

**Alternative Pathways to Employment:
Family Supported Entrepreneurship for
Neurodivergent Young Adults**

BY

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

This research would not have been possible if not for the wonderful young entrepreneurs and supporting family members they chose, who shared their time and stories with me. In particular, I am grateful to the families who selflessly made themselves available to both me and their sons because they recognize the importance of their children's talent and motivation. The work we did together is a testament to your devotion. Wherever your entrepreneurship leads you, I wish you all the success in the future.

I dedicate this body of work to my children, Henry and Cecelia, I love you both. None of this work would have been possible without the kindness and grace of their father, Tim Blake.

I would also like to dedicate this to my father, I am sorry you left us before I finished, I know you wanted to see me walk. Also, to my mother, this is a testament to your hard work caring for me and my brother throughout childhood under very difficult circumstances.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| ABLE | Achieving a Better Life Experience Act |
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act |
| ASAN | Autistic Self Advocacy Network |
| ASD | Autistic Spectrum Disorder |
| CIE | Competitive Integrated Employment |
| E1 | Employment First policy recommendations |
| EWD | Iowa Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Demonstration Project |
| FSE | Family Supported Entrepreneurship |
| FSM | Family Support Member |
| GAO | Government Accountability Office |
| HCBS | Home Community Based (Medicaid funded) Services |
| IDA | Individualized Development Account |
| IDEA | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act |
| IDD | Intellectual Developmental Disability |
| NDYA | Neurodivergent Young Adults |
| PASS | Plan for Achieving Self-Support |
| SSI | Social Security Insurance |
| SSDI | Social Security Disability Insurance |
| VR | Vocational Rehabilitation (Services Administration) |
| WIOA | Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act |

SUMMARY

Family-supported entrepreneurship is a pathway to alternative employment for neurodivergent young adults (NDYA) who often face barriers to opportunities of postsecondary vocational, higher education, and competitive integrated employment. Family assistance with entrepreneurship is a foundation for interdependence that NDYAs need to meet the developmental challenges in the construction of self-determination during their transition to adulthood. It is unclear, however, whether and to what extent the novel approach of employment and education through entrepreneurship embodies this process in the NDYA and how families assist in its access. This research represents an exploration of entrepreneurship through dyadic interviews of NDYA entrepreneurs and their family support member. These interviews sought to understand experiences with entrepreneurship to identify related activities and events influential to the development of self-determination in the context of family, community, and secondary transition institutional systems. This research employs a Critical Disability Studies lens to visualize interdependence framed by feminist care ethics and standpoint theory, and it discerns family supported entrepreneurship to be a viable means of employment capacious for platforming personal growth and the development of attributes anticipated in adulthood. As such, it offers alternative options for postsecondary employment and community engagement while expanding the definition of interdependence and the role of family in the life course of NDYAs. The non-economic outcomes of family supported entrepreneurship for the NDYA are of interest to postsecondary transition, employment, community integration, and family inclusive self-determination intervention programming; as well as informing a wider and more nuanced understanding of neurodivergent interdependence and socially productive identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation represents the findings of research on whether the opportunities and experiences of neurodivergent young adults engaged in family supported entrepreneurship developmentally inform the transition to adulthood. Using a qualitative approach, my research explores this process through the use of interviews with transition aged neurodivergent entrepreneurs and the family members who support them. Neurodivergent young adults struggle to access postsecondary opportunities of employment and education; therefore, alternative options for social engagement within the larger community need be considered. Indeed, family supported entrepreneurship of neurodivergent people shows promise for their representation, and the inclusion of their narratives is necessary and of immediate interest.

The literature review and relevant key concepts presented in the first chapter build an understanding of the research intention. The review examines and discusses publications in Disability Studies and Family Entrepreneurship Studies, postsecondary disability transition policy and research, disability employment policy and research, and self-determination theory. The theoretical framework-visually represented by the conceptual map-relates the concepts used to understand the relationship between the experiences and activities within family supported entrepreneurship and NDYA self-determination. Feminist care ethics and standpoint theory are incorporated to build the theoretical framework used to develop the thesis, design, and conduct the research, and analyze the findings.

Following the literature review, the methodology chapter introduces the methodological epistemology with an in-depth discussion of feminist care ethics and standpoint theory through the lens of Critical Disability Studies, in order to interrogate normative postsecondary transition outcomes of NDYA. A brief review of the advantages of qualitative

research and dyadic interview methodology follows. The dyadic interview is introduced to describe its usefulness in the collection of rich data with neurodivergent young adults and their families. This methodological theory bridges the research aims and objectives with the research design and subsequent data collection and analysis plan. To contextualize the findings, Chapter IV offers an abridged biography of the entrepreneurs and their families, yielding an appreciation of the NDYA entrepreneurial experience described in the findings. Each entrepreneurship represents an exemplary demonstration of the process when working well.

Chapter V presents the thematic analysis of the findings that inform NDYA transition to adulthood as defined by self-determination. The themes describe the domains that influence this process. Transition through entrepreneurship thematically describes how entrepreneurial activities inform self-determination. That of family support details how the family assists the NDYA in their entrepreneurship and how this support develops the interdependence NDYAs use in achieving self-determination. Moreover, the community participation involved in and resulting from the entrepreneurship also informs self-determination. Transition through institutions refers to formal and informal systems that influence decisions to engage in entrepreneurship.

The final chapter discusses how institutions, family, and community function separately and in concert in to build the self-determination that NDYA entrepreneurs exercise in their transition to adulthood. Moreover, this discussion expands to discuss the usefulness of the findings for Disability Studies, postsecondary transition of neurodivergent young adult policy and programming, disability entrepreneurship, and family supported entrepreneurship for disabled entrepreneurs.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A. Introduction

The review of the following literature seeks to build a foundation from which we can appreciate family supported entrepreneurship as a developmentally advantageous and alternative pathway of employment for the neurodiverse young adult.¹ Although the current generation of young adults receive more federally mandated services than previous ones, their postsecondary employment outcomes continue to fall short of their peers. There have been a number of reports, however, of successful young neurodiverse entrepreneurs in the popular media, which suggests that entrepreneurship can be a promising alternative employment experience. Furthermore, these endeavors describe committed family involvement.

How NDYA engage in entrepreneurship, together with their families, first requires a theoretically supported definition of entrepreneurship and its application to this phenomenon. An understanding of postsecondary transition—and its historical relationship to employment and education policies—sets the context for this emergence. Given the paucity of research on the family support of entrepreneurs with a disability, the literature presented on the emerging topic of disability entrepreneurship will intersect with the more established one of family located entrepreneurship literature, to introduce the concept of family supported entrepreneurship for the NDYA. This conceptual intersection is necessary to understand the purpose of my research: to explore and understand family supported entrepreneurship as not only an alternative to traditional employment but to argue that it is a viable means to employment

¹ Neurodiversity, rather than describing those individuals having neurological differences diagnostically defined to include people with Autism Spectrum condition, instead promotes their “neuro-equality” with the neurotypical (those individuals not having any neurological condition diagnoses) and their enjoyment of the same civil liberties without having to suppress the identity that defines them. The neurodiversity umbrella covers a number of neurological differences, but for the purposes of this research and the reviewed literature, neurodiversity refers to autism spectrum and intellectual developmental delay (Baker, 2011; Fenton & Krahn, 2007).

necessary to access experiences of self-determination and community participation that inform emerging adulthood.

B. **Key Concepts**

The major concepts described in this research include entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, self-determination, and family supported entrepreneurship. The following theoretical definitions of these concepts are presented throughout this chapter to identify how they are operationalized in the research. Moreover, clarification of these concepts is necessary for the development of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks applied to the research analysis. First, the theoretical definition of entrepreneurship includes both economic and noneconomic goals. Next is the presentation of self-determination theories, including those developed in the context of disability, and the family support thereof. Then, theories of self-determination describe the process by which noneconomic outcomes of entrepreneurship, relevant to the transition to adulthood of the NDYA, are attained. Additionally, the introduction of family capital is a concept integral to understanding family contributions to the support of entrepreneurship, also operationalized as a resource for action in the interest of NDYA outcomes. Finally, a brief discussion of family supported entrepreneurship considers its efficacy for organizing the NDYA entrepreneur's process toward self-determination.

1. **Entrepreneurship and noneconomic goals**

The general concept of an entrepreneur is an individual who is engaged in an entrepreneurship. Yet, what constitutes an entrepreneurship continues to skirt a consensus of definition; it may be that the evolution of commerce necessitates as much (Anderson et al., 2012). Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship is almost universally recognized as the successful introduction of a new product of re-purposed or recombined existing raw materials

into the marketplace (Schumpeter, 2000). This phenomenon is predicated on the following key elements: motivation, innovation, overcoming resistance, profit, and link to business cycle. Although self-employment arguably has much in common with Schumpeter's conditions for entrepreneurship, self-employment's predominant concern is profit, where the goal is self-sustainability with no expected "link to a business cycle" having the potential to remarkably influence the economy (Swedberg, 2000, 2009). Accordingly, then, entrepreneurship endeavors to maximize growth in ways that engage the larger marketplace, including job creation (Henrekson & Stenkula, 2009; Swedberg, 2009). Research on entrepreneurship conducted by people with disabilities is often described somewhere between these two distinctions (Callahan et al., 2002; Conroy et al., 2010; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Parker Harris, Caldwell, et al., 2014; Shaheen, 2016). That disabled people are more likely to be considered self-employed rather than entrepreneurs may in part be due to ableist narratives, inaccessibility of resources, or theoretical debate around the definition of entrepreneurship. Regardless of these preconceptions, however, the entrepreneurship of people with disabilities has the potential for yielding growth that enters into a business cycle and, as such, for becoming a poverty reduction strategy, were it to prosper (Hagner & Davies, 2002; Parker Harris, Caldwell, et al., 2014; Parker Harris, Renko, et al., 2014).

When aligned with supportive disability employment policy, one such outcome of these entrepreneurial strategies is the potential reduction in dependency on social services. Ideally, the combined result of these events would have a marked influence on the larger economy with respect to Schumpeter's "link to business cycle" key element of entrepreneurship (2000). However, there are both valid arguments for and demonstrations of non-economic entrepreneurship based on Schumpeter's other respective key elements of motivation,

innovation, and overcoming resistance. Swedberg's extension of Schumpeter's noneconomic entrepreneurship model recognizes the import that artistic, political, and scientific innovations have on the *social* economy (2009). Here, capital or profit resulting from non-economic innovation is described as having less value to the individual in exchange for the greater common good, defined as "the social culture of a nation." In the non-economic entrepreneur's motivation, Schumpeter expounds, even in the absence of profit, one still finds "the will to conquer" and the "joy of creating" (Swedberg, 2009). Interpretation of these sentiments aligns with attributes of self-determination for disabled people with respect to inclusion; such attributes are accessible through entrepreneurship. The inclusion and representation of disabled people in "the social culture of a nation" is the greater common good (Swedberg, 2009). What then, whether the goals are economic or non-economic, is particular to the motivation of a disabled entrepreneur?

Motivation is considered a complex element of entrepreneurship, which often falls under themes that describe the push towards entrepreneurial endeavors out of necessity or the pull in response to opportunity. Much has been written about the push that results from the lack of access to traditional employment for marginalized communities, given structural oppression; unsurprisingly, less has been written about the pull of opportunity (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; De Clercq & Honig, 2011; Renko et al., 2016). In this regard, were the disabled entrepreneur to bring an innovation to market, the need to overcome resistance located in structural ableism (in the absence of policy developed specific to their support needs) may be addressed through entrepreneurial organization. The type of innovation through organization in Schumpeter's model of entrepreneurship refers to that economic process that is able to overcome the inertia and compel the new good through production to market, especially if, as a result, a

greater potential for profit is realized. One applicable form of organization is that of a cooperative (Swedberg, 2009). For the disabled entrepreneur, family could be an example of a cooperative organization.

Before industrialization, most businesses were family businesses, whereas after industrialization, families occupy a behind-the-scenes role. As such, their concern is mainly focused on growth, profit, and incorporation, rather than activities typical of cottage industries (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). Possibly, a family would fit Schumpeter's definition of an organization, as a component of the key element of innovation. Through a contemporary lens, family is an embedded organization akin to an incubator (Heck et al., 2006). Family based organization in relation to innovation is anchored in available economic, affective, educative, and connective resources that are based in family capital (Rodriguez et al., 2009; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Sorenson et al., 2010). This consideration illustrates the potential for the family to influence the young entrepreneurial family member in the entrepreneurial process.

Therefore, the neurodiverse young adult's entrepreneurship is not solely aimed at financially sustaining themselves. Indeed, their entrepreneurship is integrally related to the passions they are gifted with by virtue of their neurodiversity, and such passions motivate the creation of the business, while the support and cooperation of the family creates the organization to push said innovation into the marketplace. By extension, the supporting family are quasi-employees able to grow the business in a way that furthers defines the entrepreneurship.

2. **Self-determination**

The presumed dependence of neurodivergent people on others for their well-being highlights the importance of how care ethics inform both the social structure and interpersonal aspects of this relationship. The degree to which these two conditions might

complicate self-determination is further complicated by the societal expectations of independence involving idiosyncratic, arbitrarily determined standards. With respect to social development, self-determination is understood to be the network of internal and external factors that motivate intentional action in the interest of personal well-being. Psychological factors that are considered necessary to support self-determination include autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For neurodivergent people, experiential opportunities that inform development often occur in segregated environments that arguably limit the capacity for learning, such that self-determination is functionally relative to their landscape of growth. Therefore, the psychological factors of functional self-determination require consideration of the need for supporting development of self-regulating behavior in ways that inform empowerment (Wehmeyer, 1999).

Motivational theory describes what constitutes self-determination, and functional theory describes the conditions needed to optimize self-determination. Both involve positive psychological outcomes, while also leaving room for explanation of how they are engaged to effect change. Causal agency theory posits that self-determination is enacted when an individual executes behavior defining of autonomy, competence, and relatedness into agential action able to “cause an (desired) effect, accomplish a specific end, or to ... create change” (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Forber-Pratt, et al., 2015, p. 258). To elaborate, a self-determined individual consciously and intentionally engages in a deliberate *volitional* act. In this regard, action is *agentic* or otherwise self-directed toward an intentionally purposive goal. Agentic action is employed in response to environmental challenges and opportunities. These actions—volitional and agentic—are premised on *action-control beliefs* that describe the self-determining individual’s understanding of their relationship to the goal where they can expect to achieve their

desired or intended outcomes. For the NDYA entrepreneur their causal agency is reified through activities of entrepreneurship.

The actions of the causally self-determined agent, although contextually defined, are facilitated by relationships within their immediate environment. It is through this self-initiated progress of perceiving expected outcomes, which a causal agent believes can improve well-being and develop identity, that a person's world becomes larger and therefore presents an increasing number of challenges that are greater in intensity, where each clearing represents an autonomous decision or a demonstration of competence that requires social navigation. These possibilities can only materialize, however, if a person is conditionally situated in the development of potential. That is to say, the embodiment of this identity requires both self-determination and tangible opportunity. Such opportunities are available to the NDYA through entrepreneurship with the assistance of their family. Family extends resources that support the entrepreneurship while building interdependence that informs self-determination.

Self-determination, whether the command of intrinsically motivating behaviors or proficiency in the skills that establish causal agency, begin their social construction within the family of origin (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wehmeyer, 2014). Family support of self-determination is of interest given its positive correlation with adaptive development, postsecondary outcomes, and quality of life, among other aspects (Carter et al., 2012; Kim, 2019; Kirby et al., 2016). Like entrepreneurship, the process of the development of self-determination among NDYA is contextually influenced their family and their culture. There is no set standard, since each person approaches and arrives at a self-determination standpoint across their lifespan informed by multiple factors, given socio-cultural and cognitive diversity (Kim & Turnbull, 2004). Understanding the role of family in the self-determination of the entrepreneur is arguably

consistent with the role of family in self-determination for intellectually and developmentally disabled people. The literature available on the role of family in self-determination describes family perspectives, barriers to promotion, and supports and intervention (Dean et al., 2021). While families report and understand the importance of self-determination skills for their intellectually and developmentally disabled children, they also appreciate the amount of improvement needed for its consistent functioning (Carter et al., 2013). An oft cited barrier to self-determination was family concern over the potential vulnerability of their children (Saaltink et al., 2012). Limited evidence suggests, however, that the inclusion of family in self-determination interventions is a promising strategy (Hagner et al., 2012; Kim & Park, 2012). The family factors that encourage or hinder self-determination are also relevant to entrepreneurship. Those factors can be described by the construct of family capital, which comprises economic, cultural, and social capital.

3. **Family capital**

Family is the primary social network that influences a child's development. The capital of a family encompasses the social, economic, and cultural resources of its members, expended for and accessed by their children, in the interest of their present and future well-being (Furstenberg & Kaplan, 2004; Parcel & Hendrix, 2014). The degree to which these resources fluctuate within the family and are available for transfer or exchange over the life course has the potential to shape a young person's transition to adulthood (Furstenberg, 2010; Waithaka, 2014). Family capital frameworks include economic, representing income and assets; cultural, describing educational attainment and other contextual factors meant to classify one's social strata; and social capital. Unlike economic and cultural capital, social capital extends beyond the family or individual through conduits of trust and reciprocity within a social network

that establishes connections to available resources (Bourdieu, 1986). Whether the sum total of capital within a family can predict the futures of their children is debatable, but it is a way to operationalize the factors at play (Stone, 2001).

Outside forces on family capital during a child's transition to adulthood can influence how defining these milestones are met (Waithaka, 2014). Indeed, beginning in the late 20th century, neoliberal policies led to a sharp decline in manufacturing jobs, yielding higher unemployment rates for young men without a college degree (Danziger & Ratner, 2010). Concomitant wage shrinkage has extended the length of time that young adults live at home, delaying their entrance into marriage and establishment of their own families. For those remaining at home, their relationships with their family were found to be marked by stronger bonds when they were productively engaged (Furstenberg, 2010). Family capital can mediate the success of children reaching their transition goals, even as the outcomes for neurodivergent young adults less often include living independently (Anderson et al., 2014; Trainor et al., 2013). Indeed, for the NDYA entrepreneur, residing at home while productively engaged in family supported entrepreneurship are mutually inclusive.

How neurodivergent people experience social capital within their family depends on the family members and the circumstances. Studies on the social capital available and exchanged within the family network predominately focused on neurodivergent adults living outside of the family home (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004; Giesbers et al., 2020; Kramer et al., 2013; Widmer et al., 2008). In general, neurodivergent family members recognized that they received more support from their parents than their neurotypical siblings did. However, reciprocity in the form of emotional support between neurodivergent young adults and their siblings was found to be higher than that with their parents, and thus indicative of more balanced

relationships (Giesbers et al., 2020; Widmer et al., 2008). Siblings' social networks have a profound role in the lives of neurodivergent people with respect to employment, accessing services, and community participation. Moreover, neurodivergent people reciprocate when siblings include the disability advocacy community in their social networks.

The bridges, bonds, and links in the sibling social network serve to increase neurodivergent peoples' interdependence given the realities of parental demise (Kramer et al., 2013). The importance and potential of neurodivergent peoples' interdependence is evidenced in their family's access to community participation. The avenues by which these community connections are made serve to build the neurodivergent individual's social capital in the interest of their interdependence (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). While family capital comprises economic, cultural, and social capital, these aspects are interdependent, acting in concert in the interest of family members and as a unit. As such, family capital scaffolds the basic psychosocial needs to develop an interdependence that promotes self-determination and increases the reciprocal capacity to build one's social capital (Walker et al., 2011). The application of family capital toward the support of their young person's entrepreneurship is a platform to stage this process.

4. **Family supported entrepreneurship**

The agency gained through the entrepreneurial experience can steer the NDYA toward the self-determination fundamental to securing their personal well-being (De Clercq & Honig, 2011; Shir et al., 2019). A family supported entrepreneurship is an opportunity for the NDYA to focus their intrinsically located interests and skills into extrinsically motivated business goals (Hagner & Davies, 2002; Percival, 2019). In many ways, entrepreneurship is a heuristic platform for scaling the exercise of making routine choices to

contemplating complex decisions. Here, agency defining talent, focused on entrepreneurial activities, demonstrates autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Economic self-sufficiency may not and maybe should not be the intention of entrepreneurship considering the very real risk of losing disability benefits state and federal driven income threshold policies (Lee, 2019; Parker Harris, Renko, et al., 2014). Instead, parents may seek ways to address their young person's disengagement that consider their skills or interests when confronted with systemic barriers to competitive integrated employment (Bross et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2015). This research points to the possibilities of entrepreneurship as a way for families to redirect their young person's potential and engage them with their larger communities while developing interdependence in the process.

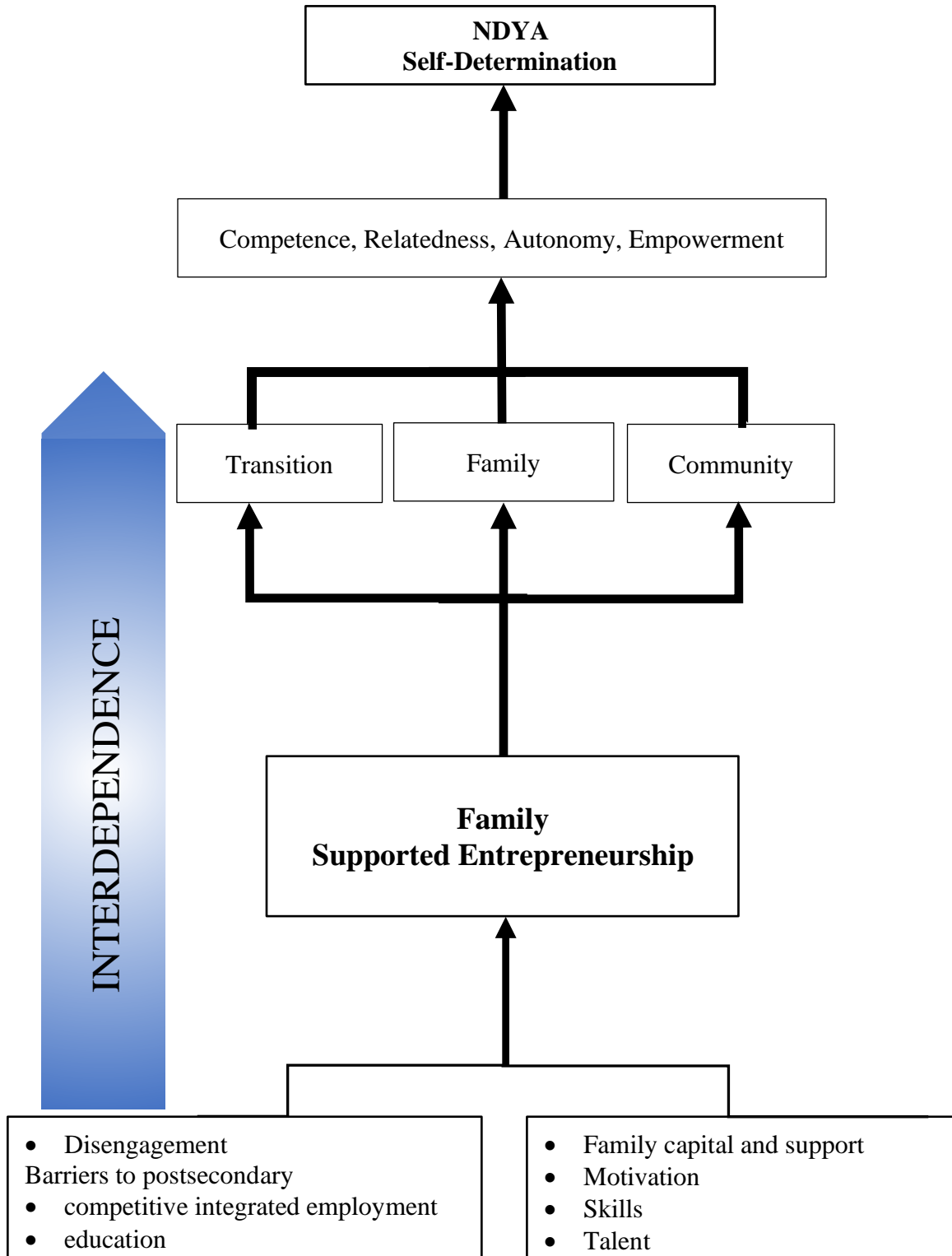
Families' support in the customization of entrepreneurial endeavors specific to and achievable within the family member's immediate ecosystem provide opportunities to establish interdependence with the potential to empower self-determination in the self-realization of the causal agent. Arguably, all entrepreneurship involves family to varying degrees (Rogoff & Heck, 2003). However, conserving a mutually empowering relationship between family members, such that control is not concentrated when building and maintaining a business in which there is a power imbalance, warrants critical stewardship (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007). The extant research on family support within small family firms, while important, has yet to include the dependence of disabled peoples on family members in the execution of their entrepreneurship. Such an appreciation challenges the dated and myopic myth that an entrepreneur is a rugged individualist and self-made man in ways that make room for disabled entrepreneurs having family support (Blanck et al., 1999; Rizzo, 2002; Von Mises, 2000). The research seeks to evolve this paradigm toward a more inclusive definition of the entrepreneur

who embodies success beyond the material. Instead, feminist care ethics and concepts of critical disability studies support outcomes of interdependence, empowerment, and self-determinism have intangible values.

