities in which I have worked and been educated in special education, I strengthened my qualitative exploration through my stance on the utilization of secondary transition EBPs and predictors in the high school environment for all students with disabilities, specifically related to working with parents and affording them a voice at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting and the transition planning process of their secondary-age children with significant disabilities. As a researcher at the University of Oklahoma's Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment, I am entrenched in the ever-evolving, empirically validated approaches of enhancing the positive postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living. Although significant, my experiences brought inherent biases to my research project due to my funneled perspective of what I bring to the project as a research instrument. To remedy this, I was diligent in respecting my parent participants' experiences during the interview process. This helped me to better understand their individual perspectives in relation to my research questions and the expectations they placed on their secondary-age children with disabilities and their future environments in which they will learn, live, and work.

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Outcome Letter



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: September 09, 2019

IRB#: 11143

Principal Investigator: Joshua Michael Pulos

Approval Date: 09/09/2019

Exempt Category: 1 & 2

Study Title: Parents' Expectations on the Postsecondary Environments of their Secondary Students with Disabilities: A Qualitative Exploration

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Aimee Franklin

Aimee Franklin, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
SPECIAL EDUCATION
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

A doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma is seeking parent participants for his doctoral dissertation research study. The **purpose** of this study is to explore the expectations of parents as they relate to the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, independent living) of their children with disabilities with high support needs, which may require ongoing services and support for postsecondary success.

Are you are parent of a child **(a)** with a disability with high support needs, which may require ongoing services and support for success when they graduate high school; **(b)** 16-21 years of age; **(c)** enrolled in a high school setting or 18-21 school-affiliated transition program; **(d)** on an Individualized Education Program (IEP); **AND** **(e)** with an intelligence quotient (IQ) of less than 70 (if known)?

This is a **two-part study**:

1. An online survey where you will consent to participate in the study and provide your contact information (5 minutes).
   Survey Link: https://ousurvey.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_57KFrp88IYf5MjP

2. A face-to-face or over the phone interview with a researcher where you will discuss your expectations in relation to the postsecondary environments of your child with a disability (40 minutes to 1 hours).

[OU-NC IRB Number: 11143 Approval Date: 09/09/2019]

For additional information, please contact the doctoral student below:
Joshua Pulos, M.Ed. – Doctoral Student
University of Oklahoma
Phone: (405) 325-8951
Email: jmpulos@ou.edu
Office: Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment
338 Cate Center Drive
Room 190
Norman, OK 73019

Appendix D

Informed Consent and Qualtrics© Survey

Consent to Participate in Research at the University of Oklahoma
[OU-NC IRB Number: 11143 Approval Date: 09/09/2019]

I am Joshua Pulos from the Department of Educational Psychology and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled *Parent's Expectations on the Postsecondary Environments of their Secondary Students with Disabilities: A Qualitative Exploration*. This research is being conducted at the University of Oklahoma. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a parent of a child with a disability. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Please read this and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? The purpose of this research is to explore the expectations of parents as they relate to the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, independent living) of their children with disabilities with high support needs, which may require ongoing services and support for postsecondary success. Specifically, I am interested in learning about what those expectations are, if and how those expectations vary across the level of supports needed, and any other underlying driving force which may have shaped and influenced those postsecondary expectations.

How many participants will be in this research? About 10-25 people will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will complete an online survey and undergo an in-depth interview, either face-to-face or over the phone with the researcher.

How long will this take? You participation will take 1 visit, totaling 40 minutes to 1 hour to complete the in-depth interview. In addition, follow-up interviews may occur dependent upon if the researcher needs clarification of an interviewee's answers.

What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate? There are no risks and no benefits from participating in this research.

Will I be compensated for participating? You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research.

Who will see my information? In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records.

You have the right to access the research data that has been collected about you as part of this research. However, you may not have access to this information until the entire research has completely finished and you consent to this temporary restriction.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any questions and can stop participating at any time.