C. **Theoretical Framework**

The framework informing my research must be able to provide a theoretical platform that integrates my three areas of interest: neurodiversity, family supported entrepreneurship, and emergent adulthood. Feminist care ethics and standpoint theory with a Critical Disability Studies lens are identified as discourses that have the potential to address these interests with respect to research design, development, and data collection and analysis (Calás et al., 2009; Garland-Thomson, 2005, 2011; Kittay, 2011; Sprague & Hayes, 2000). The following conceptual map (Figure 1) visualizes an organization the concepts presented by this research. The map represents the real world progress of the family supported entrepreneur having outcomes that mark the behavioral and eventual psychological attributes that mark the transition to adulthood. The combination of systemic barriers to typical postsecondary outcomes that result in disengagement that impedes transition with marked potential of the NDYA potentiates the family to support entrepreneurship. Once initiated, the evolution of the NDYA's family supported entrepreneurship is informed by transition programming, while motivated to engage in entrepreneurial activities with family that introduce the NDYA to inclusive community engagement. It is within the synergy of the transition, family, and community complex that the NDYA establishes the competence, relatedness, autonomy, and empowerment that endow self-determination. Feminist care ethics and standpoint theory supported by the tenets of critical disability studies embrace alternative systems of development, interpretations of milestones, and quality of life demanded by oppressive patriarchal hegemony.

FIGURE I: Conceptual map



Feminist care ethics advances an understanding of interdependence and self-determination, which explores family supported entrepreneurship (FSE) as a pathway to adulthood, embracing the intimacy required in relationships of support. Feminist standpoint theory complements feminist care ethics, in order to better recognize the conditions that anticipate entrepreneurial engagement, its organization in the family system, and the centering of the NDYA in entrepreneurship having outcomes in self-determination. Feminist care ethics and standpoint theory are viewed through a Critical Disability Studies lens to understand how ableism position NDYA and family within a standpoint and to present entrepreneurship in an emancipatory context.

1. **Feminist care ethics**

Members of two groups—women and disabled people—that have critically analyzed and called for reform in the delivery of care are also the two groups most impacted by such care. Feminist theory has materialized care in the oppressive history of wage-worthy gendered labor, with its location in the private sphere of home, whereas disability rights theorists have situated care in the uneven power dynamics between giver and recipient in favor of, respectively, employee and employer (Erevelles, 2011). Both feminist and disability care ethics rightly bring compensation for care to the fore, even as they elide the virtuous conditions of care ethics (Kittay, 2011). By emphasizing autonomy lost when embodying care in gender for the giver, and its diminishment in the disabled, risks the devaluation of interdependence. The overlap of feminist care ethics with that of disability care ethics embraces a dialectic of care and autonomy, in which interdependence can describe an identity not “caught in the independence-dependence dichotomy,” and which instead speaks to the human condition more broadly (Reindal, 1999, p. 365).

Feminist care ethics marked a departure from care ethics when Carol Gilligan theorized a gender difference in moral development when boys and girls were presented with a moral dilemma concerning the lengths a spouse should go to in the interest of their partner's life. Per the responses of the young participants, Gilligan posited that boys consider principled grounds and legal consequences, whereas girls take a narrative approach that focuses on the qualities of the relationship, arrived at through communication between the involved parties (Gilligan, 1993). Her construction of a feminist care ethic contributed to a discursive framework of morality built on these observations. Consensual relationships—whether filial, conjugal, platonic, or financial—are the foundation of actionable care: “being there, listening, the willingness to help, and the ability to understand-take on a moral dimension, reflecting the injunction to pay attention and not to turn away from need.” (Gilligan, 1989, p. 61). An ethics of care suggests that which is necessary to maintain life and the quality thereof; however, this can understandably include actions taken by caregivers in the interest of the recipient's well-being and future potential. This research describes care in the context of family supporting NDYA skill and motivation through entrepreneurship given lack of opportunities for them to otherwise flourish.

Feminist disability studies build on feminist theory and is deployed in as many disciplines that critically analyze the structure of power dynamics in understanding the human condition. Feminist disability studies also recognizes and confronts the historical silencing of disabled people, who are defined by socially dominant paradigms that are constructed by disabling dichotomies, which, not unlike gender, emphasize the embodiment of perceived strength over weakness (Garland-Thomson, 2005; Morris, 2001). As such, it tackles problematic relationships that socially reproduce disability identities of dependence while simultaneously

ignoring narratives situating care beyond those of mother and infant, or Clara Barton nursing wounded soldiers. This is not to suggest, however, that care cannot be politically suspect, as when the discussion of care more often centers the caregiver while the receiver is absent (Davy, 2019; Morris, 1991). While the findings of this research present a view of care relationships between NDYA entrepreneur and supporting family that is progressive, the power dynamics between the parties are still of concern.

Post-modern feminist theory stands in tension with the critical disability argument that care denies autonomy when directed by the caregiver, such that care is agency-affirming only when it is a material exchange between care-giving employee and care-receiving employer (Hughes et al., 2005). Feminist disability theorists contest this standpoint as reductive in its denial of the very often intimate nature of the care relationship and in its necessary subjection of either party into subordination (Kittay, 2011; Morris, 2001). Furthermore, autonomy is understood to mean nondependent more often in the Global North, where care is an established dimension of the service economy in welfare states (Kelly, 2013). This material ethics of care present a dialectal dilemma where socio-cultural attitudes regarding the requirement of care of those physically, cognitively, or psychiatrically disabled denies their autonomy in ways that disenfranchise them (Erevelles, 2011; O'Leary, 2017). The family supported entrepreneurship challenges this interpretation as the NDYA establishes autonomy through interdependence developed while engaging in entrepreneurial activities.

What then, do feminist disability scholars have to say about care that centers and honors the concerns of disabled people? Garland-Thomson speaks of the importance of conserving “the prevalence, persistence, and enduring sturdiness rather than” protecting disability that is understood as vulnerability (2012, p. 341). By this definition, it is the

embodiment of disability that determines agency, rather than undermining it. In this regard, the conservation of disability, when demonstrated through participatory citizenship, materializes the distribution of equal rights (Garland-Thomson, 2012). Conserving disability will require care, be it assistance with the quotidian or the supervision of life-saving medical treatment.

Contemplation of the degree of care that situates the embodiment of disability would have us examine whether participation requires contribution, which if immaterial is constitutive of the personhood integral to citizenship (Kittay, 2005). The NDYA establishes their entrepreneurship in part, through their disability identity where the disabled entrepreneur reifies personhood.

Feminist disability care ethicist Eva Kittay believes that contribution should not define personhood, the definition of which is built on empirically determined normative demands (2005). Kittay is, in part, responding to the eugenic meanderings of a *practical* ethicist who discounts the value of life for those having significant neurological impairment, and who believes that they do not have the psychological capacities to perceive their future. The practical ethicist demands that this perception qualify relationships, which in its absence, invalidates the legitimacy of the connection. If the connection cannot exist with respect to the cognitively disabled person, neither can its continuity with the person to whom they are connected. Therefore, those that do not and cannot hold personhood—infants, intellectually and developmentally significantly disabled, comatose, or having advanced dementia—are consigned to the margins of human existence.

Philosophical examination of who is not a person on moral grounds has no good moral purpose. Entertaining these purposes denigrates relationships that people have with those who are believed to be unable to form them, when in fact, from a patriarchal perspective, they are both primary and paramount. Indeed, Kittay submits that family is the core human

connection that triumphs over any privation of personhood (2005). The family seeking to widen the NDYA's world through their entrepreneurial potential is an exemplary connection.

Were there to be a defined feminist disability care ethics, its standpoint would include the amplification of the feminist and disability care theorist message that care is a relationship having reciprocal dynamics (Guidry-Grimes et al., 2020; Kittay, 2011; Morris, 1991; Sprague & Hayes, 2000). It is the right of the person to provide care as much as it is the right for a person to receive care, not only to live, but to enjoy a quality of life defined by well-being. What role the family plays in care marks an impasse, where the material aspects of feminist care scholarship have neglected to include family care giving or receiving disabled women into the discourse (Morris, 2001; Shpigelman, 2015; Walmsley, 1993). The vacuum left by their absence meant there were few to warn of the potential for abuse of disabled people with the establishment of care located in the collective settings, including institutional warehousing. Moreover, disabled people (and in particular, disabled women) were left out of the organizing and advocacy for social policy to develop community-based care that would support inclusion and keep people near their families (Morris, 1991).

In the 1970's, the deinstitutionalization movement radically changed where disabled people reside. In the absence of policy that would ensure a safe transition, the landscape of civil rights that both feminists and disabled people had hoped to shape with respect to care requires a continued focus. Housing and employment remain policy priorities, while independent living options go underfunded, and we await the overturning of subminimum wages legislation (APSE, 2023; Novack, 2021). Now, close to three-quarters of autistic young adults live with their family, dropping to 60% by 30 years of age (Roux et al., 2017). The right to autonomy, defined by the self-determination of developmentally disabled people, initially comes under the

aegis of their family members who strongly desire the community inclusion of their loved ones (Ryan & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Taylor et al., 2016; Tint et al., 2017). Families both need and are eager for direction on their ethical obligations to their intellectually and developmentally disabled children. They also seek to ensure that their children's self-advocacy will be heard (Heller & Harris, 2011; Heller & Kramer, 2009; Hewitt et al., 2013; Hole et al., 2013; Nonnemacher & Bambara, 2011).

Practical applications of family and care ethics, with respect to self-determination in the context of autonomy, are predominately represented in biomedical ethics. Here, autonomy refers to family involvement in patient consent and the right to medical privacy, treatment, or termination of life-saving medical treatment (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019). Critical disability analysis of care ethics and the transformative empowerment of self-determination have been represented in publications spanning several disciplines, include sociology, education, gender studies, political science, and developmental psychology (Bourke, 2022; Erevelles, 2011; Scott & Doughty, 2012; Smith et al., 2007; Sprague & Hayes, 2000). These theoretical articles introduce families to challenge and recenter the positionality of disabled family members. Recently, autistic self-advocates have confronted the tension between the ethical complications of family care and their often impeded self-determination (Day et al., 2020; Rossetti et al., 2008; Rottier & Gernsbacher, 2020). The self-advocacy community challenges any and all parental advocacy given their history of normalization grounded in the medical model of disability, by calling for self-representation (McCoy et al., 2020). In this seemingly terse dismissal, however, emerge possibilities of intra-community interdependence between autistic folk self-determining an autistic identity that owns the table rather than seeking an invitation for a seat to author policies and distribute resources.

Clearly there is fertile ground for feminist care ethics, in the context of disability, to continue a discourse that shapes the evolution of an ethics of care beyond that of medical bioethics through interdisciplinary critical analysis. Given this utility and importance in Critical Disability Studies, feminist care ethics is useful in the examination of family support of disabled family member entrepreneurs. I would be remiss, however, to analyze entrepreneurship solely through this lens without also appreciating the business ethics of entrepreneurship discourse. Ideologically, capitalism would have us believe that maximizing profit at the expense of labor is in the interest of societal well-being (Heilbroner, 2011). In the classic definition of the entrepreneur as a force of capitalism, whether as an innovator exploiting new resources or unrealized market opportunity, profit is the end purpose of any entrepreneurial venture (Schumpeter, 2000; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). As neoliberal policy came to dominate the economies in the global North, the popularity of entrepreneurship became a subject worthy of academic rigor, inviting its own ethical examination outside of business and managerial studies (Harris et al., 2009; Harvey, 2006).

Although the focus of business ethics in the context of entrepreneurship speaks more to formal enterprise than family supported entrepreneurship, there is considerable academic interest in the ethics of entrepreneurship (Osorio-Vega, 2019; Sengupta & Lehtimäki, 2022; Vallaster et al., 2019). A recent comprehensive literature review on ethics and entrepreneurship conducted a bibliometric key word analysis of relevant research and found that a social entrepreneurship article had higher citation count than any other publication in the business ethics domain (Vallaster et al., 2019). This research interprets social entrepreneurship as having an intentional social mission and casting a wide contextual net that includes environmental, educational, and cultural concerns, and just as distinct organizational platforms and objectives.

Furthermore, the authors theorize an evaluative standard of social entrepreneurship and posit the inclusion of intangible products of social wealth, such as well-being and happiness, in addition to economic wealth, to be constitutive of total wealth (Zahra et al., 2009).

I introduce social entrepreneurship here as embracing the value of non-economic wealth and recognizing the distributive value of its objective in the purpose of its social mission. Arguably, both immaterial wealth and social mission are instrumental, if not theoretically fundamental, to interdependence per feminist care ethics in the context of disability. Indeed, there is a growing body of research on disabled social entrepreneurs (Caldwell et al., 2012, 2016, 2020b; Harris et al., 2013, 2014; Parker Harris, Renko et al., 2014). There is also a smaller body of work that considers relational or care ethics and social entrepreneurship (Osorio-Vega, 2019; Sengupta & Lehtimäki, 2022). As an example, a case study that included two family supported enterprises of disabled family members introduced the concept of “shared value” to describe the nexus of the social mission and economic gain imperatives in the ethical grounding of business decisions. The shared value of an enterprise included the incorporation of social mission transparency as constitutive of and superlative to a social entrepreneurship identity alone (Osorio-Vega, 2019). This is not to say that every family supported entrepreneurship for the disabled entrepreneur is necessarily also a social entrepreneurship. Instead, a theoretical background of (social) entrepreneurship ethics is useful in the synthesis of a feminist care ethical foundation that informs the self-determination of the disabled entrepreneur and their interdependence with respect to family support.

The importance of attending to the ethical grounding of the family supported entrepreneurship can benefit the disabled entrepreneur, the supporting family members, and the enterprise itself. This dissertation, however, centers the ethical interests of the entrepreneur.

Indeed, scholarly interest predominately emphasizes the entrepreneur, situating them in the ethical alignment of their organization with their influence on the performance and success of the business (Harris et al., 2009). This dissertation seeks to visualize the ethical alignment of the organization as embodied by family support and the entrepreneur, and its subsequent influence on the interdependence and self-determination of the disabled entrepreneur. To do this, an examination of family support will show how interdependence might operate within the entrepreneurship. This dynamic will be used to demonstrate the conditions that allow for and encourage self-determination as described by an autonomy that endows the entrepreneur with the (causal) agency to access well-being (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Forber-Pratt, et al., 2015). Moreover, this autonomy issues from the relationship with family in the concerted actions between NDYA and supporting family during entrepreneurship.

The dimensions of interdependence of the entrepreneur in the context of the entrepreneurship are located in their engagement with organizational activities conducted in both their self-interest and the interest of their enterprise. Self-determination via interdependence is initiated within the entrepreneurship when accessing opportunities that encourage behavioral attributes of relatedness, competence, autonomy. These opportunities occur amidst socio-contextual challenges presented by and within entrepreneurial decisions and actions, while mechanisms of critical stewardship of both the entrepreneur's self-determination progress and the enterprise ethically ground the entrepreneurship (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007). If, in the family supported entrepreneurship, the disabled entrepreneur is indeed the central stakeholder whose interdependence is honored, they would be able to effect change in the achievement of autonomy and well-being in the process.

2. **Feminist standpoint theory**

Feminist standpoint theory approaches an epistemological understanding that underscores and remains vigilant to challenging constructs of individual identity development through the subordinating reflection of patriarchal social architecture (Garland-Thomson, 2005). Here, Critical Disability Studies seeks to depart from the traditional social model of disability, where disability is defined as a socially constructed condition for the purpose of exclusion of disabled people, at the expense of the medical model of disability, that seeks to cure, fix, or otherwise normalize, those having a disability (Oliver, 2013; Oliver et al., 2012). Critical Disability Studies has evolved beyond the social model, asserting inclusion at the expense of disability identity defined by social assimilation (Garland-Thomson, 2005; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). As an example, the Critical Autism Studies view of the neurodiversity movement recognizes the neurobiological dichotomy of neurodivergent and neurotypical. The emancipation of the neurodivergent identity embraces a neurological difference that might trouble disability identity as a social construction (O'Dell et al., 2016).

If the neurodiversity movement appears at odds with the social model of disability, neither does it lend itself to a composite of deficits per the medical model of disability; instead, identity is a standpoint on a spectrum of neurodivergence (Davidson & Orsini, 2013; Woods et al., 2018). Autistic people have established “neurodiversity” to be the self-determined construct of their identity (Jaarsma & Welin, 2012). As such, they contend that they do not require acceptance on society’s terms with respect to inclusion, but instead assert that regardless of inclusion and social presence, they are still fully endowed with the rights and agency of membership (Bagatell, 2010; Baker, 2011; Fenton & Krahn, 2007). This phenomenon of

empowerment represents a paradigm shift from the patriarchal primacy standpoint that claims authority to “name.”

The NDYA is outside of the postsecondary transition system given the system’s inability to realize successful outcomes of competitive integrated employment (CIE) for their population (Roux et al., 2013). Additionally, the family that supports entrepreneurship for their NDYA is a participatory outsider when they realize that the traditional transition outcomes are inaccessible to them (Giarelli et al., 2013; Milen & Nicholas, 2017). The oppression of the outsider is a failure of the postsecondary system to address the realities and needs of the NDYA community (Roux et al., 2017). The manifestation of this systemic failure is a process that leads to NDYA disengagement (Roux et al., 2015). The emancipatory and transformative aspect of feminist standpoint theory celebrates this oppressed outsider status by recognizing the outsider’s potential to empower the insider through the recognition of oppression (Harding, 2004, 2009). Indeed, it may be their neurodiverse difference that compels marketable innovation and, with the radical support of their family, shifts the paradigm of empowerment to the NDYA and away from the inadequate established systems of transition.

Feminist standpoint theory and Critical Disability Studies theory complement one another. Both are founded in civil rights movements that seek inclusion. Moreover, both return agency to those whom their foundation theories would locate externally in society (Collins, 1986; Garland-Thomson, 2005). Liberal and neoliberal accommodations within systems and institutions should not be accorded reactively, but rather enacted in response to the proactive expectations of marginalized populations (Garland-Thomson, 2005; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Subsequently, the neurodivergent, along with their families, eschew the accommodating policies that have not offered easier access to better opportunities of CIE. Instead, they seek to

practice self-determination, in concert with family support, to seek alternative employment on their own terms. Feminist standpoint theory shifts the dominant paradigm by proposing that externally determined relationships, situated within the FSE, have the power to shape identities of personal and social responsibility to the neurodiverse insider (Sprague & Hayes, 2000). These theoretical frameworks thus inform my research that privileges the NDYA and their family as insiders, with the knowledge that allows us to understand what motivates the process of FSE, as well as the resulting outcomes (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995).

Feminist standpoint theory endows the oppressed with the primacy to recognize oppressive conditions. The empowerment of the oppressed depends on this primary understanding. The NDYA experience—inside of the barriers to traditional postsecondary transition, and actively witnessed by their families—motivates both toward entrepreneurship. Rather than acquiescing to arbitrarily informed normative standards of transition, FSE privileges neurodiverse attitudes, norms, and values integral to the entrepreneurial process. The FSE process empowers NDYA self-determination by requiring active participation. In addition to outcomes of self-determination, community participation integrates community to engage with the entrepreneurial products of neurodiversity. This engagement, theoretically informed by both feminist standpoint and critical disability ideals, brings neurodiversity to the forefront of the FSE located social relationships on the terms of the NDYA.

D. **Neurodivergent Young Adults and Employment**

Each year, approximately 50,000 special education students with autism leave their postsecondary settings (McDonough & Revell, 2010). By the year 2027, an estimated 500,000 autistic young adults in the United States will transition into adulthood (Roux et al., 2015). By their early 20's, only slightly more than one-third of autistic adults will be employed (Roux et

al., 2017). In comparison, an earlier study finds that almost twice the number of their peers with special education designations of learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, or speech-language impairment have achieved employment (Shattuck et al., 2012). This disparity raises the concern that autistic young adults are not accessing the community engagement provided by employment. The formative experiences of employment are necessary to build the self-determination skills they need to develop the responsibilities, meaningful relationships, and social contributions that define adulthood (Arnett, 2007; Schalock, 2000; White et al., 2018).

The barriers that autistic young adults face when seeking employment ultimately represent exclusion from developing the personal responsibility one acquires from social participation in a work setting. Recent congressional attention and policy are beginning to address this growing concern (Kiernan et al., 2011; Upton, 2014). Unfortunately, however, replacing mandated employment related services that end upon high school graduation with newly created postsecondary programs for competitive integrated employment has found uneven funding and prioritization at the state level (Freeze, 2017; Mank, 2016). In the meantime, families are at a loss when finding ways to best help their transition-aged autistic children achieve milestones in their life journey (Blustein et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2014). Beyond demonstrating how undeveloped policy begets deficient programming, the employment data significantly illuminates two concerns. First, many of the barriers are systemic in nature, beginning with the complications of executing postsecondary goals developed in school, and continuing with parents' frustration with agencies designed to serve disabled adults (Hendricks, 2010; Holmes et al., 2018b; Milen & Nicholas, 2017; Roux et al., 2017). Secondly, families are left to piece together creative approaches for their children, while redefining and fine tuning their transition to adulthood (Cheak-Zamora et al., 2015; Cheak-Zamora et al., 2013; Francis et al.,

2013). The following section reviews the landscape of postsecondary outcomes for NDYA and offers a brief history of federal policies that inform their standpoint.

1. **Labor market**

The transition to adulthood for young Americans typically includes engagement in postsecondary employment. The employment rate of young adults with a cognitive disability continues to fall short of that of their neurotypical peers. Supplementary census data reveal that twice as many young adults between the ages of 16-21 without any disabilities are employed, compared to youth with a cognitive disability (41% vs. 20%), although the latter do make some gains (76% vs. 41%) between the ages of 22 and 30 years of age (Butterworth et al., 2017). An earlier 10-year longitudinal study on the postsecondary achievement of autistic young adults within the same age parameters found that they were under-employed at a greater rate than their peers with other cognitive disabilities, worked far fewer hours, and were paid less on average (Butterworth et al., 2015; Shattuck et al., 2012).

Although NDYA and their families usually express a preference for working in the community, only 4% of intellectual developmental disability (IDD) agency clients between the ages of 18 and 21 ultimately end up in integrated employment, and they typically work less than 20 hours a week (National Core Indicators, 2019). The majority find themselves working in sheltered workshops or community-based nonwork services and day activity center placement (Roux et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2015), given the pipelines established in secondary special education settings ("*U.S. v. Rhode Island and City of Providence*," 2013). In these contexts, the goal of postsecondary transition (i.e., the gold standard) of CIE placement—having minimum wage pay, benefits, and opportunity for advancement—remains elusive (Migliore et al., 2012; Roux et al., 2013; Shogren & Plotner, 2012; Test et al., 2009; Tucker et al., 2017).

If the primary goal of disability employment is the development of skills associated with emerging adulthood, then reasonable expectations of the work experience include the development of personal and social responsibility (Arnett, 2004). In this regard, the development of these responsibilities manifests in the acquisition of life skills that empower the young person through self-determination and community participation (Anderson et al., 2016; Bishop-Fitzpatrick et al., 2016; Camarena & Sarigiani, 2009; Schalock, 2000; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). However, where these life skills are learned, whether taught as part of a secondary educational curriculum, postsecondary transition program, pragmatic experience, or a combination thereof proves a dilemma.

2. **History of secondary to postsecondary transition policy**

Comprehending postsecondary transition requires a review of the structural contexts that have the potential to greatly influence, if not fully determine, the trajectory of the neurodivergent young adult's future. The structural contexts seemingly outside of their control begin with the policies that control how systems inform the institutions that address programmatic intervention designed to guide transition. Policy informed postsecondary programming defines this transition as the transformation expected from the high school student when meeting individualized performance objectives developed to achieve identified postsecondary goals. Educational and community-based institutions identify goals of employment or postsecondary education, based on the socio-culturally determined belief that they provide the learning experiences that ensure the young adult's postsecondary transition to independent young adulthood.

The characteristics that the emerging young adult is expected to master include the life skills of practicing self-care and establishing meaningful personal and community-based

relationships, while also advocating and negotiating for one's personal rights (Hardman, 2010). These competencies are critical foundations for postsecondary education, vocational training, or on-the-job experience. For secondary students with disabilities, transition also refers to the planning mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA (Hardman, 2010). The foundation of the student's transition is built on the cornerstone individualized education plan (IEP) they develop with their school-based transition team, based on their skills and talents. Ideally directed by the student, the team includes teachers, ancillary service providers, social workers, and parents, and it is linked with community resource programs. While considering postsecondary options, the team is responsible for identifying and implementing a program designed for the student to achieve the goals of independence while also recognizing the student's talents and interests. Furthermore, the team is expected to coordinate postsecondary services through community-based agencies, including, but not limited to, advocacy, employment programs, continuing education, and vocational rehabilitation (Hardman & Dawson, 2010).

Built on a forty-year foundation of education and disability federal policy, the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated that children with disabilities receive a public-school education with comprehensive programmatic intervention designed to help them achieve their full potential. Although the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act guaranteed access to free and appropriate public education (FAPE), the segregation of students into self-contained special education classrooms did not take into consideration what the students needed for full participation" (Education for All Handicapped Children, 1975; Hardman, 2010; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Under IDEA, students received services and accommodations designed to improve performance in the least restrictive

environment, which was more inclusive of the wider school community (Hardman, 2010). While the number of students sharing the special education category of autism did see gains in employment-in particular, competitive integrated employment (CIE)-these rates largely remain stagnant. Some 14 years later, the mandate-meant to level the secondary education playing field-found NDYA still struggling to access the employment opportunities realized by their neurotypical peers (Grigal et al., 2011; Wilczynski et al., 2013).

The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA looked to improve the employment outlook by further articulating transition programming policy to focus IEPs on instruction and activities that result in postsecondary outcomes of education and integrated employment (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). The reauthorization, however, failed to revive flagging efforts to improve postsecondary employment outcomes due to the lack of clear guidelines necessary to ensure a seamless transition. Prevocational planning in the secondary setting alone may have been considered adequate, given established disability rights legislation designed to protect students' postsecondary employment opportunities. This legislation included Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that declared it unlawful to preclude people from full participation in federally funded programming ("Section 504 Vocational Rehabilitation Act," 1973). Section 504 was the result of the tireless and heroic efforts of disability activists who won the battle that resulted in the right to public education and employment services for people with disabilities (Scotch, 2009).

In the struggle for full community participation, Section 504 laid the foundation for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) seventeen years later. The single line of language in Title II, that “disabled individuals ... interact with non-disabled people to the fullest extent possible,” mandates integration through the legal protection from discrimination in, and

the establishment of accommodations for, employment (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990). Furthermore, although the language of Title I of the ADA actively protects people with disabilities from employment discrimination and provides reasonable accommodations for them, accessing employment that is both gainful and integrated in the community has proven more difficult. In the three decades since its passage, challenges to the ADA have resulted in a number of decisive, precedent-setting victories, which have ultimately influenced legislation that continues to shape effective employment policy for young adults with disabilities (Brennan-Krohn, 2016; Novak, 2015; Rinaldi, 2013). Likewise, the reauthorization of IDEA recognizes the postsecondary potential of students with disabilities in the development of actionable transition program objectives (Burgess & Cimeria, 2014; Hardman, 2010; Shattuck et al., 2011).

Once students leave their secondary setting, there is no formal means for their teachers and school administrators to know whether their IEP goals of transition have been met. Arguably, the fundamental focus of the secondary IEP is determined by and experienced within the confines of the student's high school. The school administrations' creation of programming that can effectively impact access to CIE likely requires new policy funding for efforts beyond redesigning or reorganization of IEP services and delivery to include seamless transition programming with outside employment agencies (Butterworth et al., 2017; Mank, 2016). Still, unless follow-up focusses on realistic parameters of success, the full picture of the outcome will remain unclear. For example, four years after IDEA reauthorization mandated postsecondary transition programming to improve employment outcomes, analysis of vocational rehabilitation (VR) employment case closures found a significant improvement for autistic young adults relative to clients with other disabilities (Lugas et al., 2010). There remained, however, a distinct disparity in the quality of employment findings for autistic clients relative to others. The former

worked on average one-third fewer hours (24 vs. 36 hours) and just short of two-thirds the adjusted average weekly earnings (\$196 vs. \$316) (Smith & Lugas, 2010). Additional VR data employment case closure analysis did find gains in the seven years after IDEA reauthorization. These results varied widely amongst the states, however, indicating a failure to significantly improve underemployment relative to 2004 (Burgess & Cimeria, 2014). Efforts to address an unpromising future underscored by these chronically disappointing data would require better policy reinforced through a series of legal efforts that challenge systemic barriers.

3. **Work activity centers and sheltered workshops**

Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) allows nonprofit agencies to employ people with disabilities in segregated settings for well below minimum wage . Decades after the passage of the ADA, the spirit and intent of its Title II integration mandate, which envisioned a new paradigm of civil rights for people with disabilities, has yet to be fully realized. Work activity centers receive federal and state funding per Section 14(c) to provide shelter-based life skills and job training, theoretically to prepare their clients for equal opportunity into competitive employment (Beckwith, 2016; Fair Labor Standards Act, 1938). By 2000, however, fewer than 5% of work activity center employees had transferred into community-based employment, and less than half remained employed after five years (USGAO, 2001).

Recent data released by state IDD agencies show incremental success in client integrated or individual placement, revealing the continuing need for program improvement (notably, state IDD agency reporting language has changed, such that CIE is now identified as either integrated or individual employment). Although there has been a steady decline number of people with IDD working in facility-based services, there has not been a proportional increase in

CIE. This difference is likely due to a change in policy that has limited 14(c) certification, along with states' failure to increase spending in employment services. Instead, the number of IDD agency clients in community-based non-work services has more than doubled between 1999 and 2019 (Winsor, 2022).

The policy necessary for realizing a paradigm shift from segregation toward productively integrating people with IDD into the community would require a systemic approach, in addition to funding. A cost-benefit analysis found that the cost sheltered work was more than twice per capita that of providing support for people with IDD to work in the community (Cimera, 2007). Thus, the employment of individuals with IDD outside of a sheltered workshop was not only feasible, but it also paid the employee more and had a lower tax burden (Cimera, 2008, 2012). Although activity centers are meant to prepare people for life and employment in the community, referrals to vocational rehabilitation from a sheltered setting, for autistic adults in particular, had outcomes no better than referrals from elsewhere (Cimera et al., 2012).

These data suggest the need for a greater effort on the part of transition programming if autistic young adults are to achieve better community integrated postsecondary outcomes. This effort requires scrutiny of policy in the interest of improving postsecondary transition outcomes. Enforcement begins with challenging the lack of access to integrated opportunities through the courts to drive policy to increase community participation. The intention of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the spirit of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act provide the foundation needed to build a case that would advance the integration of people with IDD into the community. The language of these civil rights legislative achievements was instrumental in the precedent-setting *Olmstead* Supreme Court decision,

which shifted the paradigm of invisibility and isolation of people with disabilities to integrated participation in the community through access to health, housing, education, and employment services (*Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W.*, 1999).

The first case to apply the integration mandate was *U.S. v. The State of Rhode Island and the City of Providence* (2013), where the DOJ determined that Mount Pleasant High School students having developmental disabilities in the Harold A. Birch Vocational Program were being systemically funneled into the sheltered workshop and day service Transition Through Planning Program and thus, isolated from nondisabled students. This process, often called “tracking,” gave these young adults no other option for either postsecondary education or integrated employment, supported or otherwise. Interpretation of *Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W* requires integration with nondisabled people to the maximum extent possible, whether or not day or residential programs were in view. Thus, these students need not live in an institution for their civil rights to be violated under Title II of the ADA, as established by the findings in *DAI v. Paterson case* (Stefan, 2012). The interim agreement requires establishing a transition process for current workshop employees and students with disabilities, to integrate them into community-based supported employment. Additionally, the state will no longer place students in, or provide funding for, the sheltered workshops and day programs (*U.S. v. Rhode Island and City of Providence*, 2013).

Already under the scrutiny of the DOJ, the State of Rhode Island was found to have 80% of developmentally disabled employees in sheltered workshops for at least ten, and often more than 15 years, at an average pay of \$2.21 an hour. The DOJ considered this an extended reliance on segregated services at the expense of community-based services and supported employment, and it considered the continued isolation of those with IDD to be in violation of Title II of the

ADA, according to its interpretation in the *Olmstead* integration decision. The resulting consent decree compelled the state to pledge a commitment to providing for community-integrated options in the ten years since the decree. This includes supported employment placement to 2,000 people from both sheltered workshops and facility-based day programs, along with transitioning secondary students (*U.S. v. Rhode Island*, 2014).

Meanwhile, an appeals court found the Oregon Department of Human Services to have violated the Title II right to access integration for eight people with IDD through the unequal employment service program funding in favor of sheltered workshops over supported community-based employment. The initial case was dismissed because the court was of the opinion that the suit required a fundamental alteration of services through the imposition of a nonexistent standard of care (*Lane v. Brown*, 2015). Of interest was the argument presented by the Oregon Department of Human Services that the integration mandate of Title II did not include segregated employment (Americans with Disabilities Act Title II, 1990). Regardless, according to the *Olmstead* precedence and DOJ application of such in *U.S. v. City of Providence and State of Rhode Island*, separate services are segregated services, inherently unable to fulfill the intent of the integration mandate and therefore, the participation with nondisabled people through the provision of access and opportunity (*U.S. v. City of Providence and State of Rhode Island*, 2013). The settlement requires the state of Oregon to give some 1,000 current sheltered workshop employees the opportunity to work in the community at competitive wages. Furthermore, 4,900 young adults transitioning out of secondary school will have access to Vocational Rehabilitation services designed to prepare them for competitive employment. The state will take measures to ensure integrated and supported employment at a competitive wage for those people with IDD based on their skill sets and interests (*Lane v. Brown*, 2015).

These cases have informed and reinforced legislation with the potential to greatly influence the direction of postsecondary transition programming for young adults with IDD. The first of these cases preceded the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the latest anticipated the competitive integrated employment initiatives known as Employment First (E1) occurring at the federal and state levels. Employment First (E1) is the political recognition that the deinstitutionalization that began in the 1970's took place without a plan to prepare for the community reentry of a vulnerable population. Decades later, this population might be even more vulnerable, given their sheltered workshop experience; thus, E1 is readying the responsible agencies to bring the community into the fold.

4. **Work Innovation Opportunity Act**

Employment First (E1) scaffolds its framework on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA succeeds earlier legislation that proved ineffective in improving job prospects and labor conditions for NDYA (Butterworth et al., 2014; Hoff, 2014a, 2014b; Novak, 2015). These improvements will provide opportunities for people with disabilities to receive the education and training necessary to develop the skills toward securing CIE. WIOA addresses systemic barriers by establishing state service accountability of performance regarding outcome measures through data collection and surveillance. Failure to meet projections will result in funding sanctions (The National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, 2014). WIOA further seeks to remove barriers by shifting monies from subminimum wage certificate holding programs to fund pre-employment internship and on-the-job experience (Butterworth et al., 2017; Mank, 2016). This policy position, in part, responds to claims and concerns that NDYA are not socio-emotionally prepared for the rigors of employment in the absence of postsecondary transition services, which

are not available in segregated settings (Siperstein et al., 2014; Zalewska et al., 2016). Moving forward, preparing the young person with IDD for CIE requires the alignment of services in a unified coalition to address these concerns (Butterworth et al., 2017; Nord et al., 2015; Nord & Hepperlen, 2016).

Some 20 years before WIOA, state developmental disability agency directors organized combined efforts to repurpose existing policies to further CIE opportunities by way of interagency alignment of state programs; these efforts resulted in what is now known as E1. E1 objectives seek to dynamically interconnect, and make transparent, state and federal agency systems to enhance the successful delivery of their services toward achieving CIE goals (Hall et al., 2014; Klayman & Coughlin, 2017; Mank, 2016; The National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with DIabilities, 2015). In its execution, E1 manifests the spirit and intent of Titles I and II of the Americans with Disabilities Act in recognizing the capability of and right to employment in the most integrated setting, such that disability is not a factor in hiring, with the exception of accommodations necessary for job performance (The National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with DIabilities, 2015). The preclusion of 14(c) certificates holding community resource providers from offering postsecondary transition services, per the WIOA amended Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, removes a barrier to CIE for young adults' postsecondary transition (Butterworth et al., 2017; Freeze, 2017; Mank, 2016). E1 standard bearers mobilized a redirection from segregated facilities toward self-determined choice of employment for the most marginalized of the disability population (Bush & Tassé, 2017). WIOA supports each state's efforts through the funding of state-based Vocational Rehabilitation

Agencies' provision of prevocational training and employment services for NDYA, per E1 direction (Mank, 2016).

a. **Vocational Rehabilitation System**

Vocational Rehabilitation employment services begin with an assessment to determine eligibility; they continue with vocational counseling and referral, vocational training, personal assistance services associated with employment, and job placement (Chen et al., 2015; McDonough & Revell, 2010). Neurodivergent people engage with varying degrees of VR services at different stages in their life and diverse outcomes. Public funding is often the only option for autistic young adults to access those services that they received in a secondary setting and that have benefitted them in their search for integrated employment with or without other support (Kaya et al., 2016; Migliore et al., 2012). These services have proven necessary for placement when compared to the experiences of those having other disabilities. Often, braiding and blending these services with other developmental and disability service and employment agencies can enhance placement opportunities (McDonough & Revell, 2010).

A deeper analysis suggests that employment outcomes in relation to access to and engagement with VR services are more nuanced. Between 2002-2011, state-based VR service reports had multiple degrees of difference in wages and hours worked. Thus, a nationwide standardized approach, such as E1, is necessary before any real understanding of how well VR services meet the needs of transition aged youth with autism is possible (Burgess & Cimera, 2014). While guided by WIOA's federal guidelines, E1 policy and execution is up to the each state's discretion (Klayman & Coughlin, 2017; The National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, 2014). Therefore, VR placements depend on the host state's disability employment policy service delivery and success

rates as well as the vitality of their economy (Davis, 2018). By implication, VR program planning and distribution of resulting services are under state purview and can respond to the fluctuation of their local economies and constituents' needs (Burgess & Cimeria, 2014; Nye-Lengerman, 2017). Furthermore, constituent needs arguably depend on the standards of special secondary education and postsecondary transition planning (Sansosti et al., 2017).

Resistance to program reorganization, when it requires redistribution of limited resources, is natural and expected. Such measures may be necessary, however, given the infrequency of school contact with VR on behalf of transition aged youth with autism when compared to members of their cohort with other disabilities (Zalewska et al., 2016), as well as their utilization of more VR services, at greater cost, with lower employment outcomes (Chen et al., 2015). For example, readjusting program delivery to intensive, higher-cost services over a shorter period of time benefitted employment outcomes for all transitioned aged youth (Kaya et al., 2016). Seemingly low-cost efforts to connect students with VR are harder to oppose when tax dollars are being spent to create real competitive employment opportunities for members of society typically shut out from equal economic participation.

Factoring an appreciation of this population's diversity, including in their cognitive, communication, and social skills, into the design of program and delivery of service might also improve employment outcomes (Nye-Lengerman, 2017; Zalewska et al., 2016). For example, a study on how autism comorbidities influence the VR process revealed disparities in the process experience relative to integrated job outcomes. Although receipt of services significantly improved job outcomes across all categories of impairment, this was not the case with assessment. When autistic clients were assessed, they were less likely to achieve integrated employment. The development of an individualized employment plan according to clients' stated

interests and skills illustrates its importance. Surprisingly, however, such plans negatively affect placement. Only those who were unemployed at VR intake received assessments, while those who were employed did not (Nye-Lengerman, 2017). This would have us believe that those who came without employment were unemployable, when the possibility of ineffectual efforts stemming from ableism is also plausible.

Perhaps the gaps in service reveal the need for specialized vocational rehabilitation counselor training and systemic variation within placement agencies, more than anything about the autistic clients that they serve (Honeycutt & Stapleton, 2013; Honeycutt et al., 2015; Kaya et al., 2016; Nye-Lengerman, 2017). An influential survey on the experiences of VR counselors illustrates that the many issues they confront when doing their job center around their frustration with the lack of community support services (Murza, 2016). Yet, when queried regarding the barriers to employment, they predominately locate them in a lack of interview and social skills among their transition aged autistic young adults. Respondents did, however, recognize their need for additional resources, such as further training, to meet their clients' needs.

A qualitative study of the experiences of adults on the spectrum with the VR echoes this systemic frustration (Müller et al., 2003). Notably, they locate this frustration in their unmet need for VR to provide assistance in their engagement with employment sites. These expectations described navigating the employment process, beginning with jobsite contact and interview, and including onsite job support, such as social skill development and the identification of an employee mentor. Furthermore, they believed that the counselors should have an idea of the job environment with respect to accommodations, focusing on neurodiversity training. These concerns mirror the autism specific training and community resources counselors

expressed a need for, and the lack of systemic alignment during postsecondary transition from IEP to outcome repeats, if employment program transitions to job.

Overall, systemic conditions that situate transition involve a misalignment in services and expectations from their own employees and those they seek to employ. These problematic scenarios are just the conditions that program alignment E1 initiatives outline. Publication regarding reception of E1 at the stakeholder level remains limited at this early stage of each state's implementation. In part, as evidenced above, E1 is not policy but a framework for existing federal and state legislation and policy. Therefore, this herculean task requires the synchronization of federal agencies unaccustomed to harmonious cooperation in the coordination of a campaign having no currently designated funding (Butterworth et al., 2017; Mank, 2016). The help young adults need from services when seeking employment are those that families typically fulfill for their children (Blustein et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2018b). Autistic children, however, depend on their families' normative social and communication abilities to smooth their entry. Parents who turn to public services designed to provide that assistance face institutional and systemic barriers; it is a job to find their children a job (Anderson et al., 2018; Chun et al., 2022a; Wilson et al., 2021). Therefore, E1 policy recognizes the importance and potential effectiveness of family advocacy on E1 program delivery framework (Kiernan et al., 2011; Mank, 2016).

E1 family advocacy can and will happen at many levels, from and within secondary settings for disability services, as well as other forms of lobbying. An example of the latter is an early model of family advocacy for supported employment in the community, Individual Placement and Support family advocate program. The program connects state mental health authorities and vocational rehabilitation services to provide individualized, supported

employment services. The IPS Learning Community trained family advocates to organize stakeholder communities for the purposes of education and advocacy in the development and sustainability of public advocacy to promote evidence-based practices of quality customized and supported employment (Swarbrick et al., 2017).

The established success of this group has carried over to recent leadership training programs. A New Hampshire-based program enrolled a mix of 30 family members and people with disabilities to participate in leadership training. The program develops leaders through disability history, disability policy education, grassroots organizing and communication skills, lifestyle opportunities of post-secondary education/health/assistive technology resources, and the legislative process. The training is used to develop policy advocacy projects that offer further access to resources through policy challenge (Schuh et al., 2017). Grassroots parent advocacy organizations are called upon to participate in systems alignment. An evaluation of one such project, Partnerships in Employment Systems Change Project, recommends the creation of parent and family coalitions to establish how best to support families and their transition aged youth with IDD to achieve CIE using an E1 model (Tucker et al., 2017). Such efforts can only enhance CIE resources and placement, considering PIE states have had success with CIE VR employment closures for transitioning young adults with IDD, whose post-secondary outcomes are often the lowest, compared to young adults with other disabilities. None of this advocacy, however, guarantees their child a job suited to their skills. Furthermore, advocacy work requires quite a bit of time with little to no pay, all for serving the purposes of the larger community and agencies that have failed families in the past. Therefore, parents often consider other ways to provide their children with more suitable opportunities, that for some includes entrepreneurship.

E. **Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship has long been a poverty fighting strategy for marginalized groups confronting systemic barriers to educational and employment opportunities (Caldwell, 2016). These barriers may indicate social and economic isolation on a larger scale (Robertson, 2009; Wehman et al., 2014). Entrepreneurial endeavors often require the support of family to succeed beyond start-up (Carroll, 2008; Cook, 2012; Kasper, 2014). For the neurodivergent young adult, the end goal of entrepreneurship may not be economic self-sufficiency, but rather an opportunity to showcase individualized passion and related skills within the market economy while engaging with a larger community (Antshel, 2018; Knott, 2018).

Self-determination as a goal or outcome of entrepreneurship, while noneconomic, serves a purpose for the entrepreneur and their business. The resultant effects of entrepreneurship located self-determination are dynamic and can include motivation of active engagement and the realization of well-being (Shir et al., 2019). For those entrepreneurs who look to entrepreneurship as an opportunity for engagement and personal development, and for those that support them, the well-being that comes with attributes of autonomy, relatedness, and competence is a worthwhile endeavor of interest to the interdisciplinary academic community (Atalay & Tanova, 2022).

1. **Entrepreneurship in the context of disability**

The official labor statistics that best indicate a business having its foundation in entrepreneurship are collected under the category of self-employment. According to the 2016 US Department of Labor Bureau of Statistics, the rate of employment for people between the ages of 16 and 64 years of age with no disability is 3.5 times that of people with a disability (US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Yet, people with disabilities are nearly

twice as likely to be self-employed than those without a disability (US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Indeed, a European study found that although rates varied between countries and sex, overall self-employment rates for people with disabilities are higher than for those with no disability (Pagán, 2009). These data underscore the commonality of conditions that both push those with disabilities into self-employment and pull them toward better opportunities. The latter include realizing a living income on flexible terms that accommodate their disability in ways that traditional employment may not. For the entrepreneur, it is also an avenue of self-determination which has the potential for further integration into a community from which they have historically been marginalized.

External, or sociological, conditions that are present as barriers to traditional employment may lead a person with disabilities to entertain the idea of entrepreneurship, where they perceive that they have more control (Caldwell, 2016; Callahan et al., 2002; Conroy et al., 2010; De Clercq & Honig, 2011; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Maritz & Laferriere, 2016; Martin, 2012). Personal choice may not seem a convincing motivation. On reflection, however, the difficulties that people with a disability have in accessing traditional employment renders this reasoning valid. Here, choice has larger implications in the context of disability. Logistically, flexible working hours and the option to work from home are accommodations that, if not possible with an employer, are realized benefits of self-employment. Working from home reduces business related transportation, a known barrier to traditional employment, given accommodation and accessibility issues with both private and public transportation (Blanck et al., 1999; Callahan et al., 2002). There is also evidence to suggest that self-employment is a means to realize higher earnings than the income earned in traditional employment (Blanck et al., 1999; Revell et al., 2009). Entrepreneurial motivations, however, involve other attractions

outside of earnings, like the more nuanced aspects of quality of life and the self-esteem that accompanies overall satisfaction with work.

Demonstration programs have described these motivations in greater detail. One well-known demonstration program, Iowa Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWD), is a result of public and private advocacy programs having legislative sponsorship. EWD identified 112 participants with sensory, orthopedic, neurological, psychological, or developmental disabilities, and having established business acumen, who would receive technical and financial assistance toward creating or continuing an entrepreneurship. Participants indicated discrimination while employed or seeking employment as motivation for self-employment. Those participants whose businesses were home-based recouped business expenses faster, and thus they realized profits sooner. Furthermore, many businesses founded by entrepreneurs with a disability contributed to the economy when hiring employees (Blanck et al., 1999).

On a smaller scale, a microenterprise demonstration project involving participants with intellectual and developmental disabilities examined the level of socio-emotional motivators (Conroy et al., 2010). Given that this study related to microenterprise, financial self-sufficiency was not the main focus. Many of the 27 participants were occupied in an adult day programs or sheltered workshop, and the monies that they earned from microenterprise were higher than low to zero wages in those contexts. Evidence of motivational factors for self-employment is significant in measures of self-esteem and increased quality of life. Recognizing that the degree of impairment in both this and the EWD demonstration did not preclude participants' motivation toward entrepreneurial endeavors further impresses the potential of entrepreneurship to increase the quality of life for people with disabilities (Blanck et al., 1999; Conroy et al., 2010).

There are few empirical studies that richly describe the entrepreneur. Hence, our understanding of what individual characteristics and environmental conditions predict entrepreneurial entry may be limited. With respect to VR—having no distinction between entrepreneurship and self-employment—closures for self-employment (of which the rate for recipients of VR services is far lower than Department of Labor statistics for all self-employed people with disabilities) tell us that the self-employed are more likely to be white males having postsecondary educational attainment. Furthermore, self-employment closures were found to have not only a higher cost of VR services previous to closure, but also slightly higher public support dollars (Yamamoto & Alverson, 2013). EWD participants mostly mirrored these demographics, where service recipients were predominately white males with at least a high school diploma. Data analysis for EWD participants found their age to be in the mid-40's, and more than half were married (Blanck et al., 1999). Although these data describe a seemingly homogenous group of entrepreneurs, they do not define the potential of entrepreneurs not sharing this profile, but rather draw attention to the barriers they face (Walls et al., 2001). Indeed, one study found that many entrepreneurs with disabilities had not accessed VR services, suggesting possible barriers relative to other intersectional aspects of systemic oppression, beyond ableism (Caldwell et al., 2017).