Will my identity be anonymous or confidential? Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. The data you provide will be retained in anonymous form (i.e., pseudonym) unless you specifically agree for data retention or retention of contact information at the end of the research. In addition, you agree to being quoted directly and for the research to use your data in future studies.

What will happen to my data in the future? After removing all identifiers, we might share your data with other researchers or use it in future research without obtaining additional consent from you.

Audio Recording of Research Activities To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. By consenting, you agree to the audio recording of your interview.

Who do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints? If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at (405) 325-8951 and/or jmpulos@ou.edu. In addition, you can contact my advisor, Dr. Kendra Williams-Diehm, at (405) 325-8951 and/or klwd@ou.edu.

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the research(s) of if you cannot reach the researcher(s).

Dissertation Survey

Start of Block: Survey Introduction and Consent to Participate in Research

Q1 **Consent to Participate in Research at the University of Oklahoma**
[OU-NC IRB Number: 11143 Approval Date: 09/09/2019]

I am Joshua Pulos from the Department of Educational Psychology and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled *Parent's Expectations on the Postsecondary Environments of their Secondary Students with Disabilities: A Qualitative Exploration.* This research is being conducted at the University of Oklahoma. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a parent of a child with a disability. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Please read this and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? The purpose of this research is to explore the expectations of parents as they relate to the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, independent living) of their children with disabilities with high support needs, which may require ongoing services and support for postsecondary success. Specifically, I am interested in learning about what those expectations are, if and how those expectations vary across the level of supports needed, and any other underlying driving force which may shaped and influenced those postsecondary expectations.

How many participants will be in this research? About 10-25 people will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will complete an online survey and undergo an in-depth interview, either face-to-face or over the phone with the researcher.

How long will this take? You participation will take 1 visit, totaling 40 minutes to 1 hour to complete the in-depth interview. In addition, follow-up interviews may occur dependent upon if the researcher needs clarification of an interviewee's answers.

What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate? There are no risks and no benefits from participating in this research.

Will I be compensated for participating? You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research.

Who will see my information? In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records.

You have the right to access the research data that has been collected about you as part of this research. However, you may not have access to this information until the entire research has completely finished and you consent to this temporary restriction.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any questions and can stop participating at any time.

Will my identity be anonymous or confidential? Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. The data you provide will be retained in anonymous form (i.e., pseudonym) unless you specifically agree for data retention or retention of contact information at the end of the research. In addition, you agree to being quoted directly and for the research to use your data in future studies.

What will happen to my data in the future? After removing all identifiers, we might share your data with other researchers or use it in future research without obtaining additional consent from you.

Audio Recording of Research Activities To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. By consenting, you agree to the audio recording of your interview.

Who do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints? If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at (405) 325-8951 and/or jmpulos@ou.edu. In addition, you can contact my advisor, Dr. Kendra Williams-Diehm, at (405) 325-8951 and/or klwd@ou.edu.

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the research(s) of if you cannot reach the researcher(s).

Please print this document for your records.

Q2 Are you 18 years of age or older?

○ Yes

○ No

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you 18 years of age or older? = No

End of Block: Survey Introduction and Consent to Participate in Research

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Start of Block: Inclusion Criteria