The portals of entrepreneurial entry are different for every entrepreneur and, as such, are relative to their gender, age, socioeconomic status, education, disability presentation, culture, and residence (Caldwell et al., 2017; Heath & Reed, 2013; Pagán, 2009; Renko et al., 2016; Revell et al., 2009; Yamamoto & Alverson, 2013). The conditional characteristics, however, present fewer barriers to entrepreneurship than their context when engaging with systems that control support for their enterprise. Like minority and immigrant necessity

entrepreneurs, these systems include financial institutions providing start-up loans and small business development corporations (Sanders & Nee, 1996; Waldinger, 1995). For the entrepreneur with a disability, the experience of ableism includes not only discriminatory assumptions, but accessibility issues as well (Ashley & Graf, 2018; Renko et al., 2016).

The attitudinal nature of systemic barriers that potential entrepreneurs face within disability services and among support personnel represents the pervasive diminishment of agency for people with disabilities. People with a disability seeking entrepreneurial entry comment on their disappointment and exhaustion when engaging with disability services and/or community-based development agencies (Altinay et al., 2012; Walls et al., 2001). System fatigue should not be misinterpreted as a refusal of service agencies to help, but rather an indication of a failure of policy to align stakeholder practice and resources toward a common outcome. In other words, it is a learning process for everyone, and “taking things personally” will not further anyone’s best interests (De Clercq & Honig, 2011).

At this juncture in entrepreneurship for people with a disability, relevant education is a human capital important for both the entrepreneur with a disability and the government agencies employed to assist them (Ashley & Graf; Martin, 2012; Potts, 2005; Yamamoto & Alverson, 2013). A survey conducted with Australian VR counselors revealed their support for self-employment services. Yet, 25% of counselors questioned the usefulness of VR policy for self-employment. This finding is echoed in the response of a larger percentage, who found providing this service not to be a positive experience (Kendall et al., 2006).

Attitudinally, direct support personnel of micro-entrepreneurs with IDD were able to enjoy their work, while recognizing the challenge of difficulties related to “rules and regulations” (Conroy et al., 2010). Granted, the absence of policy requiring the rudiments of business training has the

potential to be a barrier for participants when their state providers voice frustration with the amount of time and effort they spend supporting the business rather than the entrepreneur (Hagner & Davies, 2002). Entrepreneurship education and training thus seem both cost-effective and productive for all support people, whether these are paid or include family members.

Investing in entrepreneurial training facilitates strategy building to create human capital. Here, education affords an opportunity to address barriers that might otherwise undermine motivation or prevent start-up. Additionally, education programs provide a venue for multi-agency collaboration (Harris et al., 2013). Engaging small business development corporations to teach people with disabilities how to develop business plans empowers them. In return, social capital is built, which encourages cooperation that tackles barriers of ableism in the process. Invited social service agencies could offer advice on the “disability cliff,” the most pressing concern for entrepreneurs with a disability. Here, depending on the state-defined income limits for retaining Medicaid, the very real fear of losing their life-dependent healthcare is enough to prevent entrepreneurial entry and business growth. Furthermore, monies received in Social Security benefits are often necessary beyond start-up where profits are reinvested in the business to keep it afloat or stimulate growth (Blanck et al., 1999; Harris et al., 2013). Therefore, providing information and guidance with creating asset building accounts for people with disabilities—Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE), Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), or Individualized Development Account (IDA)—would minimize the economic and socio-emotional barriers that these anxieties represent (Ashley & Graf; Renko et al., 2016).

The social capital generated when entrepreneurs with a disability start a business could and should be considered as valuable a profit as monetary income. Self-esteem is important to entrepreneurship. In one study it was significantly more likely to be associated with

start-up activities than with actual business creation. These start-up activities were a result of entrepreneurial training and further exemplify the benefits of education programs (Martin, 2012). This has been the experience of microenterprise and supported self-employment endeavors, in which financial self-sufficiency was never the intention (Conroy et al., 2010; Hagner & Davies, 2002). Self-esteem is social capital that begets community integration, an important component of entrepreneurship, generating networking resources from increased engagement (Hagner & Davies, 2002). Additionally, supported self-employment provides two avenues of self-determination and economic participation when entrepreneurs personally choose their state-provided support person who, as a result, has employment too (Callahan et al., 2002; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Rizzo, 2002). Self-esteem is not a solitary phenomenon. Instead, it is a product of social dynamics whose early development begins in the family (Arnett, 2000).

For some families who have encouraged and supported enterprise for their offspring who have a disability, social capital was their initial investment for entrepreneurial entry, and its resulting production was all that was expected (Conroy et al., 2010). Excepting family size or marital status, measures of social capital have little to no formal inclusion of family in the body of literature for disability self-employment or entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, family is indeed mentioned more often in qualitative studies. The EWD study found that a significant number of participants were supported by their family, while those whose enterprise were successful were more likely to be married (Blanck et al., 1999). In contrast, a secondary analysis of the Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics longitudinal dataset found that family size for entrepreneurs having emergent businesses was no larger than that of entrepreneurs with no disability (Renko et al., 2016).

The lack of family participation in disability entrepreneurship research makes sense if one considers that family participation in the employment of their offspring with a disability is initiated and most active during post-secondary transition (Chambers et al., 2004; Henninger & Taylor, 2014; Holmes et al., 2018b; Kirby, 2016; Young et al., 2017). For example, an employment program for a young adult with disabilities and their parents may present self-employment as an option. Granting that self-employment is not necessarily entrepreneurship, it may be that the program development sought to not draw a distinction between the two for pragmatic purposes. Although it is neither an established nor typical route toward independence for young adults, program follow-up found 1% self-employed. Furthermore, such programs are designed to increase expectations of, and provide resources for, competitive employment. The study participants' need for parental support to find employment is recognized in the program's design, self-employment options are precisely that, "self"-employment, and in the interest of self-determination, neither the program nor the study formally involve family in enacting this option (Francis et al., 2013).

2. **Entrepreneurship in the context of family**

For some time, several academics who study entrepreneurship have called for research that considers family systems in their theoretical approach (Randerson et al., 2015; Stafford et al., 1999; Steier, 2009; Tschoeke et al., 2020). Much of the research remains focused on the family in the context of management, stewardship, and ownership (Chrisman et al., 2012; Eddleston et al., 2008; Edelman et al., 2016). Limiting the contextual aspects of family in entrepreneurship to these aspects does so at the expense of the nuanced forces in family dynamics that are equally vital to the functioning of entrepreneurship. When the literature does describe research that touches on these sub-narratives of family contribution, it understandably

operationalizes these exchanges in the form of capital: human, social, or financial (often described as family capital). For example, studies that examine the exchange of family-based social capital designated as conducive to entrepreneurship include altruism, but they do not describe what conditions provoke its display or replenish this resource (Eddleston et al., 2008). The evaluation of a family's "essence," regarded as attitudes of loyalty and psychological attachment, pertained only to the support of the family business (Chrisman et al., 2012). Also, we know that the number of family members, and their degree of participation, changes over the phases of the entrepreneurial process, but an inventory of what constitutes their involvement is often lacking (Klyver, 2007).

Minority and immigrant family entrepreneurship research that situates conditions requiring the redistribution of family capital in the interest of both family and enterprise best describes the experience expected of family supported entrepreneurship for a family member with a disability. Theories of necessity or opportunity entrepreneurship can explain what motivates the family supported entrepreneurship in response to marginalization from employment participation in their local economy. In brief, the necessity entrepreneur begins their business when unable to secure suitable employment, while the opportunity entrepreneur is motivated by innovative opportunities alone (Reynolds et al., 2001).

A survey of influential factors that distinguish the opportunity from the necessity entrepreneur found the former more likely to be a young man with a higher household income (Van Der Zwan et al., 2016). The more revealing findings included the probability that opportunity entrepreneurs prefer owning their own business as opposed to paid employment. Although both did not differ in educational attainment or business ownership in their family background, the necessity entrepreneur was significantly more likely to be concerned about

financial support and access to start-up information. These findings suggest the necessity entrepreneur has fewer opportunities for paid employment, while potentially having less access to the resources necessary to sustain entrepreneurship. Given that this study analyzed international data from the United States, Europe, and Asia, it did not describe the theoretical conditions of diminished human and social capital that present obstacles to traditional employment, which initiate necessity entrepreneurship and are often used to describe minority or immigrant entrepreneurship (Bhola et al., 2006; Chang et al., 2009; Nee & Sanders, 2001; Rodriguez et al., 2009; Sanders & Nee, 1996).

Minority and immigrant entrepreneurs are of particular interest considering the research finds family to be intrinsically involved in the many stages of their enterprise (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Waldinger, 1995). The cultural experience of minority and immigrant entrepreneurs situates them outside of the dominant culture that has competitive control of the many resources necessary for inclusion in the larger market economy. This requires that minority and immigrant entrepreneurs develop strategies unique to their conditional status (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Waldinger et al., 1990). It may be that immigrant families come from countries having economic conditions that encourage entrepreneurial engagement with the marketplace—for example, individually rented stalls in open air markets, which are common to many developing countries. If so, this is an exploitable culturally located human resource strategically available to new immigrants. The dimensions that encourage entrepreneurship within the cultural context of families include the collectivist nature of support for the business within the home through shared family capital (Mwaura et al., 2017; Sanders & Nee, 1996).

The uncertainties that the immigrant entrepreneur has launching a business might seem less formidable than those of finding and maintaining employment in a new country. A study of Asian and Latinx immigrant families and self-employment found that human capital, in the form of educational attainment and English language proficiency, when compounded with social capital, as defined by marriage and additional family members in the household able to participate in the business, increases the likelihood of self-employment. Rates of self-employment for men and women were predominantly higher when both human and social capital were higher, although self-employment rates for men were significantly higher than those for women, regardless of differences in human and social capital. Women with higher human capital scores were more likely to be self-employed than those having lower scores. Furthermore, higher social capital was always indicative of higher rates of self-employment, regardless of available human capital. That is, higher human capital was not enough to mediate shortfalls in social capital in the attainment of self-employment for women (Sanders & Nee, 1996). Considering that women globally are more likely to be necessity entrepreneurs, the absence of human and financial capital suggests that the availability of family capital is a strong indicator of entrepreneurship (Hay et al., 2002).

The embeddedness of immigrant ethnicity, and that of family, overlap in the areas of social capital, where mutual trust is developed within the kinship of family and the larger community. Given the structural barriers to traditional financing, immigrant entrepreneurs often utilize this social capital for the purposes of accessing start-up funding through investors within their respective communities (Nee & Sanders, 2001; Waldinger et al., 1990). African American business owners, like people with disabilities, often do not have this opportunity. A qualitative study contrasting the ethnic embeddedness of African American construction contractors with

immigrant contractors from Korea and the Caribbean found “African Americans ... most disadvantaged ... because they have been most exposed to the social closure that results from the mobilization of white ethnics’ social capital. By contrast, (immigrants) entered the labour market in societies where racial domination played little or no role in labour market outcomes” (Waldinger, 1995, p. 578). This statement has profound analogies to entrepreneurship with respect to disability, where those with disabilities, and by extension their families, have experience with social closure in the form of ableism.

Although there are parallels with the experience of necessity family entrepreneurship of minorities and immigrants, the family supported entrepreneurship for a person with a disability will have its own unique conditions and dynamics. Additionally, most entrepreneurship research for people with disabilities frames them as a homogenous population. The implication of this reductionistic framing is that barriers and challenges are comparable and, as such, outcomes do not describe the nuances relative to the condition of one’s specific disability and related experience. This underscores why studying disability entrepreneurship in the context of family is imperative for the purposes of its theoretical development. Therefore, the family capital of family members—unchallenged by ableist socio-cultural, policy/legal, economic, and technical barriers—includes exploitable resources that extend to the entrepreneur regardless of their disability. Furthermore, the degree to which disability impacts entrepreneurial activity may be ameliorated through the compensatory family investment of like resources. The NDYA entrepreneur’s growing familiarity and comfort with the demands of their entrepreneurship might also reduce the demand on family. This outcome potentially reveals gains in self-determination.

3. Self-determination of the entrepreneur

A motivated neurodivergent person theoretically stands to benefit from the autonomy conferred through entrepreneurship and subsequent self-determination. A large-scale study applying self-determination theory to entrepreneurial experience found a significant relationship between entrepreneurship and well-being. Further analysis found that autonomy enhanced competence and relatedness comprehensively mediated over 40% of this correlation (Shir et al., 2019). Although family was not a variable of interest here, support mediates entrepreneur well-being or otherwise influences non-economic outcomes worthy of further research (Cogan et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2020). Regardless, this article is in the top 5% of citations for articles when searching “entrepreneurship” and “well-being” in the Web of Science database, which suggests the potential value of family as a contextual factor in the relationship between the two (Shir et al., 2019).

The moderate share of publications that include narratives of self-determination from the neurodiverse community are in stark contrast with an overwhelming body of academic literature on its definition and measurement. Reviewing the relevant literature, qualitative studies found that neurodivergent people expressed the importance of personal choice, as evidenced by respected and supported decision making that reflected achieving their personal short-term and life goals. There was also recognition of the need for self-advocacy in the development of interdependence necessary for self-determination, through community with other self-advocates (Nonnemacher & Bambara, 2011; Petner-Arrey & Copeland, 2015; Shogren & Broussard, 2011). Neurodiverse self-advocates have published declarations of, position papers about, recommendations for, and principles of self-determination, all of which are able to guide the interdependence of the neurodivergent entrepreneur (Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

[ASAN],2018; Invalid, 2015; Self Advocates Becoming Empowered, 1997; The Arc, 2018).

Ideally, the self-determined entrepreneur would take the lead in shaping and maintaining their entrepreneurship. This prioritization is more likely to occur if their fellow stakeholders were to embrace the tenets put forth by the self-advocacy of the disability community.

The wisdom of self-advocacy groups is found in the language that might direct how family, caregivers, and service providers best support self-determination. In their pioneering “Declaration of Self-Determination,” Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered frankly enjoin, “ask us first ... we should be the decision makers ... in all our daily living activities” (Self Advocates Becoming Empowered, 1997). The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN) recommends the development of self-determination in such a way that incorporates community integration and self-advocated choice of a support coordinator (Autistic Self Advocacy Network, 2018). The Arc’s position locates key conditions of self-determination in personal and community domains, introducing the importance of civic engagement in the latter (The Arc, 2018). Finally, Sins Invalid, a self-advocate disability justice group, recognizes interdependence within the self-advocacy community as one of their ten principles of disability justice (Invalid, 2015). An entrepreneurship that responds to these guidelines would, at a minimum, trust the entrepreneur’s choice for support of those who consistently respects their goals. Moreover, entrepreneurship theoretically elevates the entrepreneur beyond the boundaries of business into their wider community to include disabled self-advocates and entrepreneurs. Meeting the full complement of these self-determination qualifications may be aspirational, but their intention speaks to ethical support for the entrepreneur’s interdependence.

How the entrepreneur self-determines their position within the organization with respect to expectations is a complex aspect of the family supported entrepreneurship. The

entrepreneur exercises causal agency in entrepreneurship when their volitional actions inform the agentic in ways that empower action-control beliefs toward their well-being (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Forber-Pratt, et al., 2015). Early volitional action motivates the nascent entrepreneur toward a business located in interests of their preference. Interpreting the self-direction of agentic action in the context of entrepreneurship does not mean that the entrepreneur operates in a vacuum of their own devising. Instead, these actions result from informed and educated decisions, as would be expected from any entrepreneur. Progress through the acquisition of experiences gained through action construct beliefs informs future action in the interest of well-being. This cumulative entrepreneurial activity relies on the entrepreneur's participation; although they may not execute it exclusively on their own, without them there can be no entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurship is not ethically grounded unless it began with their consent and remains contingent upon their preferences. Otherwise, or if they cease active participation, it should more likely be considered simply a family business.

A dynamic that requires strategic organization dependent on the active participation of the entrepreneur invites an interrogation of entrepreneur identity in the context of the entrepreneurship. For example, an enterprise might present as having a disabled entrepreneur at the center of operations, but when it is more closely scrutinized, they are merely the face of the business. Such a commodification of disability identity, where the entrepreneur is denied agentic action through exclusion from entrepreneurial activities, risks consumer deception (Scheaf & Wood, 2022).

The self-determined embodiment of disability identity engaged in entrepreneurship reifies the autonomy of the entrepreneur. Simultaneously, they effect consent in their participation with the business in ways meaningful to them. For the entrepreneur to be both

the identity of the business and the central actor, the family should neither dominate the organization, nor should they be absent. Fluctuations in the balance of demands and expectations between entrepreneur, supporting family, and business speak to the entrepreneur's self-determination. The informal hierarchies contingent on this dynamic are to be expected when the interests of business and supporting the family are secondary the entrepreneur's interdependence and well-being. Here, the efforts of family support—rather than essential to entrepreneurship—represent a mutually empowering relationship that honors an ethics of care (Sprague & Hayes, 2000). The demonstration of as much is conditionally fluid, meeting the entrepreneur and the family where they are in cultural and ecosystem conditions.

F. **Family Supported Entrepreneurship for Neurodivergent Young Adults**

Family supported enterprises, where the central actor is actively engaged in the productive participation of daily operations, have ethical considerations beyond those expected of a neurotypical family supported entrepreneur. Given the potentially vulnerable agency of the neurodiversity community, these exceptions necessarily focus on the importance of self-determination, which may be a desirable non-material outcome indicative of success, if not a foundational intention of family support.

The concept of interdependence, necessary for self-determination, is further developed and reinforced in the supported entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship presents dilemmas, however; even as it is typical and expected of small family business, a major concern is that of entrepreneur's consent to engage in entrepreneurship and remain centered in the business.

1. **Family supporting self-determination through entrepreneurship**

The desire to engage with the market economy through entrepreneurship refers to the individual entrepreneur capitalizing on their knowledge having material value. Family is

more likely to be involved in entrepreneurship, and often a change in family dynamic motivates the family venture (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). Therefore, it may be that a family, having the financial and intellectual capital resources, chooses to invest in the talents or skills of a disabled family member having limited employment options (Bird & Wennberg, 2016; Danes et al., 2009; Steier, 2009). Organizational, environmental, and cognitive factors all have the potential to influence the entrepreneur's access to self-determination. Scenarios having an impact on this outcome manifest in the context of challenges and dilemmas presented by the entrepreneurship and supporting family members.

What motivates the entrepreneur is the primary consideration in the early stages of entrepreneurship. Effort must be made to make certain that the nascent entrepreneur consents to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors and that the family sees value in this venture (Schröder & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013). For the neurodivergent individual, the conditions under which this information is secured demands great responsibility from all stakeholders. As is true for any family firm, inherent power dynamics of parental authority and cognitive or communication difference underscore the importance of ensuring that entrepreneurial participation is free of any spoken or unspoken family exclusive expectations (Chrisman et al., 2012; Petner-Arrey & Copeland, 2015). Securing consent anticipates an autonomy that suggests a relatedness expected from interdependence. The recognition that the entrepreneur is free to revoke consent at will also speaks to their interdependence and healthy stakeholder relationships.

The challenges that the entrepreneur confronts during the entrepreneurship represent opportunities for them to exercise self-determination. The family supports interdependence by teaching problem-solving and self-advocacy skills. The ways that families can foster competence are as diverse as the scenarios they encounter in the course of

entrepreneurship. One study revealed that, although the clear majority of families consider these skills to be very important for their young person, they were less likely to report the skills as consistently performed (Carter et al., 2013). Families understand that they occupy complex roles when promoting their young person's self-determination, but too often they confront barriers to and lack of opportunities to acquire these skills, which are best gained in post-secondary community engagement like employment (Bianco et al., 2009; Francis et al., 2014; Hatfield et al., 2017; Shogren, Wehmeyer, et al., 2015b). Some self-determination interventions involve parents in employment support (Francis et al., 2015; Hagner et al., 2012; Saaltink et al., 2012). To date, there are a limited number of studies that include discussion on self-determination and family support of neurodiverse entrepreneurs (Caldwell et al., 2020a; Harris et al., 2013; Percival, 2019). Their purpose, however, was not to establish family support of self-determination.

Reinforcing the centrality of the entrepreneur is conceivably demonstrated by their initial and continued consent to participate in the entrepreneurship and through entrepreneurial guidance in the interest of their self-determination. The complexity of this interdependence could be found in family support members' ability to ascertain nuances of the entrepreneur's progress and introduce more difficult tasks to establish competencies. In addition to championing the entrepreneur's promise, any increase in self-determination might ready them to recognize and manage future obstacles located in the entrepreneurship. These situations could possibly compromise the entrepreneur's autonomy if the family support member were to err on the side of unwarranted protection (Leonard et al., 2016; Mill et al., 2010; Saaltink et al., 2012). In this regard, conflict is a well-documented concern in family businesses and entrepreneurships that have diverse influence on the well-being of family and the success of their business

(Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007; Ferrari, 2022; Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004; Kidwell et al., 2012; Samara & Paul, 2019). A base line understanding of these risks can assist families and NDYA to anticipate dilemmas in balancing the concerns of the business with the primacy of the entrepreneur.

2. **Family supported entrepreneurship and conflict**

Meeting the objectives of interdependence that centers the entrepreneur in the goal of self-determination may be an ideal. Although family entrepreneurship literature has yet to include self-determination as a goal of entrepreneurship, there is a considerable interest in noneconomic family goals that include related outcomes, such as the well-being of family members (Cardella et al., 2019; Chrisman et al., 2012; Heck et al., 2006; Richards, 2022). Family conflict research is a recurring theme in family entrepreneurship and small firm business research, which explores a plethora of situated tensions in just as many contexts. Conflict can arise from the routine definitions of roles and responsibilities to matters having more gravity, such as ownership and stewardship (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004; Kidwell et al., 2012; Samara & Paul, 2019; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). Conflict in the family supported entrepreneurship of the NDYA take on different facets relative to power disparities familiar to intellectually and developmentally disabled people and their families.

One concept salient to the family supported disabled entrepreneur is that of “identity conflict” between family and business, and its impact on the entrepreneurial process. Theoretically, identity conflict is the tension that arises between the internalized behavioral expectations associated with, in this case, family and business (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). The family role, per feminist care ethics through the lens of disability, is intrinsically one of caregiving, protection, and nurturing toward the interdependence of the disabled family member

(Kittay, 2011; Watson et al., 2004), whereas family business and entrepreneurship have collective extrinsic goals of income, prosperity, and generational security (Cardella et al., 2019; Dyer Jr & Handler, 1994; Heck et al., 2006; Nordqvist & Melin, 2010). The conflict arises when the behavioral expectations of one identity are inconsistently engaged at the expense of the other identity. This conflict can have adverse effects on either the family (as a whole and its individual members) or the business, and it can compromise the ability to assess the opportunities presented by entrepreneurship (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). Here, risk assessment guided by entrepreneurship mission and family's intentions of support require particular attention.

Per the identity-conflict phenomenon, there is considerable risk to the development of the disabled entrepreneur's self-determination, as defined by causal agency, when making necessary decisions required of entrepreneurship (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Forber-Pratt, et al., 2015). The "family-business" meta-identity is a role proposed to manage identity conflict challenges either through already familiar conflict resolution behavior now applied to the business, or through behaviors developed in the transformation into the family-business role. The authors describe this meta-identity to be that of the shared meaning at the intersection of the family and business, which is a "dynamic as people begin 'negotiating, modifying, developing, and shaping expectations through interaction'" (Burke, 2003, as cited by Shepherd & Haynie, 2009, p. 1253). Certainly, an emphasis on the entrepreneur's self-determination is an unusual dynamic of the family-business. As a non-economic goal, its importance can get lost in the routines or upheavals of business. Family support should be the first priority for the entrepreneur, with the entrepreneurship coming a close second.

3. **Family supported entrepreneurship for the neurodivergent young adult**

The advantages of entrepreneurship for an autistic person are similar to those with other disabilities. These include applying personal skills developed through passion to a marketable product or service. An interesting characteristic of many people on the autism spectrum is their ability to focus intensely—perseverate, in the medical model deficit speak vernacular—on interests and activities to a degree uncommon in the neurotypical (Briel & Getzel, 2014). This commitment, when transferred to enterprise, serves the entrepreneur well. Elsewhere, socio-cultural identification of neurodiversity assumes a communication disorder that impedes community participating social reciprocity without any reflection of how this assumption denies it (Ballaban-Gil et al., 1996; Giarelli et al., 2013). Entrepreneurship would allow one to choose their work environment and the hours to suit their productivity while creating a platform for community participation on their terms—arguably, Facebook represents one such example. In many ways, the cost-benefit analysis of the neurodivergent entrepreneur may not seem all too different than that of the neurotypical. Innovation situated in difference and disparity illuminates barriers and advantages for the NDYA entrepreneur.

Having listed a few of the advantages to entrepreneurship for the autistic entrepreneur raises the question: what are the advantages of autism for entrepreneurship? While limited research has been conducted on the proclivities of autistic entrepreneurs, there is literature on those with attention deficit disorder (Knott, 2018). One review published on the subject cited a number of studies whose findings included those diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are more likely to be entrepreneurs. Other studies found that ADD behavior conveyed a unique combination of risk tolerance and hyper-focus that was advantageous to entrepreneurial intention (Antshel, 2018). ADD finds itself on the same spectrum as autism and,

therefore, possibly shares many conducive aspects of entrepreneurship (Austin & Pisano, 2017; Hatak et al., 2021; Lerner et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2021). Of note, both publications describe little to no family support of their enterprise. This does not mean, as evidenced by the FSE literature reviewed earlier, that this is actually the case.

There are a number of articles that speak to the family supported entrepreneurship of the NDYA. A Danish study examining family involvement at different stages of entrepreneurship found family significantly more likely to be involved when the entrepreneur was younger than 30 years of age (Klyver, 2007). Furthermore, those entrepreneurs having little to no higher education were more likely to have family involvement than those who did. Another international database analysis found self-employment to promote well-being, defined in part as happiness, through self-determination (Kara & Petrescu, 2018). Additionally, my research will explore the question of whether the NDYA exercised autonomy in their motivation to engage in FSE. A study exploring the antecedents that motivate family business succession decisions in adolescents utilized Ryan and Deci's theory of self-determination relative to parental relational support and perceived competence (Schröder & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013). The study found adolescents significantly more likely to assume succession responsibility, given intrinsically identified autonomous motivation, as enabled through parental relational support and competence, while conditions of significant parental control in the absence of relational support and competence found no correlation with likelihood of succession. These findings support, if not the probability of NDYA autonomous motivations for FSE, at least its possibility.

G. **Summary**

Much like all young adults, NDYA postsecondary transition appears to be largely determined by education and or employment. However, barriers blocking access to these

outcomes—not of issue to their neurotypical cohort, nor to the same degree to those having other disabilities—leave NDYA and their families with fewer such opportunities. Several policies both anticipating and acknowledging the current state of NDYA postsecondary horizons have yet to influence encouraging outcomes. This gap leaves talented young people having much to offer society disengaged from the life experiences necessary to successfully emerge from young adulthood. Although this condition discourages both the NDYA and their families, some families have capitalized on the opportunities inherent to the neurodiversity of their children, rather than wait for new policy to create real change. NDYA and family engagement in FSE may not have initially intended to replicate conditions of traditional employment to effect NDYA growth. Yet, if FSE requires or results in responsibility that gives rise to NDYA self-determination, while simultaneously changing societal ableist attitudes, the phenomenon offers a welcome alternative pathway to employment for NDYAs. Using qualitative methodology to capture the lived experiences of NDYA entrepreneurs and their families who endeavor to help their loved ones reach their potential has the advantage of providing the rich data their stories deserve. The following methods section explains and describes the process by which the research approached the family supported entrepreneurship for NDYA and their transition toward adulthood.

III. METHODS

My intention in this dissertation is to bring attention to neurodivergent young adults who are accessing developmental experiences informative of adulthood through family supported entrepreneurship. Postsecondary policy and subsequent programming, focused on traditional outcomes of competitive employment and education, have yet to (and may not be able to) meet the needs of a very diverse population of transition aged neurodivergent young people. As a result, policy makers have shown an increased interest in entrepreneurship as alternative employment. While its potential to engage young adults in meaningful activity as participants in their larger community has been recognized, little is known about its important noneconomic outcomes or the dynamic of support within the family network. A deeper understanding of this experience, which comes from the rich description of qualitative inquiry, can be useful in guiding policy to better meet the transition needs of neurodivergent young people through entrepreneurship, and informing how families can best advance their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Qualitative methodology framed within a feminist care ethics theoretical schema approaches this research with the power to explore, in depth, the relationship between the NDYA and their family during entrepreneurship. It also seeks to balance what is otherwise understood as one having uneven consequences. By employing the dyadic interview to collect data, critical disability studies guides the research by privileging the NDYA in their relationship with family during their entrepreneurship with the understanding the voices of neurodivergent people have been historically absent from scientific inquiry. This silence risks obscuring the condition of neurodivergent people, misinforming both policy and comprehensive programming, which requires the transparency that can be gained through the insights that dyadic interviews can afford. Toward this end, the entrepreneurship of three neurodivergent entrepreneurs and their

identified family support members were examined through eight dyadic and four individual support member interviews. The original research intended to collect data through ethnographic observation; however, the COVID 19 pandemic required the University of Illinois at Chicago Office for the Protection of Research Subjects mandate required changes to the research design. Therefore, subsequent data collection did not include in person observation. Despite the COVID 19 mandate, a new interview approach was developed into a series of smaller interviews taking place over a longer period of time. This interview series took place over a four-week period for each dyad and represents a total of one family support member (FSM) interview and two dyadic interviews of the NDYA and FSM per week, each lasting approximately one hour. The data collected comprised 36 interviews *in toto*.

A. **Research Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of entrepreneurship that inform the transition to adulthood through the development of the neurodivergent young adults' self-determination, which results from the interdependence gained through family support of entrepreneurial ventures. The following research questions were developed to access the information essential to build an understanding of how this phenomenon occurs *in situ*.

1. What were the experiences of NDYA and their family that informed the decision to engage in entrepreneurship?
2. How do NDYA experience, family support activities, and events of entrepreneurship encourage NDYA interdependence and influence subsequent self-determination?
3. What entrepreneurial experiences are defining of NDYA self-determination?
4. What ways do NDYA engage in entrepreneurship related self-determination that are indicative of the transition to adulthood?

The importance of the answers to these questions lies in the holistic understanding of neurodivergent young adults participating in entrepreneurship with the support of family. In particular, exploring noneconomic outcomes puts the focus on developmental growth that approximates that which would be expected from competitive integrated employment in the transition to adulthood.

B. **Methodological Epistemology**

Feminist theory in the context of disability proposes that knowledge production by the marginalized and oppressed is singularly necessary for their emancipation (Garland-Thomson, 2005). Using feminist care ethics through a critical disability studies lens, this research examines how neurodivergent young adults and their families challenge ableist interpretations of independence and adulthood through entrepreneurship (Jacobs et al., 2021; Post et al., 2017). Feminist “disability” care ethics forwards the concept of interdependence, which recognizes people’s right to require or provide care as an empowering relationship, rather than one grounded in the abled/disabled binary (Kelly, 2013; Morris, 2001). Meanwhile, feminist standpoint theory posits that the construction of knowledge occurs within the conditions of one’s immediate environment, itself shaped by cultural ideologies, policies that dictate one’s social position, and one’s personal interests and decisions—an organic epistemology (Harding, 2004).

In the context of critical disability studies, standpoint theory centers the disabled person’s voice in the description of their experience, within a real world setting, in the construction of disability identity that includes care (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Sprague & Hayes, 2000). Moreover, recognizing the value in the noneconomic goals of entrepreneurship pragmatically honors the activism facets of critical disability studies when challenging neoliberal definitions of the entrepreneur. This understanding recognizes the goals of employment outside of financial

self-sufficiency while the parameters of what defines employment are fluid as well. In keeping with critical disability study principles, this study is a social inquiry of the family supported NDYA entrepreneur where the goals, while noneconomic, still represent economic participation.

This production of knowledge, built on a foundation of theory that demands the primacy of the disabled participants, results from a long history of exclusion from research (Zarb, 1992). This absence perpetuates a disparity of power that fails to value care or validate interdependence. The social model of disability finds that whatever imposes restrictions on a person's participation in society disables (Oliver, 2009). Therefore, a standpoint is subjectively located in personal experience with situational conditions that can prevent or deny potential (Collins, 1986). For participants in this research, feminist standpoint theory extends an understanding of relationship beyond disabling dichotomies to allow for power parity in partnership.

We all tend to think about relationships as personal and even private, but feminist standpoint theory warns against the dichotomizing of private and public. Our interpersonal relationships are the means through which we are connected in social structures and the ways our community and society are organized shape and constrain the kinds of interpersonal relationships we can form and sustain. Thus, the notion of relationships empowering self-determination needs to be broadened to also include social structural relationships. (Sprague & Hayes, 2000, p. 685)

Recognition of the connection of the social structures in the family supported entrepreneurship of the NDYA similarly requires a methodologically informed tool for collecting data. The dyadic interview proves a useful qualitative research method for exploring the experiences shared between two people having a common history (Morgan, 2016). Dyadic interview was chosen to collect data, given the NDYA and their FSM share a common experience in entrepreneurship.

The dyadic interview enjoys a growing interest from the interdisciplinary qualitative research community. Theoretically, the dyadic interview is the relational construction of knowledge brought forth in the conversation between two people who have a common

experience. The interviewer is, in this way, observationally informed, rather than leading the direction of conversation toward the collection of data (Morgan, 2016; Szulc & King, 2022). Where autistic people's communication differences with the reciprocity of spoken language present issues in research participation, the dyadic interview's technique of including those with whom they are intimately familiar prove a vital resource for incorporating their experiences (Caldwell, 2013; Critchley et al., 2021).

Feminist care ethics informs dyadic interview methodology by honoring the interdependence that comes from intimate relationships of care (Caldwell, 2013; Richardson & Jordan, 2017). It is also a methodology that arguably seeks emancipatory status, where the conversation between participants in the dyad is the momentum that drives the divulgence of a data trove of information with minimal researcher prompts (Barnes, 1992; Caldwell, 2013). In keeping with critical disability studies, the onus is on the researcher to interpret the raw material from dyadic interviews and "restructure cultural meaning and social processes" in the production of knowledge that maintains a radical agenda (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 56).

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a disruption in the economy that provides an opportunity for reconsidering the entrepreneurial potential of disabled people (Frain et al., 2022). The post-pandemic shift in societal structures of how and where people work parallels that of related family dynamic changes in the context of home life in ways that prime entrepreneurial innovation (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). The findings of this research can add to the relatively nascent body of knowledge at the intersection of disability and entrepreneurship, with family-based entrepreneurship theory forwarding the potential of disabled entrepreneurs. Moreover, these findings present the emancipatory element of the development of self-determination within a critical disability studies context by honoring the nonmaterial outcomes

of entrepreneurship indicative of postsecondary transition (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Taylor et al., 2014).

C. **Approach to Research**

A disability paradigm that reflects the social model of disability requires an epistemological scope of examination only available through qualitative inquiry (O'Day & Killeen, 2002). A comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of people would have us see their world through their eyes. Unfortunately, autistic and intellectually and developmentally disabled people historically have been represented through quantitative research findings that limit this understanding (Beail & Williams, 2014; Taylor et al., 2016). The interview is the predominant method of data collection in qualitative studies from diverse philosophical positions. Feminist theories approach the method to identify and describe power imbalances at play in oppressive othering, putting due emphasis on the relational conditions of making meaning through family (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Reczek, 2014). Interviews framed within an emancipatory paradigm acknowledge the oppression of marginalized research participants and address power relationships in research design (Stone & Priestley, 1996).

Ultimately, interviewers must remain vigilant to participants as the authors of the stories that they narrate during interviews. Historically, neurodivergent or intellectual developmental delayed people have been excluded from both quantitative and- less often- qualitative research conducted to address the quality of their lives (Carey, 2009; Jones et al., 2022; Nicolaidis et al., 2019). Therefore, interviews were chosen as the methodological tool to explore the answer to these research questions for two reasons. First, with interviews the voices of the participants are literally heard and as the sole authors their own narratives, their interpretations, and understandings are authentic. Secondly, at the time this research was being conducted the

University of Illinois at Chicago Institutional Review Board Office for the Protection of Research Subjects COVID 19 mandate restricting in person interviews precluded ethnographic observation and on site data collection.

There is some degree of debate around how best to structure interviews for neurodivergent participants. Whether informal conversational, standardized open-ended, or interview guide approaches are best suited for neurodivergent participants depends on the situational factors that involve the participants themselves, as well as research methodologies and objectives (Nicolaidis et al., 2019; Patton, 2015). Keeping in mind the spectrum of cognitive difference in neurodiverse people, applying universal design in the development of interview strategies has been successful with participants requiring accommodations. This approach includes conducting the interview in creative and novel formats that incorporate visual prompts, and offering options for response as necessary (Courchesne et al., 2022). Moreover, using plain or lay language in the development and delivery of research questions and prompts is an accessibility best practice (Nicolaidis et al., 2019; Prosser & Bromley, 2012).

During the design of this research, a semi-structure interview guide was developed with the understanding that once data collection began, changes to both questions and their delivery would be made based on the rate of and relevance to previous responses to questions and prompts (Prosser & Bromley, 2012). These questions were developed to explore themes of family informed interdependence developed during activities related to entrepreneurship and the resulting self-determination that increases community engagement and identity development. The inquiry also probes how conflict experienced during entrepreneurship affects outcomes.

The University of Illinois at Chicago Office for the Protection of Research Subjects monitored the research approved by the Institutional Review Board (Protocol #2020-0274)

(Appendix A). The timing of this research coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent nationwide shutdowns. The Office for the Protection of Research Subjects COVID-19 response policies mandate precluded in-person interviews and onsite observations. Therefore, in keeping with IRB COVID-19 protocols, all interviews were conducted via Zoom virtual meeting platform.

1. **Participant recruitment**

Participants were identified through a Google search using keywords with Boolean commands “autism AND entrepreneurship AND entrepreneur,” and posting IRB-approved research flyers to the social media platforms autistic identity Facebook account and subreddit (Appendix B). Recruitment via Google search targeted news accounts of autistic young adult entrepreneurs, where reporting revealed family support. The emails of four potential entrepreneurs were identified through their business website. Messages that included the IRB approved research flyer and recruitment letter were sent (Appendix C). After correspondence with all four, two families agreed to participate. Two additional families contacted the researcher via Facebook messenger in response to a recruitment flyer posted on an autistic entrepreneur Facebook account, and one family subsequently agreed to participate in the research project.

A Google search was conducted to identify NDYA and their families engaged in active entrepreneurship, where a developed product was available for sale or an established service was provided. Considering two of the three entrepreneurs were identified through Google searches having high count hits for news reports or business web site, they necessarily represented only those enjoying enough success that they were the subject of inspirational news content. The mothers of the three entrepreneurs who stated interest in the research project scheduled screening phone calls with the researcher. During the screening phone call, the

mothers verified that their young adults were diagnosed with autistic spectrum difference and agreed to discuss the research project with their sons. If the NDYA indicated interest, the mother contacted the researcher via email to set up an informational interview with the researcher and the NDYA. If the NDYA agreed to be interviewed, an initial interview was scheduled, during which they were asked to identify a support member who would serve as their interview partner.

Purposive intensity sampling was employed to identify NDYA engaged in information-rich, family supported entrepreneurship (Patton, 2015). A total of 36 interviews were conducted with three dyads. The dyads consisted of three NDYA over the age of 18 and their three identified family support members, who were engaged in entrepreneurship with the active support of their families. The size of the participant pool entailed their personal identification through the assignment of code, NDYA1-3 and correspondingly FSM1-3.

a. **Participant demographics**

The table below describe participant demographics, business descriptions, and additional relevant socioeconomic data.

TABLE I: Demographics of Neurodivergent Young Adults

| <i>Identification Code</i> | <i>Business</i> | <i>Setting</i> | <i>Education</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Race</i> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------|
| <i>NDYA1</i> | Party and Event Entertainment | Home-based Event settings | High School Degree | 25 | Asian American |
| <i>NDYA2</i> | Fancy Foods | Home-based | High School Degree | 22 | Caucasian |
| <i>NDYA3</i> | Voice Actor | Home-based | High School Degree and some college | 24 | Caucasian |

Family capital was discussed in the literature review and theoretical methodology as a facilitator of entrepreneurial start-up; therefore, details on parental education, employment, and income proxy of home ownership were included in family demographics and are presented in Table II. Furthermore, all NDYA reside at home.

TABLE II: Demographics of Family Support Members

| <i>Identification Code</i> | <i>Support Relationship</i> | <i>Parental Education</i> | <i>Parental Employment</i> | <i>Home Ownership</i> | <i>Race</i> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>FSM1</i> | Mother | Bachelor/ Graduate | Full Time/ Full Time | Yes | Asian |
| <i>FSM2</i> | Mother | Graduate/ Bachelor | Full Time/ Full Time | Yes | American |
| <i>FSM3</i> | Mother | Bachelor/ Bachelor | Full Time/ Semi-Retired | Yes | Caucasian |

During recruitment screening, the FSMs stated that their NDYA were formally diagnosed with autism spectrum difference. The autism spectrum describes a wide range of functioning, communicative, and cognitive impairments. The three NDYA presented with varying degrees of communication differences, with NDYA1 having significant support needs and limited reciprocal language, NDYA2 having minimal communication differences and moderate support needs, and NDYA3 having minimal to no communication differences, and mild to moderate support needs. Participant support needs are defined below (Percival, 2019):

- Mild support needs: Assistance with planning, transportation, and communication;

- Moderate support needs: Assistance with financial management, awareness, and decision-making; and
- Significant support needs: Requires supervision 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Needs assistance with majority of activities of daily living.

Supports needs were assessed either from information indicated during the interview from either FSM or NDYA, in response to questions or probes designed to establish NDYA activities of home life, school, community, and entrepreneurial activities. These data provided a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of NDYA along with supporting family members.

b. **Informed consent and assent procedures**

The need for more robust research to develop a larger body of knowledge about and relevant to autistic and intellectually developmentally disabled people is thought to be hampered, in part, by difficulties with consent (ASAN, n.d.; Jaswal & Akhtar, 2019; Legault et al., 2021; Nicolaidis et al., 2019). The autistic community's concern, however, is more with the penchant of researchers to focus on social deficits and neurotypical assimilation (rather than recognition of "autistic flourishing"), which eventually yields epistemic misrepresentation (Legault et al., 2021; Silverman, 2019). Part of this misrepresentation is the belief that the cognitive differences of neurodivergent people preclude their consenting to research. Yet, if certain accommodations are considered, this is not the case. Efforts to include neurodivergent participants in research include plain language consent forms, asynchronous consent via email or hard copy post, and synchronous verbal methods that include phone or virtual meeting platforms (Nicolaidis et al., 2019).

Once participants indicated interest either through email exchange or over phone, a copy of the consent was sent via email for review prior to first interview. Oral consent was secured over Zoom virtual meeting platform for all FSMs and NDYA2 and 3.

Previous to beginning consent participants were asked whether they had any questions for the researcher and answered if queried. Each line item on the consent checklist was read to the participant and initialed by the researcher per their indication of understanding and agreement (Appendix D). Consent for NDYA1 was secured through his legal guardian, FSM1; additionally, NDYA1 assented in the presence of FSM1 to participation when read a plain language assent form having essential information (Appendix E). Funding came available to compensate participants \$24 for their interviews requiring an addendum to the consent (Appendix F).

2. **Dyadic interviews**

Dyadic interviews The dyadic interview as a modality of data collection has yet to attain the popularity of other interview formats, such as focus groups or one-on-one interviews (Caldwell, 2013; Eisikovits & Koren, 2010; Morgan et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2015; Reczek, 2014). Dyadic interviews have been used to collect data from various populations on a variety of topics, and they share many of the advantages of joint interviews and focus groups regarding common experiences. Yet, the dyadic perspective produces enriched discussion, as the issue of interest is shared between participants having an intimate or familial relationship, in which memory can be put to question (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010; Morgan et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2015). Caldwell's introduction of dyadic interviews in disability research considers the challenges of the technique, including ethical concerns with confidentiality that may compromise response credibility or limit revelations (2013).

The configuration of the dyad lends itself to triangulation where what might be considered interparticipant validation emerges within the conversational attributes of their responses (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). The literature describes dyad members as having a common language when sharing and comparing their experiences, and thus they reflectively

check in with each other during the interview (Morgan et al., 2015). Dyadic interview data analysis recognizes the interdependence of the dyad members as sources of shared information, identifying descriptive overlaps in the text and subtexts and interpreting the contrasts (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). As such, dyadic interviews are particularly useful for research with neurodivergent people and their families, who are familiar with communication idiosyncrasies.

In her review of multi-family studies, Reczek acknowledges the interview as a data collection tool molded to fit the criteria of a diverse history of epistemologies, ranging from post/positivist to critical research. Family interactions reflect and reveal family power structures through which the disability experience informs disability identity (Reczek, 2014; Taylor et al., 2016). Critical theory-based research embraces a feminist epistemology, which examines these power structures within family dynamics from a transformative approach (Reczek, 2014; Spencer et al., 2014). Critical Disability Studies furthers the reach of feminist praxis in the application of standpoint theory, especially with regard to intellectual disability (Caldwell, 2013). Dyadic interviews recognize and value interdependent social relationships as a natural facet of the disability standpoint. In that regard, dyadic interviews are a tool that provides an opportunity for dialectical exchange between people with disabilities and their families in such a way that “interrogate[s] notions of care and dependence as well as power and privilege.” (Caldwell, 2013, p. 490). Therefore, they are also an opportunity to facilitate emancipatory transformation during the social relations of research production (Caldwell, 2013; Zarb, 1992).

Dyadic interviews also address several problematic methodological issues of research conducted with intellectual developmental disability and family research (Caldwell, 2013; Reczek, 2014; Taylor et al., 2016). Much of both disability family research and family research in general is post/positivist, having a theoretical modality that often defaults to identifying the

deficits of a family having a disabled loved one (Critchley et al., 2021; Reczek, 2014; Taylor et al., 2016). The knowledge production in which the unit of analysis is the parent, rather than the disabled family member, risks upholding the medical model paradigm of research. Therefore, in the social construction of the family life and disability, disabled family members' experiences must be included (Goodley & Tregaskis, 2006). From an emancipatory perspective, dyadic interviewing is a valuable tool for forging a path toward a transformative standpoint for the neurodiverse, and in particular for those who are intellectually developmentally disabled (Caldwell, 2013).

Ideologically, the dyadic interview structure is organized around critical disability studies principles by privileging the voice of the disabled family and their choice of family dyad partner, honoring their interdependence (Caldwell, 2013). Here, each participant's subjective interpretation of a shared experience creates a negotiated objective reality. The dyadic family interview is an opportunity to understand how joint choices are made, differences resolved, and knowledge co-constructed. These moments offer the researcher a vantage point to observe how patterns of power function in the family network. Additional advantages include a family member as the interviewer who is privy to information that leads to the refinement or discovery of new themes (Reczek, 2014).

a. **Dyadic interview process**

Caldwell, in her seminal paper on the use of the dyadic interview in critical disability research, details a three-interview-stage process (2013). The first stage establishes rapport, builds trust, and establishes the experience or issue of interest. It is during this interview that the person with a disability identifies the conversation partner, in this case the family member, for the dyad. The second stage is the same format; however, it is conducted with the

identified family member. The final stage provides an opportunity to “check in” and enrich the findings of the first interview by creating space for clarifications, additions, and resolution of concerns that came from the interview process (Caldwell, 2013). In the social relation of this research production, the choice of family support member is an example of how self-determination—when coupled with the privileged perspective of the NDYA—cultivates agency.

i. **Dyadic structure and rapport**

Responses to interview questions potentially differ depending on the configuration of participants in the dyad and the structure of the interviews. Combinations could be individual interviews followed by a joint interview, individual interviews separated by a joint interview, etc. (Caldwell, 2013). The specific variation of dyad structure may not be up to the researcher, however. It may be that the development of a rapport between the researcher and the dyad members establishes researcher credibility and trust, yielding a mutual determination of how the interviews will proceed (Morgan, 2016). Ideally, the disabled dyad member is interviewed first, in order to choose their joint interview partner and establish trust and rapport by the privileging of their choice (Caldwell, 2013). Establishing a rapport with both dyad partners facilitates a familiarity with the research partnership that is conducive to sharing during the interview.

ii. **Dyadic interview challenges**

Building rapport is also a way to anticipate potential concerns when conducting dyadic interviews. At times, interview topics may be sensitive or contentious, and the conversation may result in conflict. Granted, this information may be of interest to the research; however, the researcher may need to be ready to redirect the dialogue.

These moments are important for understanding power dynamics in relationships where patterns of inequality risk response coercion and acquiescence (Caldwell, 2013; Reczek, 2014). While disclosure is necessary for collecting the rich data expected of the methodology, these particular challenges potentially prevent sharing during interviews. Conversely, the unconscious influence, or contamination, between responses in the interview conversation would mean that the accounts of experiences are not wholly independent (Morgan, 2016). This phenomenon is possible during any phase of the interviews, during coding, or maybe never; their possibility underscores the importance of reflexivity and memo-ing throughout the research process (Patton, 2015).

b. **Dyadic interview procedure**

After granting consent, the FSM scheduled three interviews (ninety minutes or less) a week for four weeks, representing twelve interviews in total for each dyad. Each week, the first interview was with the NDYA individually, the second interview was with the FSM individually, and the final interview of the week was a combination interview with both the FSM and NDYA. Of note, NDYA2 requested their FSM be present during their individual interviews. Per the dyadic interview methodology, the questions were directed to NDYA2. In the second interview, the FSM was asked the same questions as NDYA2 in the previous interview to cross-check his responses. The third and last interview of the week was a combination interview that functioned as an open discussion for corroborating experiences, addressing inconsistencies, and exploring points of interest to the researcher. At the end of the combination interview, the FSM scheduled the next week's interviews with the researcher.

i. **Interview guides**

An initial semi-structured interview guide, consisting of open-ended questions, was developed previous to interviews (Appendix G). The guide was sent

to participants after securing their consent in order to familiarize them with the information of interest. These questions were designed to probe the NDYA and FSM about the NDYA's history that informed their entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial entry, active entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial outcomes. After each interview, the questions for the next interview were tailored to acknowledge and incorporate the information gathered from the previous one (Appendix H). The customization of the interview guide prompts, specific to each participant interview, was utilized to maintain rapport and stimulate information-rich responses.