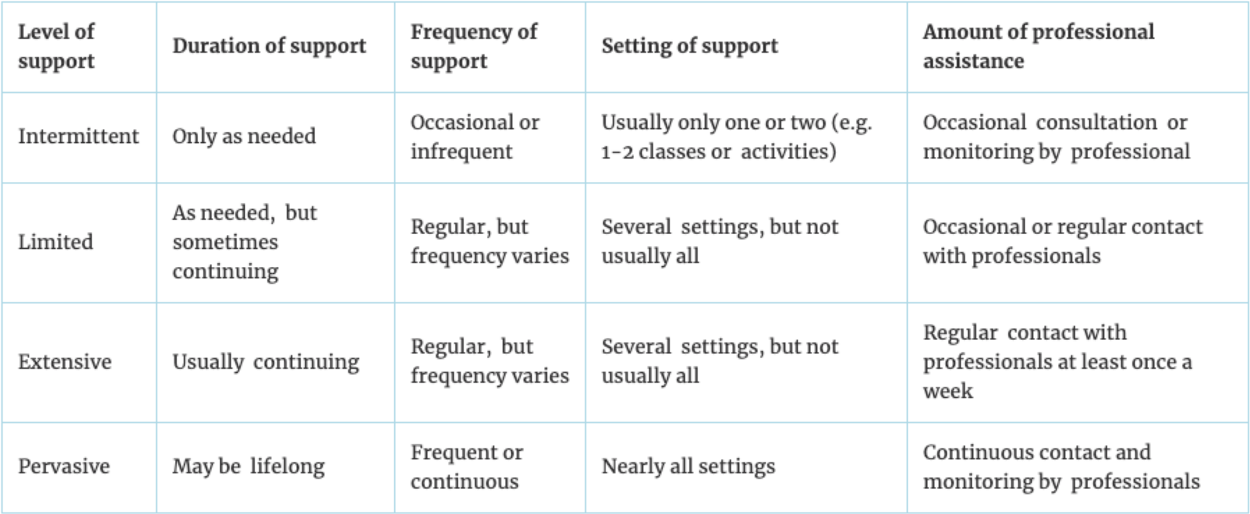
Q3 Are you a parent of a child
(a) with a disability with high support needs, which may require ongoing services and support for success when they graduate high school;
(b) 16-21 years of age;
(c) enrolled in a high school setting or 18-21 school-affiliated transition program;
(d) on an Individualized Education Program (IEP); AND
(e) with an intelligence quotient (IQ) of less than 70 (if known).

○ Yes

○ No

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you a parent of a child (a) with a disability with high support needs, which may require ongo... = No

Q4



Level of support	**Duration of support**	**Frequency of support**	**Setting of support**	**Amount of professional assistance**
Intermittent	Only as needed	Occasional or infrequent	Usually only one or two (e.g. 1-2 classes or activities)	Occasional consultation or monitoring by professional
Limited	As needed, but sometimes continuing	Regular, but frequency varies	Several settings, but not usually all	Occasional or regular contact with professionals
Extensive	Usually continuing	Regular, but frequency varies	Several settings, but not usually all	Regular contact with professionals at least once a week
Pervasive	May be lifelong	Frequent or continuous	Nearly all settings	Continuous contact and monitoring by professionals

Q5 With the above criteria, what is the current level of support needed by your child to participate in their **current** day-to-day education, employment, or independent living environments?

○ Intermittent

○ Limited

○ Extensive

○ Pervasive

Skip To: End of Survey If With the above criteria, what is the current level of support needed by your child to participate... = Intermittent

Q6 Child's IQ
*This does not need to match exactly what your child's IEP states.

○ Mild: IQ of about 50 to 70

○ Moderate: IQ of about 35 to 50

○ Severe: IQ of about 20 to 35

○ Profound: IQ below about 20

End of Block: Inclusion Criteria

Start of Block: Demographics

Q7 Parent's Age

____

Q8 Parent's Gender

○ Male

○ Female

○ Transgender or Gender Fluid

○ Other ____

○ Prefer not to answer

Q9 Parent's Race (categories based on U.S. Census Bureau)

- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ Two or More Races
- ○ White
- ○ Other ____
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q10 Parent's Ethnicity (categories based on U.S. Census Bureau)

- ○ Hispanic/Latino
- ○ Not Hispanic/Latino
- ○ Other ____
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q11 Parent's Level of Education

○ Some High School

○ High School Graduate

○ Some College

○ 2-Year Degree

○ 4-Year Degree

○ Professional Degree

○ Doctorate

○ Other ____

○ Prefer not to answer

Q12 Parent's Employment

○ Currently Employed

○ Not Employed

○ Prefer not to answer

Skip To: Q14 If Parent's Employment = Not Employed

Skip To: Q14 If Parent's Employment = Prefer not to answer

Q13 If employed, what is your current title and employment placement?

____

Q14 In what community does your family reside?