It was necessary to develop accessible interview guides for NDYA1, whose communication style had limited reciprocity and was prone to Applied Behavior Analysis scripted comments. After discussion with FSM1, it was thought that visual interview guides might encourage more responses from NDYA1 (Appendix I). The visual guides proved somewhat successful; however, the illustrated guides needed some adjustment to ensure the visual field was not too busy.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis The collection and subsequent analysis of data necessarily focused on the unit of analysis, the NDYA. Data gathered from the FSM resulted from questions that were specifically about their understanding of the NDYA experience. In the combination interview, these data were substantiated in the discussion between NDYA and FSM, when prompted from data gathered in the two previous interviews.

1. Data collection

The interviews were conducted on the University of Illinois at Chicago virtual meeting Zoom platform. During the interview, the researcher kept notes and memos in the interest of reflexivity and tailoring the questions for the following interview. The Zoom videos

and transcripts were uploaded to the ATLAS.ti computer assisted qualitative data analysis software program. The video and audio recordings were then used to edit the transcripts of the no more than ninety minute interviews for clarity as well as initial coding.

2. **Data coding**

ATLAS.ti was used to accommodate the large body of data collected because it was able to manage and organize the multiple data sets generated for coding and theme building. The coding process began with margin memo-ing to organically capture emerging concepts and to prevent rigidly funneling ideas inherent to software design (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Saldaña, 2015). The eclectic coding method anticipates this risk, comprising a number of coding schemes having exploratory qualities when approaching large amounts of data. It is an approach recommended for those new to coding. Moreover, it is considered useful when there is more than one process of interest to the research (Saldaña, 2015). With eclectic coding, the first (exploratory) round of code identification is followed by a second (more purposeful) review that could include code collapsing into categories. The final rounds review code categorizations for theme identification.

3. **Data analysis**

Data analysis begins with memo-ing to inform the categorization of codes. After redundant or subordinate codes were merged, the initial code count of 146 was reduced to 67 to better manage code cataloguing and begin categorization (Braun, 2022). The abridged open code list was then reviewed to develop a code book and to establish groups (Appendix J). The codes within these groups were reviewed a final time and then refined through further code merging and cutting to thirty two codes for thematic development. The source quotes of the grouped codes and related memos were then reviewed to develop themes (Appendix K).

4. **Thematic analysis**

Code merging, overlaps, and distinctions developed into themes for examination to understand the domains of transition to adulthood in the context of entrepreneurship (Braun, 2022). The remaining 67 codes, as informed by memo-ing and note taking, were developed into thematic categories, and further refined into the four final themes as described in Table III. The theme of “Transition to Entrepreneurship” was defined by seven codes divided into three subthemes: Postsecondary Transition, School-based Support, and Extra-Curricular Training, describes system-located experiences that inform the initiation and development of entrepreneurship. The thematic domains of “Family” and “Community” represent the relationship of relevant NDYA experiences and interdependence that inform self-determination. The theme of “Entrepreneurship through Family” represents three subthemes: Family Support, Family Business Dynamic, and Family Supported Entrepreneurship Check-In” were derived from five codes. The “Community Participation through Entrepreneurship” theme was developed from five codes, that were further refined into the subthemes, Community Engagement, Community Support, and Community Visibility, Finally, NDYA entrepreneurial activities that ultimately influence self-determination are described by the “Self-Determination through Entrepreneurship” theme, which was derived from fourteen codes that were further collapsed in to the four subthemes: Autonomy, Relatedness, Competence, and Psychological Empowerment. Below, a table of the final four theme before assigned a title, are represented with their subthemes.

TABLE III: Thematic Analysis

| CODE GROUPS FOR THEME DEVELOPMENT | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Institutions | Entrepreneurship | Family | Community |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postsecondary transition • School-based support • Extra-curricular training • Transferable skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence • Relatedness • Autonomy • Psychological Empowerment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support • Family business dynamic • Family supported entrepreneurship check-in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement • Community support • Community visibility |
| COVID-19 (Stand-alone theme) | | | |

E. **Quality of Research**

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative methodology seeks the depth and richness of participant experience that cannot be accessed with statistically defined data. This does not mean effort is not made to ensure the reliability of the data collected and analyzed with qualitative methodological tools (Braun, 2022; Denzin, 2018; Patton, 2015). During research design, data collection, and analysis attention was paid securing reliability through trustworthiness, reflexivity, triangulation, and member checking.

1. **Bias and trustworthiness**

Concerns of trustworthiness and response bias during data collection is a risk to qualitative and quantitative research alike (Denzin, 2018; Patton, 2015). Addressing bias in the design and delivery of interviews includes acknowledging the power dynamic between researcher and participants and making an effort to ameliorate it when developing rapport (Milton & Bracher, 2013; Milton, 2014; Scott-Barrett et al., 2019). Acknowledging this differential includes reinforcing to participants that they are in control of the interview process through initial consent and with check-ins during the interview to confirm that they consent to

continue (Scott-Barrett et al., 2019). Dyadic interview technique has the potential for response bias depending on the relation and power dynamic between participants (Morgan, 2016). Having neurodivergent participants choose their dyadic interview partner, however, respects their agency and may address the potential for response bias (Caldwell, 2013). NDYA participants were asked to choose a family member that supported their entrepreneurship for the interviews during the consent process. At times during the interview process, NDYA and FSM were asked individually if they agreed to continue participating.

The trustworthiness of the research is partly ensured by the length of data collection to establish the familiarity required to build thick rich description. The interview process was lengthy, each dyad was interviewed for a maximum of ninety minutes twice weekly over a four week period. Interview questions for the week were often retooled to delve deeper into a topic or elaborate on experiences of interest related in previous interviews. This strategy sought to establish authenticity of responses in the building of the relationship between researcher and participants.

2. **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity, or researcher subjectivity, informs research design, data collection, and analysis. It represents researcher reflective flexibility-or active inquiry-in response to positionality throughout the research process and is a running critical interrogation of the work of research. Reflexivity in the researcher's domains of personal values, methodological functionality, and academic discipline influence the production of knowledge (Clarke & Braun, 2021). Overall, reflexivity can demonstrate the credibility of the researcher and their research (Darawsheh, 2014). In the interest of transparency with respect to personal reflexivity, this study is conducted by a neurodivergent researcher, herself the mother of two transition aged

neurodivergent young adults. Furthermore, the functional reflexivity of the feminist care ethic's methodology recognizes that the relationship within neurodivergent participants' families informs their experience and thus the data collection and analysis. Moreover, the researcher's home discipline is disability studies; thus, the focus of research also seeks to understand participants' experience with systemic ableism, such that subsequent knowledge production has an emancipatory objective in defining the neurodivergent entrepreneur identity based in part on the noneconomic goals of entrepreneurship.

To reflexively address the concerns of personal positionality and research intent memo-ing took place throughout the research process in both the interview journal and on atlas.ti when coding data . During interviews, particular attention was paid to researcher's overidentification with the experiences of the families and efforts were made to avoid conflation with similar participant experiences. If memos were indicated during coding, the data-participant responses-field was widened to include a significant amount of their commentary before and after the data of interest to ensure objectivity. Memos associated with codes were reviewed again during data analysis to interrogate assumptions during thematic development.

3. **Triangulation and member checking**

Dyadic interviewing is understood to be a unique method of accessing more information in greater detail from participants and for this research, an accommodation for participants having complex communication concerns. It is also a way to approach reliability through the triangulation of participant responses to substantiate experiences of entrepreneurship. Participants are asked the same question both individually and then together in the dyadic interview. Their responses present an opportunity to compare and assess personal interpretations of shared experiences in real time during shared interviews and for this research, within twenty

four hours when conducted individually. Triangulation provides a more reliable understanding of the multi-faceted construction of the social phenomenon that is the family supported entrepreneurship. Reliability can be further secured through asking participants if the researcher's interpretation is also on point.

Member checking was conducted with the participants to establish whether the researcher and participant experience of entrepreneurship are aligned. A section of findings was selected and sent to the respective participants asking them if the analysis of their comments accurately described their experience. Participants were asked to respond to the researcher with their decision and whether they had any questions. Participants from all three entrepreneurship, responded in agreement with the interpretation and understanding of their experiences.

F. **Summary**

Upon completion of research design, data collection, and data analysis, dyadic interview methodology proved sufficient to develop themes that answered the research questions. Qualitative methodological tools have built an understanding of the NDYA experience of family supported entrepreneurship and recognizing the outcomes of interest given their thick rich descriptions. Additionally, efforts made to secure the reliability of the findings established while not a generalizable description of all family supported entrepreneurship for neurodivergent transition aged entrepreneurs, a foundation for future research to explore the commonalities and differences thereof. The following section presents the findings that describe the family supported entrepreneurship experience of NDYA entrepreneurs for the participants in this research.

IV. PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION

There is a constant search for a formula, with a how-to list of steps, and the guarantee that following these directions will result in a successful outcome. In the nineteenth century, entrepreneurship captured the American imagination with a succession of Horatio Alger like narratives that described mythical characters who wore boots, with straps, that when pulled resulted in a seat on the stock exchange. In the twenty-first century, the new entrepreneur to gain mythical status is the neurodiverse tech genius, although this too may also prove to be a fallible stereotype. It stands to reason that, given recent popular attention, the cachet of neurodivergence has an attendant stereotype of the latent genius hiding the pearl of an IPO-worthy business waiting to be discovered. In the meantime, most entrepreneurs speak instead of endless hours of work and dedication leading only to marginal profits.

Clearly, there is no single way for someone to “do what they love,” as evidenced by the autistic entrepreneurs whom I interviewed, along with the families that support them. One is a gifted Artist with a passion for his medium, whose mother managed the entire business side of the enterprise. For another entrepreneur, his drive is the art of entrepreneurship itself, as much as he loves the product that he is marketing. A third young man was born with a niche talent notorious for the difficulty it presents to those trying to establish themselves in the business, let alone to achieve success. What they all have in common, regardless of their differences in skill set or customer, is dedication, drive, and unconditional family support.

A. **The Artist**

“It all started when he was three, four years old and his great speech therapist suggested we find an interest for him to build expressive speech around, he said he wanted some balloons ... I have three children and I work full time, so it’s whatever you like, be happy, go create! I didn’t think too much of it. Until one morning he wakes us up and says he’s on YouTube.

His mother further elaborates that, unbeknownst to them, he had been watching balloon artists on the social media platform and then sharing his mastery by recreating and uploading their videos verbatim. The Artist’s mother slowly pieced together her son’s progress when reviewing the YouTube comments from frustrated balloon artists worldwide who, considering the Artist’s echolalic recitation of their own scripts, believed they had been plagiarized.

“Makes people happy ... because I love balloons” is the Artist’s immediate response when asked why he makes balloon art. Certainly he recognized the ability of balloon characters to spread joy, but when gifting the important people in his life balloons crafted in their image, an opportunity presented itself. His pediatrician was so impressed with the balloon doctor made in his likeness that both the doctor and his staff remarked on the potential of parlaying the Artist’s talent into a business. The reciprocated delight on the Artist’s face every time he presented balloon flower bouquets, holiday-themed characters, and especially a balloon version of the recipient, suggested to his mother that this was his way of communicating with people and vice versa. The progression to business was very slow, with mom closely observing her son’s every reaction along the way. Given the Artist’s fondness for gifting his favorite teachers and therapists, his mother considered this a relaxed environment for him to experience volume demand. They offered his balloon art as part of a school-based fundraising activity, in which

students could order an appreciation balloon sculpture for their teacher. All agreed it was a smashing success.

To celebrate the high school graduation of the Artist's sister, the family took a trip to Taiwan, where the Artist's parents had emigrated from to attend university in the US. While there, the Artist took balloon art lessons pre-arranged by his mother. The Artist's instructors confirmed what she had suspected: he is a very talented Artist, the likes of which they had rarely witnessed among children his age. Returning to their suburban home with a new-found sense of direction, his mother began to accept invitations to demonstrate his ballooning skills at various community functions. Over time, event invitations spread by word of mouth, attracting both local and national news organizations. The Artist is now a familiar attraction at private and public celebrations along with his crew (mom, dad, sister, and younger brother, each having their designated job assignment). There was never an initial business plan; instead, they set up purchase orders and determined fee schedules as needed. As with any family-run business, there have been bumps in the road, but the family has figured out how to make it work for everyone.

The difficult moments have also afforded pauses for the family to review their intentions and commitments. The pandemic presented just such an opportunity, given the immediate drop-off in parties and public gatherings where the Artist would be hired to perform. The reality of COVID-19 struck home when the Artist's father became sick enough to require hospitalization. The Artist responded in the best way he knew how: prayer and a new category of frontline worker balloon sculptures to thank those who cared for his father. Recalling these unfortunate events moved the Artist's older sister to comment that her brother is more than just balloons, emphasizing his part-time library job and keeping his social media current.

The sister's sentiments were best captured by mom's retelling of an anecdote about an inflection point in the Artist's career. If one were to adapt the concept of the entrepreneurial pivot—the phenomenon in which, when its bottom line is threatened, a business will redirect its energies toward a new product or approach—the Artist executed just such a turn when he subtly made a change that before the business, was not possible. Many autistic people thrive on constants; for the Artist, this meant there could be no balloon color deviation within his repertoire (e.g., turkeys were brown with red wattles). One day the Artist ran out of red balloons, which in the past meant no more ballooning until they could be procured. Instead, to everyone's delight, the Artist independently made a duck, marking a departure from old habits. Later still, when necessary, he found that he could tolerate color substitutions in balloon turkeys as well. In this way, the meaning of the business had evolved beyond the Artist's talent with balloons to encompass his skill as an entrepreneur.

The below table contains a brief relevant biography of the entrepreneur, their entrepreneurship, and description of business logistics, major responsibilities of the NDYA and family support.

Participant profile tables present descriptive aspects of job responsibilities, support needs, FSM details, business, transition background, and community based business activities.

TABLE IV: The Artist Profile

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| The Artist | | | |
| NDYA1 | Balloon Performance Artist | Age talent apparent: 8 | Age: 25 |
| Responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of supplies for events per calendar; • Take customer requests at event; • Balloon art assembly; and • Assist with set-up and packing supplies at events. | | | |
| Support Needs: Moderate-Significant Diagnosis: Autism, communication impairment | | | |
| Family | | | |
| Key Support Person: Mother Family Support Members: Father, older sister, younger brother Family members: same | | | |
| Business | | | |
| Event Entertainment Location: Suburban New England Est. 2014 Active Public and private events and parties Operation base: Home Marketing: Website, social media, word of mouth Owner: Mother | | | |
| Transition and Services | | | |
| Entrepreneur education: High School Degree Extracurricular Instruction: Private balloon Artist training, conferences Secondary employment: Public library assistant Disability Resources: Home Community Based Service-community integration program | | | |
| Entrepreneurship Community Activities | | | |
| Gig events Professional development special education scholarship for instructors at his alma mater Television and news interviews | | | |

B. The Chef

“His fear of job interviews meant we would have to explore his working for himself,” recalls his mother, a STEM teacher at her son’s middle school. Therefore, when news of an entrepreneurship course crossed her desk, she quickly enrolled him. Although he was unsure of what direction he would take his business, the Chef took an immediate interest in the program. Early considerations included a greenhouse, a common family-supported business venture for neurodivergent people. However, during the development of his business plan, he found the idea of undertaking assembly of an entire greenhouse rather daunting. Subsequently brainstorming about possible new directions, his mother asked the Chef what he loved. The answer having the most foreseeable promise was pickles.

The Chef’s was an astute choice, as there were several resources available in the small town where his family lived, (just north of Charlotte, NC, and known for its rich farmland). Both the Chef and his older brother had been members of the local 4-H. Additionally, the local university had an active and accessible extension program to support a cottage industry of low-risk foods. Furthermore, there were many seasonal venues, farmers markets, and brick-and-mortar stores where he could sell the pickles. Although the pickle business might involve less intensive post-production activity than ballooning, its pre-production is heavily regulated. Meeting local public health authorities’ idiosyncratic requirements of food handling and distribution required the focused support of the Chef’s mother. However, with repetition, patience, and guidance, the Chef is slowly becoming more involved with this end of the business.

In the meantime, this too is a venture requiring full family participation. The Chef’s father and his brother (who is also neurodivergent) assist in delivering the pickles to grocery accounts. Cross-country supply chain interruptions during the pandemic pressed his grandfather

into service, finding local sources for otherwise unavailable canning supplies and delivering them when visiting from out of state. While family has proven imperative to entrepreneurial success, there is also an advantage to having established community ties. It is not unusual to find some autistic people interested in organizations that have regimented activities. For the Chef, such an organization is his local school board. He began attending and closely observing their meetings, focusing on members' titles and respective roles, and paying particular interest to the rules of order. Board members took notice of the Chef and championed his endeavors, exemplifying the benefits of networking. It may also be a testament to the possibilities of small-town living, in which people know each other, and word of mouth has high-yield social capital. Farmers market sales gave the Chef the self-confidence that was arguably less accessible in the part-time supported employment he was offered at Lowe's Hardware. It also connected the Chef and his mother with a local farmer who has since become their sole in-season cucumber supplier.

There was little doubt that the entrepreneurship was proving successful. The potential for future sales was always a clear message throughout the interviews. The business was gaining traction and appeared to have hit a rhythm when the pandemic hit. The frustration in finding supplies was only matched by an unexpected increase in demand, given that, with so many restaurants closed, more people were eating at home. This rapid growth of the business during shutdown gave the Chef time to consider expansion of his entrepreneurial activities. The family had purchased a large shed, which the Chef intended to turn into his pickle factory. They soon understood that they would need a bigger shed, one with wiring and plumbing, so that they could move pickle prep out of their home's kitchen. During discussion of the future pickle factory, the Chef informed me that the factory would be multi-purpose and would include a lounge area for

the Chef to “just relax.”. The pickle business was not only an extension of his professional aspirations, but it also spoke to his possible interest in independent living.

Whatever independence looks like for the Chef, the business itself will always depend on others to handle the financial end. The Chef’s domain is all things pickles, including marketing and advertising. As it is, they can barely keep up with their current production demand, such that anything beyond community events, farmers market sales, the Chef’s speaking events, and the family’s makeshift pickle float in the town parade might attract more orders than they can fill. The Chef’s tasty Pickles are currently available for purchase at eight local Food Lion grocery stores. Talking about his future goals and interests thus far, the Chef spoke of his admiration for famous entrepreneurs and his dream of a “board of directors” worthy expansion. It was during this conversation the Chef voiced his desire to be seen as an entrepreneur rather than an autistic wunderkind. In his mother’s words, they were not in the business of selling “pity pickles.” The pickles sell themselves: she later informed me (with some dismay) they had been contacted by another five Food Lions wanting to place standing orders. Sitting beside her, the Chef wore a winning grin that bespoke his appreciation that his name is less associated with the autistic kid and his inspirational business acumen and more with pickles that were oddly sweet AND hot.

TABLE V: THE CHEF PROFILE

| The Chef | | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| NDYA2 | Food Retail | Age talent apparent: 16 | Age: 20 |
| Responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of food product, cooking, and packaging; • Deliver to distributors (groceries) with assistance; • Attend sales events, farmers markets, fancy food events, store events; and • Engage with customers, make sales, and distribute samples at events. Support Needs: Moderate Diagnosis: Autism | | | |
| Family | | | |
| Key Support Person: Mother Family Support Members: Father, older brother Family members: same | | | |
| Business | | | |
| Food Service Location: Suburban Eastern North Carolina Est. 2019 Active Grocery stores, farmer markets, gourmet food events Operation base: Home with recent structure built on property to operations out of home Marketing: Website, social media, word of mouth Owner: Mother | | | |
| Transition and Services | | | |
| Entrepreneur's education: High School Degree, High School vocational entrepreneurship program Extracurricular Instruction: Municipal food service training certificate Secondary employment: none Disability Resources: none | | | |
| Entrepreneurship Community Activities | | | |
| Farmers markets, store events, gourmet food events Public speaker on entrepreneurship Community parades Attends civic council and school board meetings Television and print news interviews | | | |

C. **The Actor**

The Actor The theory that autistic minds have developmentally disordered mirror neurons, the brain cells believed responsible in learning social behavior from others, has been

met with controversy. That so many autistic people are excellent mimics underscores self-advocates' defense of the double empathy theory, which posits that deficit models speak more to the inability of medical model research to understand the difference of autistic communication styles. For the Actor, responding to his parents' questions in the voice of a cartoon character was just something that he says he always did. However, it was in his junior high school talent show that he had the chance to share this talent with his peers. Standing in front of the school in an auditorium was not going to be possible given his struggle with anxiety, so his character, the voice of God in a classic Bill Cosby skit, was pre-recorded as an off-stage disembodied voice. This gave the Actor the chance to see his classmates' encouraging response in real time.

Other school events that showcased the Actor's voice acting always met with a positive reception. Once his voice changed, his mother noticed how often people would comment on his "wonderful, deep voice." This knowledge, along with his growing cast of character voices, prompted her to suggest he consider voice acting. The suggestion was attractive enough to the Actor that he was amenable to taking voice acting lessons offered by a local recording studio. Although he was less interested in the formalities of the process, opting instead to let his parents sit in for that part of the course, he was entirely present for the actual voice work. Part of the program involved travel to a well-known recording studio in the industry to cut a demo track. According to the Actor and his parents, he took to the microphone like a professional. Gone was the anxiety he so often struggled with. Instead, he immediately responded to every cue with the passion that only an artist mastering his craft could muster. A side of the Actor that his parents had never witnessed came to life, and at that moment, everyone in the room understood that voice acting was a very real possibility for him.

With demo in hand, they quickly put together a Facebook page to showcase his talent and announce his availability. Beyond that, they were unsure what their next steps should be. In the meantime, the Actor graduated from high school, and the family moved from suburban Illinois to the exurbs outside of a small city in Iowa. The move caused the Actor to experience isolation, which COVID-19 shutdowns further exacerbated. Both parents identified as entrepreneurs, mom owned her own business (copywriting for large companies) where his father, semi-retired from his ownership of small businesses, now worked as well. With both parents working from home, they were available to assist with the Actor's voice acting career. The pandemic gave them time to invest in the Actor's career. They had successfully applied for a seed money grant for disabled entrepreneurs from a regional non-profit organization. Both techies, the Actor and his father built an in-home recording studio and computer sound mixing platform. His mother found an online voice acting agency they subscribed to where the Actor was to check weekly and submit auditions. Through networking they found a gig where he recorded the voice-over for a trucking commercial. However, the Actor was not getting any responses from his audition submissions. In the meantime, he was registered for local college online courses.

When the family first moved to Iowa, they started a bath bomb business in their downtime. The intention was to keep the Actor engaged and busy, while opening up a perfect opportunity for father-son bonding. They sold the bath bombs at local farmers market where the Actor's voice skills came in handy as the barker, drawing in potential customers. However, with COVID-19, this enterprise had to be shelved. My interviews with the family occurred in the midst of these events. Everyone was always indefatigably cheerful, but the unknown gnawed at the edges with every passing conversation. It was around this time that his mother confided in

me that they were also exploring postsecondary college-based life skill and independence transition programs. One reason they had moved to Iowa was to be closer to the University of Iowa's REACH program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. His mother confided that they had applied the previous year but had been informed the Actor would have to commit to the program if he were to be successful (which from the admissions interview appeared to not be the case). However, he was invited to reapply the following year. The news was not a devastating disappointment because the Actor struggles with several medical issues, including a fragile immune system and asthma.

In that last year, even as COVID-19 slowed down the world, life changed rapidly for the family. They were relieved to be able to secure Medicaid for the Actor, and they also successfully applied for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). In the meantime, he was academically gaining ground in his on-line coursework. A long-time netizen, the Actor volunteered to set up a Discord server for his philosophy course group project, assisting his classmates with registering for Discord accounts. Establishing competence in these areas resulted in increased relatedness with community, albeit online, and has renewed the Actor's interest in attending a live-out postsecondary program. The isolation of the exurbs, absent of the public transportation he regularly used in Illinois to explore his community, combined with being home daily with his parents, may have renewed his interest in venturing outside of the home. During one of our last interviews, his family excitedly informed me that the Actor had been chosen to be the voice of a videogame character, that unbeknownst to them, he had discovered and auditioned for on Discord. With today's technology and the popularity of remote work, voice acting is a job that the Actor can do from his dorm.

TABLE VI: THE VOICE ACTOR PROFILE

| | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| The Voice Actor | | | |
| NDYA3 | Voice Actor | Age talent apparent:12 | Age: 24 |
| Responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet and online voice agency job searches; • Record and submit demos with written cover letter; • Soap and bath bomb assembly; • Assist with set-up and packing products at farmers markets; and • Engage with customers at farmers markets. Support Needs: Mild Diagnosis: Aspergers Syndrome | | | |
| Family | | | |
| Key Support Person: Mother and father Family Support Members: Mother and father Family members: same, no siblings | | | |
| Business | | | |
| Voice Actor Location: Suburban Midwest Est. 2021 Voice Acting: Initiating Soap making: Inactive Voice over commercials and video game voice actor Operation base: Home sound studio Marketing: social media, word of mouth Owner: No ownership established, business start-up phase | | | |
| Transition and Services | | | |
| Education: High School Degree, postsecondary transition program, community college courses Extracurricular Instruction: Private voice actor training, online sound/mixing board training Secondary employment: Occasional volunteer Disability Resources: Medicaid and Social Security Disability Insurance | | | |
| Entrepreneurship Community Activities | | | |
| Farmers Market Online social media and gaming communities | | | |

The participants offer the researcher a window to glimpse into their daily activities, past trials and triumphs, and personal reflections. The following findings sections dives into further detail, where themes were developed from the gracious sharing of their stories. The thematic

analyses present a larger picture of what the life of a NDYA entrepreneur supported by family looks like.

V. FINDINGS

A. **Introduction**

Throughout the interviews, the NDYA and their families shared their entrepreneurial journeys and related their formative experiences. Their individual narratives chronicle events that share common themes of how entrepreneurship has shaped their transition to adulthood through institutional, familial, and community systems. Participants' formal introduction to this transition likely occurred in the context of postsecondary employment and educational IEP objectives, marking an opportunity for stakeholders to consider entrepreneurship. The development of attitudes and abilities that define self-determination are essential postsecondary expectations in the transition to adulthood, demonstrated through their entrepreneurial experience. The support of family in these efforts can be described as having a dynamic that builds interdependence in the entrepreneur and benefits entrepreneurship. This connection builds bridges between the entrepreneur and their wider community in ways that further empower disability identity during the transition to adulthood. Moreover, that two of the three entrepreneurs were successful in both their businesses, and all three had the full support of family; by default, they were less likely to represent the failing entrepreneurship and demonstrate more exemplary outcomes. Granted, failure is an abstract concept given the purpose of the study was to understand the relative noneconomic outcomes of entrepreneurship in the interest of their transition to adulthood.

B. **Self-Determination through Entrepreneurship**

Autistic young adults have yet to realize the rates of employment and postsecondary education that are enjoyed by both neurotypical and cohort members having other disabilities (Roux et al., 2015; Shattuck et al., 2012). As a result, NDYAs experience significant social

disengagement due to systemic barriers, ableism, COVID-19 shutdowns, or a combination thereof (Burke et al., 2022; Roux et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2015). The prospect of family-supported entrepreneurship is an opportunity to engage NDYAs in their interests and talents in ways that encourage their continued developmental growth. It is a possible environment for the NDYA to experience increasingly complex social interactions and demands on skill building to establish confidence that encourages self-determination. Consequently, entrepreneurship can deliver opportunities with the potential for NDYAs' interdependence.

Young people experience strides toward independence during their transition into adulthood through actions of self-determination (Cheak-Zamora et al., 2015; Heller et al., 2011). Theoretically, self-determination internally motivates an individual through the achievement of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination is causally associated with successful postsecondary education and employment outcomes (Shogren, Wehmeyer, et al., 2015a). Although self-determination is more often an instructional goal of individualized secondary education planning and programmatic intervention, in practice it is contextually shaped by the ecological systems particular to a young person's holistic environment (Oswald et al., 2018; Shogren, 2013; Shogren et al., 2013). Accordingly, learning environments traditionally represented by higher education and employment are landscapes of independence where young adults navigate relationships and build the skills that they need to act in their own self-interest. Ideally, the young person is supported by a network of friends, family, and colleagues along the transition to adulthood.

Participants reflected on entrepreneurial activity conducted in the interest of business having the power to effect change in the NDYA. Coding captured in these descriptions of entrepreneurial actions in different contexts were inductively generalized into categories. These

descriptive categories deductively characterized larger subthemes of competence, relatedness, and autonomy to illustrate how the NDYA evolves toward the independence expected in adulthood through self-determining behavior. Again, COVID-19's impact on entrepreneurship and its influence on the entrepreneurs suggest an adaptability conferred through the responsibility of entrepreneurship.

Categories of **competence** include accounts of the NDYA's talents in the context of confidence. Here, FSM3 witnesses how her young person, the voice artist, displays confidence when producing their demo tape for audition submissions: "And so, when *NDYA3* started recording, I mean he just came to life, and he was had energy and he was excited about it, and he was making jokes and he was obviously very comfortable" (FSM3). FSM3's animation and delight in relating this story indicated that it was a defining moment for both her and NDYA3. Furthermore, in recollecting NDYA3's display, FSM3 witnessed his command of talent that could be channeled into entrepreneurship.

NDYA3's confidence was informed by actions exemplifying a work ethic demonstrated through taking increased initiative in business and personal life alike, suggesting a growing comfort with responsibility. As a result of encouragement and direction from his parents, NDYA3 agreed to submit voice demos to an online audition service. After months of committing to this responsibility, he independently came across a job listing for a voice actor on an entirely separate gaming platform (an activity he engages in during his personal time) and took the initiative to submit a demo and write his own cover letter:

NDYA3: Word link at the bottom yeah, so I clicked it and joined it and there is a channel on the discord that says help wanted, so I clicked it out of curiosity and lo and behold it's for voice acting ... Well, I recorded myself saying like sample lines and something to the creator and then sent it, right ...

FSM3 (*interjecting*): Mom usually writes your cover letters ...

NDYA3: Now I did (*refers to audition website*), but what happened this time, I wrote my own, slightly more informal, it was much more informal, but it was over chat so that made sense ...

FSM3 (*interjecting*): But what did you write? You don't have to say a word for word ...

NDYA3: Hello, I am a big fan ... and would be overjoyed if I would get this role. Attached, you will find my like audition. Cheers, me.

This was a rather remarkable exchange between NDYA3 and FSM3, and it highlights the three aspects of self-determination that he demonstrated. First, the fact that NDYA3 took initiative outside of the parameters set by his parents reveals the establishment of autonomy in the context of entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore, the actions taken to contact the potential employer appear to require some degree of competence with the equipment needed to record the demo, the platform on which it had to be submitted, and the ascertainment of appropriate community vernacular. NDYA3's story clarifies that his belonging within the context of entrepreneurship does not compromise his relatedness to or belonging with his parents (even as he elected to write his own introduction independently, rather than having FSM3 do so).

Executive functioning is an organizational skill considered imperative for both entrepreneurship and competitive integrated employment. One FSM recognized their NDYA as having developed this skill when he displayed responsibilities relative to his entrepreneurship:

Now he knows that that's the day we're going if I let him know you'll go down ahead of time, you can tell him two o'clock you'll wake up and that go pack away all the necessary balloons they need. So, I think that that that is something that he had learned right, you know, like okay for this job, this is what I need, so I think that's one giant step for that ... I think he has learned. (FSM1)

FSM1 appears to interpret NDYA1's ownership of necessary activities for the business to indicate developmental progress. These activities display responsibility that are very likely to carry over and mark progress in other aspects of life or future professional endeavors.

NDYA **relatedness** is potentially demonstrated in personal attitudes within a social context to include agreeableness and how they represent themselves relative to, or when identifying with, their business. The following exchange between FSM2 and NDYA2 regarding engaging with the community while representing the business demonstrates NDYA2's negotiating boundaries in the interest of his professional identity:

NDYA2: I guess like I just don't feel like I think that's like not related to the business because I like to make sure that the customers know the business and know what I do in the business.

FSM2: So (I like to) be funny and you like to be serious.

NDYA2: Yeah, I just want to keep everything professional.

FSM2 (*lighthearted*): I'm not professional.

NDYA2 (*reassuring*): You know, you understand.

Interviewer questions what expectations the NDYA2 has of FSM2

NDYA2: Give me some advice and if I really like the ideas that you give me, I think that can run the business good.

This exchange approximates a negotiation of one another's roles within the entrepreneurship while establishing, maintaining, and later actually building relatedness within that context. NDYA2's initial statement secures their entrepreneurial identity while later testing the boundaries of belonging. NDYA2's gentle redirection of FSM2 to "understand" their self-advocacy possibly illustrates maintaining relatedness. Finally, NDYA2's solicitation of FSM2's advice and the conditions of their consideration may be interpreted as building relatedness on personally empowered terms.

A poignant example of NDYA1's relatedness might be found in his appreciation of those balloons he made in the downtime provided by COVID-19 cancellations of events and the library

he works part-time. When asked what he created at this time he responded, “Essential workers like healthcare workers and post carriers ... virtual workers or healthcare workers” (NDYA1). NDYA1’s limited spoken reciprocal language might not immediately indicate a need to belong with the community. The fact that NDYA1 independently chose to craft essential workers having no standing order early in the pandemic (confirmed in earlier conversation with FSM1) may reveal an appreciation for the importance of community during the pandemic.

As the NDYA internalizes the pride gained from experience, they may feel empowered to engage in more complex agency defining behaviors of self-advocacy and leadership in ways that define **autonomy**. NDYA1 has marked communication differences, yet their enterprise is developed and thriving, and he has a dynamic role in the community. NDYA1 has expressed a sound awareness of pride in the work that he does, which is confirmed by FSM1.

NDYA1: Yeah, I feel proud when people call me the *title of his business*.

His FSM echoed his statement when relating their conversation to me.

FSM1: You could tell in his demeanor you know, like after like the *event* told me like are you proud of me? And so, I’m always proud of you right, and then I think the fact that he shared his work on his social media that means he’s very proud.

Pride is presented in relationship to autonomy, as representing an internalized sense of worthiness. NDYA1 locates this self-worth in his entrepreneurial identity. His work defines who he is, describing the means to achieve an end that establishes autonomy. For that matter, there is no one other than NDYA1 in the family who can produce the product or service that the entrepreneurship is designed to deliver.

NDYA1 refers to his use of social media to share his work, a practice he began not long after his entrepreneurial talents attracted the attention of the national media. NDYA1 may have been empowered to engage in social media as a way of not only displaying his pride but also of

taking the initiative to expose his business to a wider audience: “Lots of fans on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter. People like my board ... my friends or family or my friends, who also helped me” (NDYA1). Again, NDYA1 has independently posted to the social media accounts that he set up himself for the purpose of building his community of people who recognize him and his art. This strongly indicates the establishment of the autonomy of his identity.

In addition, actions of autonomy can be found in self-advocacy. For example, FSM1 points out that once NDYA1 had an established design collection for clients and partygoers, he became comfortable enough to voice his needs and state terms of engagement: “The other day he sees me, he said, like, ‘Well, no, I am actually going to rest for the rest of the night, but I wake up early tomorrow to do it’” (FSM1). NDYA1 established boundaries by choosing to rest with the promise that he would make the necessary accommodations to attend to job responsibilities. The competence established in entrepreneurship gave NDYA1 a zone of comfort for exercising autonomy, evidenced by his choosing to self-start the following morning.

COVID presented and opportunity for NDYA2 to take initiative that speaks to their autonomy in the interest of their work ethic. Earlier in the pandemic, local community events had yet to be cancelled. Instead, people were asked to take common-sense precautions to stem the spread of the virus. NDYA2 came up with a way reduce the risk of transmission in order to be able to continue offering samples to potential customers.

FSM2: People would just pick up the top get the pickle put it on their plate, but we didn’t want people touching the same pair of tongs. So, we took the tongs away and then NDYA2 just ... how’d you do it?

NDYA2: I would give people forks.

The entrepreneurship gave NDYA2 an opportunity to exercise autonomous problem solving. This is also a quite pragmatic display of autonomous decision making to address a dilemma

presented by entrepreneurship. Moreover, the mutual support between NDYA2's decision and FSM2's relatedness emerges in this account of events. There may be a point at which autonomy, informed by competence, elevates the NDYA to take initiative in directing others.

Leadership is a characteristic displayed by those having the sense of self borne of confidence in one's competence. Moreover, leadership is performed in the interest of others and thus embodies relatedness. Possibly, elected office is one of the more participatory leadership roles. NDYA2 has long had interest in community service and leadership that began with his attendance at board of education meetings as an observing audience member. When queried about his dreams, FSM mentioned his interest in elected office, piquing his interest: "Well, I thought about running for Lieutenant Governor, because in North Carolina the lieutenant governor serves as president of the Senate and I just want to become a presiding officer" (NDYA2). His interest in serving as presiding officer refers to NDYA2's keen interest in the rules of order and the elected official assembly.

At first glance, NDYA2 may seem to be more interested in the title rather than action. When probed on his policy interests, however, he was well aware of the responsibilities of an elected representative: "to help small businesses grow. I think that's what I would support just to help small businesses grow into corporations. Maybe lower taxes" (NDYA2). Here, NDYA2 gives serious consideration as to what he had to offer, possibly from a place of developed competence, and determined that he understood what is of interest to small business owners because he had a working understanding of a growing business. It is also possible he knows that lowering taxes is a popular response expected of politicians, as there was no earlier indication that he was involved in the fiscal operations of his business.

Entrepreneurship fosters prime leadership skills that help prepare NDYAs for continued developmental growth. Leadership is a component of empowerment, a factor of self-determination, per the functional model (Wehmeyer, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995). Psychological empowerment theoretically stratifies the process into a network of three components: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral. These represent, respectively, perceived control, socio-contextual awareness and aptitude, and the experiential knowledge of the outcomes of their intended behaviors (Zimmerman, 1995). The acquisition of these components parallels the events and outcomes described in the themes of entrepreneurship for organizing the findings.

The psychological empowerment framework is complex, but it is clear that the events that comprise NDYA accession of self-determination can represent an empowerment achieved through the entrepreneurial process. Intrapersonal components stand to be gained from entrepreneurship, the routines of which appear to promote both self-confidence and competence. The entrepreneur identity delivers the NDYA a locus of personal control, a foundation from which to develop the related self-awareness needed to understand, assess, and meet the interactional demands of the entrepreneurship. Ultimately, entrepreneurship acts as a conduit to access learned attitudes and behavior to be performed on larger stages, which eventually include community. An exchange the interviewer had with NDYA2 exemplified such empowerment. Its impact on both him and his business was palpable in his response to the question of what he has learned from his business.

NDYA2: I think, to just, if I keep working hard and I can. I can achieve some recognition from people and get more attention from other people such as like the town of (*his hometown*).

Interviewer: Why do you want the recognition?

NDYA2: I think I just feel honored when I get recognized. I just appreciate the honor.

Interviewer: Why do you appreciate the honor?

NDYA2: I just feel very respected.

Latent interpretation of NDYA2's response was the connection between the motivation to work, with an increase in purpose and social capital from his community members. FSM2 believed that his drive was less about money but more the entrepreneurship itself, as well as the positive relationships with his customers, community members, and local organizations.

As a corollary to self-determination, the embodiment of empowerment through entrepreneurship is not static, but rather contextually dynamic, with the capacity to scale in response to the challenges presented throughout the transition to adulthood. Empowerment through entrepreneurial challenges is facilitated through the support of family. Moreover, this progress is definitive of the interdependence that informs self-determination.

C. **Entrepreneurship through Family Support**

Entrepreneurship in the context of family is a relatively new avenue of research, having origins in anti-poverty strategies of members of historically marginalized communities who experience barriers to wage employment (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Dyer Jr, 2003; Katz, 2012; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Parker Harris, Renko, et al., 2014; Randerson et al., 2015; Tschoeke et al., 2020). Family entrepreneurship research is multidisciplinary in its examination of family embeddedness in cultural, psychological, and organizational contexts (Cardella et al., 2019; Wigren-Kristoferson et al., 2022). The common assumption that profit is the prime goal of entrepreneurship does not preclude family-centered non-economic benefits (Chrisman et al., 2012). For example, the concept of emotional ownership describes the attachment to, and social identification with, entrepreneurship, representing interpersonal components able to promote empowerment (Bjornberg & Nicholson, 2012; Holt et

al., 2016; Zimmerman, 1995). Moreover, unlike financial investment, psycho-emotional family support has been found to be positively correlated with entrepreneurial attitudes and start-up activities in college students (Edelman et al., 2016; Osorio et al., 2017).

In general, economic self-sufficiency is not the immediate intention of family-supported entrepreneurship represented in this research. Indeed, study participants receiving disability benefits risk their loss given state and federal driven asset limiting policies (Lee, 2019; Parker Harris, Renko, et al., 2014). Instead, parents sought ways to address their young person's disengagement that considered their particular skills or interests when confronted with systemic barriers to postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment (Bross et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2015). Family support in the customization of entrepreneurial endeavors specific to the young person's immediate ecosystem provide opportunities with the potential to empower self-determination.

Family support emerged as a sub-theme central to the neurodiverse young adults' entrepreneurial journeys. Theoretically, the self-determination process for transitioning young adults is located in the social domains of family, school, and employment (Abery, 1994). Although psychological empowerment centers the individual, per the definition of the locus of control, it also includes an interactional component that can be found in the context of family (Wehmeyer, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). Family support and dynamics relative to the business reside in the overlap of family and entrepreneurship domains. The resulting relational exchanges, which both demonstrate purpose in and contribute meaning to the business, are found in the **family support** and **family business dynamics** sub-themes. These codes, semantic in content, represent the intrafamilial relationship commitment to the business that fosters opportunities for NDYA skill development and behavior indicative of transition to adulthood.

Family Support in the context of entrepreneurship is captured in the description of participating actions of family members: “NDYA2’s father usually he buys a lot of *supply* for him, he will sometimes help him *prepare* and sometimes he’ll deliver ... his brother will help deliver. (*Brother*) is NDYA2’s main delivery person because they go during the day (when) we’re (parents) all at work” (FSM2). In this way, FSM2 describes the multiple family members that are involved in the entrepreneurship and the extent of their activities. Although it was unclear how these family members came by their duties, FSM2 implied that the family was not pressed into assistance unwillingly. Furthermore, it became clear that family undertook responsibilities NDYA2 had yet to undertake independently. Family support was especially well received during the COVID-19 pandemic when enlisted to find essential supplies for the business. Local shortages required enlisting out of state family:

During COVID (NDYA2) has always had family support ... include my father-in-law that would be technically more family support because (he) goes out of his way to help (NDYA2) have jars. My father-in-law lives in another state, so he can't help with delivery he just buys *supplies* (that) are really hard to find in *location of family*...so every time he’s out if he sees mason jar sales, buys several cases of them and when he gets like a truckload of them, he brings them down. (FSM2)

FSM2 emphasized the difficulty of meeting an increase in demand and her evident relief and appreciation that the extended family were willing and able to get involved. FSM2 stressed that her father-in-law’s participation was unsolicited, and instead offered freely.

Family support requires not just intimate knowledge of the young person’s limits but also of the business itself, for which the assistance of family is its own contingency plan:

This is where me as an I want to say job coach ... you have to know your candidate limitations right. So, I usually tell him okay ... so you're going to be there 3:00 to 6:00, and now I need you to be very professional ... But then there’s like these big events like you know national layout there’s like lots of people come, Comic Con he will say to me, ‘I’ve had enough’ and that's why ... the whole family is there, and my other son always

help ... he can do *the work of NDYA1*, but it used to be a team of two they always go out together. (FSM1)

FSM1 wanted to make clear the entrepreneurship was a learning process for everyone. The family and NDYA1 need to not only learn the vicissitudes of the business but also the limits of the entrepreneur. Family in turn, accommodates NDYA1 in the interest of supporting the entrepreneurship while at the same time continuing to center him in the entrepreneurship.

Coding for **family business dynamic** reveals the extent to which the business is embedded within the family, with respect to organizational responsibilities. At times, these may appear as a family located systemic barrier to the self-efficacy required for NDYA self-determination. However, depending on the NDYA, these data might be latently interpreted to represent accommodations: "He's a solo artist, and I need to space them (events) out ... all those things are in my head how to strategically make sure this works perfect" (FSM1). FSM1 (like the other FSMs, for that matter) divulged the difficulty of supporting the entrepreneurship. It is clear that meeting the needs of the entrepreneur in such a way that their support does not eclipse the NDYA's involvement is at the forefront of their mind.

The **family business dynamic** may also speak to the NDYA's empowerment, as the family recognizes and follows through on the NDYA's choice:

NDYA2: We work together.

FSM2: He never works for me ... either I work for him, or I work with him.

This exchange reveals the recognition and respect that NDYA2 likely has for family support, and for FSM2, NDYA2's central position in the entrepreneurship. The exchange was in earnest, and it conveyed a sense of the mutually professional nature of their working relationship. It may be that FSM is reinforcing boundaries, designating that the primary responsibility of the

entrepreneurship resides with NDYA2. This re-centering of the entrepreneur could be a way to confirm NDYA2's consent to remain in the entrepreneurship.

Reciprocity is paramount in the family dynamics of the supported entrepreneurship. The NDYA's contribution influences family support, ascribing agency and interdependence to the young adult defining of self-determination (Sprague & Hayes, 2000; Xu et al., 2020). In this regard, the NDYA's recognition of their family's involvement displays a critical awareness defining of empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995). For example, one entrepreneur noted, "I'm not ever doing it all on my own, it's a family effort" (NDYA3). This comment was not solicited, but rather it came from NDYA3's description of his personal involvement in entrepreneurship. It was a pointed comment, and it appeared very important to NDYA3 that the interviewer was aware of this reality. This clarified that the NDYA3 also realizes that his is a family supported entrepreneurship.

The NDYA's appreciation of the essential nature of family to the business, along with the family's recognition of the NDYA's agency to direct organizational change, significantly indicate an entrepreneurship that centers the entrepreneur.

NDYA2: I would rather be with them, they're very supportive and they helped me. I like family as employees.

FSM2: But he talks about, you talked about hiring people all the time.

The latent meaning in this exchange suggests that although FSM2 understands that NDYA2 currently recognizes, requires, and appreciates their support, she would like him to know that they would ultimately defer to his decisions in the future. Conversely, this may have also been a veiled suggestion on behalf of FSM2, for NDYA2 to consider replacing family with employees.

The psychological conditions (e.g., pride and empowerment) that support self-determination influence relatedness, as described by the attachment and belongingness which

both result from and are experienced outside of the scope of business. As an example, FSM3 and NDYA3 arrived at these shared experiences after working together on the entrepreneurship.

So NDYA3 and I are getting together and spending time every afternoon and one of the things we, because FSM3 is retired, semi-retired, so one of the things we do is we spend an hour just talking together or playing games or most of the time we just read a book together. (FSM3)

FSM3 is describing efforts to build a rapport to promote communication between the two that might benefit the entrepreneurship. However, this could also be a means to secure NDYA3's relatedness that might effect more autonomy.

NDYA agency related to **family support** is further suggested in the latent meaning found when FSMs probe their young adults' commitment to entrepreneurship. Coded as **FSE check-ins**, these are occasions for the young adult to safely initiate or continue dialogue regarding possible disinterest or dissatisfaction with the entrepreneurship, or desire for its redirection:

NDYA2 tried a couple of things and asked to do a couple of things. Okay like he wanted to do baked goods, you know, alongside (his current business), he wanted to also sell cookies, one time he wanted to sell chocolate ... to make his own chocolate ... that failed. (FSM2)

FSM2 describes instances that confirmed their support of NDYA2's interest in the continuation of entrepreneurship but also entertained other entrepreneurial scenarios. This is just one of the many instances where FSMs and NDYAs might indirectly negotiate consent and commitment.

It is possible that over time the NDYA will eventually become interested in an altogether different direction. As an example, they may show interest in postsecondary education or employment instead of, in addition to, or as a result of their entrepreneurship:

He said he's interested in going to the (postsecondary education) program. We go meet them again retake the tour find out if we're still interested in, sounds like fun, and they also asked for like success factors feedback because last time they thought well, maybe we're not quite ready yet, but maybe we are ready now." (FSM3)

The readiness FSM3 refers to may be a consequence of the confidence gained from NDYA's entrepreneurial experience. Otherwise, the FSM might be suggesting the possibility of the NDYA abandoning the entrepreneurship for the time being.

Families appear to recognize their responsibility to guide their children through the developmental milestones toward adulthood. Furthermore, they looked in part to entrepreneurship for opportunities to help equip their children to navigate this journey. Although, if raising a family takes a village, the village takes part in the raising of children. Membership in a community initially occurs through the family of origin network. Community exposure during childhood and eventual participation are considered the foundation of citizenship.