○ Urban

○ Suburban

○ Rural

Q15 Child's Age

____

Q16 Child's Gender

○ Male

○ Female

○ Transgender or Gender Fluid

○ Other ____

○ Prefer not to answer

Q17 Child's Race (categories based on U.S. Census Bureau)

- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ Two or More Races
- ○ White
- ○ Other____
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q18 Child's Ethnicity (categories based on U.S. Census Bureau)

- ○ Hispanic/Latino
- ○ Not Hispanic/Latino
- ○ Other ____
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q19 Child's Grade Level

- ○ Freshman
- ○ Sophomore
- ○ Junior
- ○ Senior
- ○ 18-21 School-Affiliated Transition Program

Q20 Please indicate your child's **primary** disability category (as indicated on their IEP).

○ Autism Spectrum Disorder

○ Deaf-Blindness

○ Deafness

○ Emotional Disturbance

○ Hearing Impairment

○ Intellectual Disability

○ Multiple Disabilities

○ Orthopedic Impairment

○ Other Health Impairment

○ Specific Learning Disability

○ Speech or Language Impairment

○ Visual Impairment, including blindness

○ Traumatic Brain Injury

○ Other ____

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Contact Information

Q21 Are you willing to participate in a face-to-face or over the phone interview for this study?

○ Yes

○ No

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you willing to participate in a face-to-face or over the phone interview for this study? = No

Q22 First and Last Name

____

Q23 Phone Number

____

Q24 Email

____

Q25 What is the best time to reach you?

○ Morning (8am-11am)

○ Afternoon (12pm-5pm)

○ Evening (6pm-9pm)

End of Block: Contact Information

Start of Block: Thank you

Q26 Thank you for your willingness to consent to this study. Your responses and time are appreciated. Shortly after you submit, I will follow-up with you to schedule an interview.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact the following individuals:

Joshua Pulos
Doctoral student, University of Oklahoma: (405) 325-8951 or jmpulos@ou.edu

Dr. Kendra Williams-Diehm
Associate Professor, University of Oklahoma: (405) 325-8951 or klwd@ou.edu

University of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board (IRB)
(405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

End of Block: Thank you

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this research project. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the expectations of parents as they relate to the postsecondary environments (i.e., education, employment, independent living) of their children with disabilities with high support needs, which may require ongoing services and support for postsecondary success. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

Block #1: Education Outcomes

Question #1: What are your expectations for your child's education outcomes after high school?

Question #2: What made you hold those expectations?

Probing question: How does your child's disability broaden or restrict your expectations you place on their education outcomes after high school?

Probing question. What influenced you to have those expectations (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

Probing question. Has your child been instructed at school in self-advocacy skills to request the accommodations they need in their education environment after high school?

Probing question. Is your child prepared to self-advocate for their needs (i.e., accommodations) in their education environment after high school?

Probing question. What level of support do you expect your child to need in their education environment after high school?

Block #2: Employment Outcomes

Question #1: What are your expectations for your child's employment outcomes after high school?

Question #2: What made you hold those expectations?

Probing question: How does your child's disability broaden or restrict your expectations you place on their employment outcomes after high school?

Probing question. What influenced you to have those expectations (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

Probing question. Has your child disclosed to you where they would like to work when they graduate high school? If so, where?

Probing question. Has your child been instructed at school in job-specific employment skills related to their employment aspirations?

Probing question. What level of support do you expect your child to need in their employment environment after high school?

Block #3: Independent Living Outcomes

Question #1: What are your expectations for your child's independent living outcomes after high school?

Question #2: What made you hold those expectations?

Probing question: How does your child's disability broaden or restrict your expectations you place on their independent living outcomes after high school?

Probing question. What influenced you to have those expectations (e.g., in-school influences, outside influences, personal learning history)?

Probing question. Will your child have a network of friends to support them after high school? If so, how do you expect his/her friends to support them?

Probing question. Has your child received life skills instruction at school?

Probing question. What level of support do you expect your child to need in their independent living environment after high school?