D. **Community Participation through Entrepreneurship**

Empirical research focused on the transition of autistic youth to adulthood report that social skills are significantly associated with positive postsecondary outcomes of education and employment (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Roux et al., 2013; Sosnowy et al., 2018). In addition, recognizing meaningful community connections in the NDYA's ecosystem should involve the consideration of nuances in successful outcomes, beyond postsecondary education and employment (Kuo et al., 2018; Shattuck et al., 2020; Tint et al., 2017). Entrepreneurship is performed on a community stage where the NDYA engages with a variety of actors outside of the family unit in entrepreneurial activities. These activities offer the otherwise disengaged NDYA a personalized space for face-to-face interaction with others who share their interests—customers. NDYA interpersonal communication, located in the entrepreneurial experience, represents opportunities for growth. Therefore, codes identified from interviews feature the novel scenarios that contextualize the NDYA's navigation through entrepreneurship-related social challenges, which they experience through meaningful human connections in their community.

The semantic content identified in the data coded bidirectional interactions between the NDYAs and their community. NDYA directed **community engagement** with their customers when conducting business. In return, the NDYA received **community support** demonstrated by networks of friends, neighbors, and local businesses or social and cultural institutions, in the interest of the entrepreneurship. The latent content of this thematic domain includes the nuanced elements of NDYA interdependence that results from these exchanges during entrepreneurship. Thus, the transition to adulthood is encouraged when the entrepreneur interacts with people through their business, as the exchange symbolizes their socially contributive role. Entrepreneurship is performed on a community stage where the neurodiverse young entrepreneur engages with a variety of actors outside of the family unit in entrepreneurial activities. NDYAs directed **community engagement** with those whom they interacted with during the course of entrepreneurship, such as “talking with people like at the farmers market because I use to have, I still do kind of but not really as bad a massive social anxiety” (NDYA3). NDYA3 here acknowledges the personal growth that he experienced through entrepreneurship. This growth was realized as a reduction in social anxiety that, he suggests, resulted from consistent customer engagement within the community.

During interviews, NDYA3 related his belief that social anxiety was a barrier to engaging at the community level. Later NDYA3 discussed soliciting customer engagement given the increased comfort level that resulted from familiarity with his environment, successful past experiences with purposeful activity, and family support. FSM3 validated this sentiment in both a private and a dyadic interview with NDYA3.

These informal relationships are often elevated to **community visibility** in the context of the public recognition that the NDYA receives during municipal events and local or national

news exposure. Arguably, this visibility suggests a mutual civic understanding of inclusion for the NDYA, while the community welcomes disability awareness and representation. Both NDYA1 and NDYA2 have received print and television media attention; however, the one-on-one moments yielded the more impressionable anecdotes to the NDYA, FSMs, and interviewer alike. For example:

NDYA2: A (local grocery chain) employee asked me to sign an autograph.

FSM2: Yeah, not the first time you've been asked to sign an autograph.

NDYA2: I just I just appreciate that people enjoy the brand.

It appears that NDYA2 has achieved some degree of notoriety verging on celebrity, which he immediately equates with his product. Whether the recognition had to do with his product, the business itself, or the success of a neurodivergent entrepreneur cannot be gathered from this data. Of note, neither NDYA2 nor FSM2 referred to his autism during the retelling of this anecdote. Both understood, however, that NDYA2's invitation to be a keynote speaker at a state agency sponsored event on "transition to workmanship" was due to his success as a neurodivergent entrepreneur.

In return, the NDYA received **community support** for their businesses, as demonstrated by networks of friends, neighbors, and local businesses or social and cultural institutions. The community demonstrates they value the NDYA when members patronize the business, and when local officials formally recognize its contribution to civic prosperity. These acts inform and assure the NDYA that they make a difference, thereby anchoring them in the community network through their business.

When asked what he had learned from entrepreneurship that influences his life, NDYA2 recognized community support for his business as measured by invitation to municipal events:

Well before the pandemic I would sometimes be asked to do events ... I think sometimes when like after an event I just think about how kind the customers were, and I just appreciate their business. (NDYA2)

NDYA2 may interpret his customers' support to be related to his entrepreneurial dedication and tenacity as well as his attention to customer service. In addition, he appears to understand his entrepreneurship as significantly supported by events in the community, as evidenced by the many invitations he receives as an entrepreneur.

FSM2 recounts how NDYA2's fondness for parades has grown with the success of the entrepreneurship. The timing of events speaks to the power of community visibility to impact continued community support. Summarily, this may affect his motivation and his business:

That's the main difference, last year he was like 'get me out of here,' he just kind of sat there as my husband drove ... this year, he waved and said, 'Happy Fourth, Happy Fourth of July!' Huge. See, it's like people have no idea what a little bitty thing, how life changing it can be. (FSM2)

FSM2's response to a query about how community participation through entrepreneurship has influenced NDYA2 involved recounting a difference she perceived in the change in his demeanor. She continues with a reflection on the current request for orders from the local grocery chain:

The last time I spoke to you, he was in three and now they asked if they could add, well they asked if they could add one more. I said yes, and they said, "Well, we actually have a request from five more!" (FSM2)

That FSM2's remarks came on the tail of NDYA2's newfound enjoyment with the parade suggests she may see a correlation between community participation and the order increase. The thrill of her voice relays her pride in the success of her son and his entrepreneurship.

The extent to which NDYA2 identifies with his business raises the question of whether he transfers admiration for his business to himself in the context of customer satisfaction with his product, and the work he did to establish and maintain his business. NDYA2 has a high degree of

community visibility with frequent news coverage in both newspapers and television news channels. This does bring some attention to his hometown and probably attention to the grocery chain that carries his product. The inclusion of NDYA2's disability identity in the news reports may suggest that there is possibly a mutual exchange of social capital on a larger stage. The profit in this exchange, then, may be enjoyed by all parties in its production.

Latent content of this thematic domain includes NDYA interdependence, possibly resulting from these community engagement and support exchanges through the entrepreneurship. While not a formal transaction, where any support from the community has transactional expectations from the NDYA, it may involve a distinct, mutual recognition of the importance of one another. This reciprocity potentially rebalances the power dynamics, especially if the community were otherwise to consider the entrepreneurship to be a charity. To the contrary:

And then actually because my husband and I were very thankful that the Community embrace him so much we make sure we know we have established like a scholarship fund in this school for people who either (at the) high school or in the industry that they have gone above and beyond, helping a special education child or people who wants to go into special education. (FSM1)

FSM1's decision to include this outcome of NDYA1's entrepreneurship perhaps illustrates the importance of recognizing the community's support. Although not stated, this may send a message of the positive impact that entrepreneurship has on disabled students. It could also be interpreted as announcing the entrepreneurial success of NDYA1. Likewise, in response to a prompt of a picture of his standing behind a podium at his high school, NDYA1 explains,

NDYA1: Me at (*redacted*) high school, I'm giving a scholarship.

Interviewer: What's the scholarship for?

NDYA1: The funds are for the efforts.

Clearly, NDYA1 may not consider this activity to be specifically representing his community engagement as an entrepreneur. However, perhaps in this case he recognizes his role as an entrepreneur to be the one giving support rather than receiving it.

The public act of “giving back” is an experience that has the potential to empower the NDYA to take more social risks when engaging with their communities. Conversely, community acknowledgement of NDYA’s investment in its members engenders respect for the NDYA and their business. This synergistic phenomenon can be exhibited through increased **community visibility** in the context of public recognition. Here, the NDYA and their business potentially transcend the daily transactions of commerce in the public eye and ideally represent more to the local community at large. This dynamic suggests an understanding that both parties have a responsibility to one another. While not a fully developed social contract, it is the point at which the NDYA is not so much a societal inspiration, given their disability, as a supporting member of society in their own right.

NDYA2: I was awarded the Board of Education, the Board of Ed, the State School’s Board of Education honored me at their board meeting in 2019 for entrepreneurship.

FSM2: It’s a new award when they were so blown away by NDYA2 being an established entrepreneur that they awarded him and recognized him at one of the meetings and he’s the first person to ever have that award.

According to FSM2, this was the one award the NDYA2 received that he was most proud. The account of its receipt was brought up during a discussion in the dyadic interview. At this time, NDYA2 acknowledged that he would rather not automatically be identified as autistic for reasons that included medical privacy and concerns regarding autonomy. That the award was for young entrepreneurs and not disabled entrepreneurs exemplifies the phenomenon of civic understanding that results from community visibility.

Community is a nexus of mutual connections that culminates from entrepreneurship. Here the connection mutually arises between entrepreneur and his customers rather than the NDYA and systems gatekeeping participation through expectation of conforming to normative standards. The visibility accorded entrepreneurship substantiates is less about inclusion and more about representation where disability and identity occupy the same socially constructed identity.

E. **Transition to Entrepreneurship**

Although entrepreneurship is a popular employment option for disabled people, finding access to training and small business development programs proves difficult for most (Harris et al., 2014; Maritz & Laferriere, 2016; Parker Harris, Caldwell, et al., 2014; Renko et al., 2016; Shaheen, 2016; Svidron, 2021; Yamamoto & Alverson, 2013). When available, the federally funded programming that could support entrepreneurship may actually revoke disability benefit eligibility in response to nominal financial success (Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2013). Furthermore, that receipt of vocational rehabilitation services requires the entrepreneur to be the business owner, potentially prohibits family from expending capital in accessing resources unavailable to the neurodivergent entrepreneur (Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2013). These same barriers are further compounded relative to the neurodivergence of autistic entrepreneurs, for whom family capital is likely crucial to their venture (Hutchinson et al., 2021; Percival, 2021).

Postsecondary transition planning focused resources, which are meant to assist in postsecondary employment and education, have the potential to benefit entrepreneurship (Wong et al., 2021). **School-based support** can include entrepreneurship education programs, development of specialized skills, or platforming talents to the community. Such intervention can be encouraging, given that autistic students experience a decline in services upon entering

high school, before their near-total loss when exiting, a phenomenon subsequently correlated with persistent low rates of employment (Laxman et al., 2019). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed access to services, including vocational rehabilitation (Kaya et al., 2021).

The lack of viable options presented in transitional IEPs, in contrast with school-based encouragement, could conceivably persuade families to support entrepreneurship. The absence of formal programming, however, forces the family to valiantly piece together a mix of **extracurricular support**, privately funded instruction, or agency-based disability services in order to unleash the entrepreneur's potential. Yet, the opportunities presented and the skills gained during entrepreneurship can also segue into future traditional postsecondary pathways of employment and education.

Certainly, the path to entrepreneurship may find its indirect start in the rejection of less promising futures represented by the banal offerings typically up for consideration during **postsecondary transition planning**. One mother appreciated the importance of postsecondary transition programming, but she also expressed her disappointment with the IEP options that failed to recognize her son's publicly recognized talent:

I don't want to use this term very loosely like a cookie cutter kind of a postsecondary training. Like I don't want to say none of the postsecondary training works for him. Like I told you, there's some work ethic that's right, like you know across any industry right. But for what he does, I don't know whether how much that is helpful. (FSM1)

FSM1's acknowledgement available programming could not be customized to NDYA's talents seems to suggest a lack of interest for NDYA1 to engage in both entrepreneurship and a transition program. Instead, FSM1 raises the possibility that, under some circumstances, transition programming could augment entrepreneurship (i.e., if competitive integrated employment opportunities centered his skillset and interests, such traditional programming may have been more attractive to this parent).

Another mother was excited by the job opportunity that the CEO of a nationwide hardware store chain, who had heard in the news of his success in entrepreneurship, personally offered to her son. She understood this to be less a career track than an afterthought, however:

We had a meeting with the CEO of a (nationwide hardware chain) meet and greet and he said to us and said to NDYA2, I am guaranteeing you a job anytime, anywhere with (said company) ... he would be forced to work at (hardware chain store) and it wouldn't be very much, it would only be probably about two hours a day. (FSM2)

It is unclear whether this offer was meant to be transitional, leading to full-time employment and including eligibility for promotion. Alternatively, this FSM and their NDYA's lack of interest in this opportunity might result from their general disinterest in this transition program.

Indeed, latent meaning in NDYA3's comments related an ambivalence regarding his high school's postsecondary transition project:

I was in high school ... in like that transitional period, like you know, like the year after high school where some schools keep you to like learn ... basics and stuff ... so I graduated high school and then spent I think two years at the café [an onsite refreshment concession where students purchased snacks and notions with points earned through a reward system]. It was just you know kind of boring. (NDYA3)

Overall, NDYA3 approached his discussion regarding his postsecondary transition program respectfully, but he made it clear that he was underwhelmed with his experience working in the café. This is not to say that all post-secondary transition programs are without merit, but rather that their curriculum might stand to gain some evaluative insight with a stakeholder needs assessment. The missed opportunity of serving students "where they're at" is evidenced in the lack of challenging job instruction or employment schemes.

Overall, the participants have had positive experiences with **school-based support**. Whether part of entrepreneurship programming or not, administration and faculty can champion the talent and motivation of NDYAs. Entrepreneurship education in partnership with community located business development services in transition programming can be useful and successful.

As an example, NDYA2 is pleased with the entrepreneurship program offered through his school district's occupational course of study program:

They were a school project, there were like a few different types of projects, you could do ... one of them was entrepreneurship and I chose entrepreneurship project ... I wanted to start my own business. I was excited for school project because I started a business. And I wasn't expecting it to turn into a real business but I'm very glad that it did start out as a real business. (NDYA2)

NDYA2's response reveals his recognition of the odds of successfully launching a business, as well as his delight that this was possible to do as part of a school-based program.

Although this was an advantage unavailable to other NDYAs, their schools nonetheless made a concerted effort to incorporate activities that would showcase their skills:

Toward the end of the transitions program they're talking about careers, and you know, he was talking about wanting to be a voice actor and the school let him read, like he read the daily announcements, you know they were trying to give them things to do to help promote his voice. And I think that maybe made him more comfortable and that's when he went on stage during the talent show, at the end of the final year to be the emcee for the talent show. So, you know that's cool, it was great they worked with him to build up his confidence so that he was then confident to be on stage and be the emcee. (FSM3)

As happy as FSM3 was with the program administration's carving out a niche activity to encourage NDYA3, her demeanor suggested she was underwhelmed in general. Whether adult services will be able to fulfill the needs of NDYA circumstantially remains to be seen.

Access to services, such as vocational rehabilitation and community-based resources outside of school, proved difficult for families during the pandemic. FSMs suggest that when the time comes, they will approach vocational rehabilitation, but they primarily associate the agency with securing employment (competitive, integrated, or otherwise). FSM2 believed that vocational rehabilitation would help with soft skills training in an affiliated postsecondary transition program, but COVID-19 prevented follow-through:

They also do like a little bit of job training vo-tech that kind of stuff so he had a small little bit of like how to greet someone how to shake hands, but it wasn't enough, it wasn't

near enough, at least not for (NDYA2). I don't know if they clicked better or the other kids maybe got more or whatnot, but for (NDYA2) it was not enough. He would have gotten more training through voc rehab but because of COVID voc rehab was cancelled and (NDYA2) never got it. (FSM2)

It was unclear whether FSM2 was of the opinion that services related to entrepreneurship would be available to her son in the future, but it appears that further discovery is possible.

Indeed, another family found community-based resources assisting entrepreneurship. They successfully secured seed monies through a non-profit agency that provides small grants for disabled entrepreneurs, they had yet to receive the check, attributing the delay to COVID-19:

We got the letter that we were awarded the grant and then we had to like fill out a form and send it back, and I don't know, I think I think their offices were shut down because of COVID when we never got the money. (FSM3)

All of the families experienced barriers to services, which they attributed to COVID-19 shutdowns, but both FSM2 and 3 leave room for typical frustrations with bureaucracy. Still, families understood from an early stage that they would have to search out resources interested in investing in their NDYA's entrepreneurship. These arrangements would necessarily extend beyond the scope of an entrepreneurship education. Instead, they might model the experience more closely on the kind of training expected from postsecondary college, vocational, or technical education. In addition, **extracurricular training** and the purchase of related equipment clarify the prospects of entrepreneurship. One family turned to established professionals in the field to validate continued investment:

We took like a long trip back to Taiwan—that's where my husband and I were originally from—and I looked on, like, you know, professional people who were doing balloons. So while I was there, I took him for professional classes ... those people are calling me that he's probably one of the most talented person ... so I had to find tools for him ... the year sort of like make the change in high school, you know, assisted him ... he started having local appearances, with the Church, with a school building balloons for people. (FSM1)

FSM1 was concerned about NDYA1's response to jet lag, a new environment, and the unknowns associated with international travel in general. There were no balloon art instructors anywhere near their hometown, and she wanted confirmation that NDYA1 had both talent and the willingness to take instruction to improve his art. Since then, NDYA1 has attended professional balloon artist conferences. The effort taken by NDYA1's family to nurture his interests is an example of the lengths families will go to provide opportunities for their child.

Other times, families seek out **extracurricular training** and related equipment in the interest of entrepreneurship. Latent meaning suggests that there are nuanced exchanges between FSM and NDYA that indicate exploration of the connection between the entrepreneurial dedication of the NDYA and the support of the FSM, as evidenced in this exchange between FSM and NDYA:

FSM3: So, so we went ... and found a community college professor and musician who gave a whole course on how to use this software. And it was in like what 20 lessons?

NDYA3: Yeah.

FSM3: So (NDYA3) worked himself through all the lessons on his own ...

NDYA3: That's a lot, got a lot of things to think about.

NDYA3's understanding of his relative responsibility, alongside his recognition of FSM3's efforts, demonstrates the co-commitment of NDYA and FSM.

The return on any outlays of privately funded resources for entrepreneurship may be realized in experience and skills or competence learned on the job, which then may be transferable to competitive integrated employment (or prepare the NDYA for other postsecondary activities, such as higher education). When asked what skills he understood to have mastered through entrepreneurial activities, NDYA2 listed several, including "marketing skills, advertising, customer service sales ... taking people's orders." (NDYA2). Later, he also

commenting on his ability to engage with store management stocking his product, an activity that he mentioned he was nervous about in the beginning: “I’m used to like talking with the employees to the manager” (NDYA2). Not only does NDYA2 describe activities that could be gained from competitive integrated employment, but he also retells them with the alacrity expected from established experience.

Skills learned either for or from entrepreneurship speak to larger possibilities, changing goals, and starker realities of small family business sustainability. It may be that entrepreneurship is an alternative pathway to traditional employment. For that matter, some families consider that postsecondary education might offer further development of entrepreneurial skills or better opportunities for the future. Indeed, one family and their NDYA had committed to supporting their NDYA’s entrepreneurial activities when a state university neurodivergent student program was not able to offer their NDYA admission. However, they have accepted the invitation to reapply, and they are excited about the entrepreneurial potential that on-campus networking may afford them:

FSM3: The biggest benefit would be making contacts, because one thing my husband and I have learned throughout our careers, is that you never know when you’re going to meet somebody whose brother works at a recording studio, for example, or you know meet somebody who their side gig is they write commercials. Or somebody whose side gig is a voice actor and they can help you meet the right people or you know find an agent, or you know ...

NDYA3: Because you just talk to people and, like you said, you almost never can anticipate who’s going to know somebody, and we always find interesting connections, why don’t we talk to people about what we’re doing and what we’re interested in.

Per their conversation, the entrepreneurship led to the development of NDYA3’s motivation to further their postsecondary transition to include college education, itself a stage to exercise entrepreneurial identity. Perhaps the development of his identity as a voice actor and

entrepreneur provided the confidence to commit to the college program, something the admissions committee gave as a reason for not offering a spot during the first round.

Hybrid entrepreneur is a term to describe someone who engages in entrepreneurship part-time while also employed in a wage-paying job. Indeed, one study found this to be the case for close to half of the entrepreneurs in the survey. Entrepreneurs theoretically remain employed to supplement their income, during progression to full-time entrepreneurship, or to access nonmonetary benefits available at their job. As expected, some hybrid entrepreneurs return full-time to wage employment (Folta et al., 2010). These scenarios could be relevant to the NDYAs, albeit for differing reasons. For example, postsecondary employment in concert with family supported entrepreneurship was feasible for one dedicated entrepreneur: “I work at the library, and I work as a balloon artist ... at the library on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; balloons are usually on weekends” (NDYA1). By referring to both his entrepreneurship and the library as work implies that he considers both to be employment (although it is uncertain as to whether his library position was made possible by his balloon artist experience).

Theoretically, some hybrid entrepreneurs remain employed for the security of employer-based benefits. This may indicate a reason why some disabled entrepreneurs seek traditional employment. Indeed, for NDYA1, the library might be his “day” job, but for his parents it represents more serious concerns:

I was hoping he'll have more responsibility with them with the library. Because I was hoping that he will work certain hours then the library can offer him benefits ... in New Jersey (we can) cover him up until he's 26 but then after that he will need Medicaid ... and I was hoping that if you work at the library enough hours ... I don't care about that income that much but at least he could be eligible, having some kind of benefit. That would be the biggest benefit of working at the library. (FSM1)

FSM1's revelation of concerns regarding the benefits of competitive integrated employment, which entrepreneurship could not provide, was echoed by all FSMs. Here it marks a boundary that entrepreneurship presents beyond anyone's control.

The NDYA and family experiences with the institutional influences on transition, anchored in outcomes of traditional employment and education, might be better served if entrepreneurship programming were an option. These participants believe entrepreneurship to be an avenue for experiential learning that better serves their futures. Conversely, for some participants, entrepreneurship itself may be a bridge that prepares NDYAs for competitive integrated employment or postsecondary education.

F. **Summary**

The interpretation of the qualitative data collected from the three neurodivergent entrepreneurs and family validates entrepreneurship as an alternative pathway to employment having the experiential potential for NDYA transition to adulthood. Within these entrepreneurial actions are developmental opportunities for the NDYA to establish self-determination, a foundation of adulthood. Family is the custodian of the entrepreneur and the steward of their entrepreneurship, but more, they are intimately familiar with the needs, limitations, and possibilities of their young person. Moreover, family introduces their young person to the community and educates them on its culture. Community participation through entrepreneurship changes power dynamics and imparts agency to the entrepreneur, while the community benefits from an understanding of disability that is empowered. The more complicated aspect of transition for the NDYA and their families is the navigation of institutional systems left wanting for policy to better guide entrepreneurship resources. These findings will be further examined and evaluated in the discussion to follow.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A. Introduction

The talented and motivated neurodiverse young adults in this study, along with their dedicated families, chose entrepreneurship as the path to their futures. Although research on disabled entrepreneurs and family-supported entrepreneurship is a growing field of study, appreciation for their noneconomic goals is relatively limited (beyond the discourse of social entrepreneurship). In general, entrepreneurship has yet to be recognized as a potential pathway to other expected postsecondary opportunities, such as college and conventional employment. Self-determination is a necessary attribute for accessing and driving a young adult's progress toward the kind of personal agency that contributes to fuller community participation and social integration. In this regard, participants spoke of their experiences with entrepreneurship and the ways that it influenced NDYA personal growth and engagement with their world.

Just as the field of entrepreneurship is diverse, each of the neurodiverse entrepreneurs represented here has a distinctly different journey. The qualitative aspect of this study privileges the identification of four themes that organize the entrepreneurial events that mark their developmental progress and achievements. The stories that each NDYA and his FSM tell plot their journeys through the landscapes shaping their entrepreneurship: 1) self-determination; 2) family support; 3) community participation; and 4) school, services, and training. Although it may be the case that parents recognized NDYA talent before engaging with entrepreneurship, its evolution began in earnest during formal postsecondary transition planning. Families were instrumental in the development and support of entrepreneurship that proved to be a platform for scaffolding opportunities that fostered the development of their NDYA's executive and social skills. The NDYA demonstrated attributes of self-determination in response to the challenges

presented by the processes and routines of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial activities increased and improved the NDYA's social engagement with a wider cast of community members. Ultimately, the employment of motivated neurodiverse young adults in an entrepreneurship tailored to their skills, with family serving as job partners and coaches, has proven highly valuable in the cultivation of their transition to adulthood.

B. Self-Determination through Entrepreneurship

The findings inform us entrepreneurial experiences are defining of NDYA self-determination. If the context in which one attempts to perform skills that build self-determination results in an inadequate experience, the probability of one's further development of said skills also declines (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Forber-Pratt, et al., 2015). For this reason, entrepreneurship presented the NDYA participating in this research a radical and unique platform to develop and master attributes of competence, relatedness, and autonomy, which can inform the self-awareness, self-autonomy, and self-empowerment that describe their causal agency. Moreover, the NDYA entrepreneurs also expressed sentiments of well-being in response to their experiences with entrepreneurship. This is not unexpected, disabled people in the United States are more inclined to choose self-employment than the general population, given the freedom to self-determine their conditions of employment, such as accommodative working conditions (Callahan et al., 2002; Renko et al., 2016). Furthermore, an international survey of self-employed people found their well-being positively associated with intrinsically motivated self-determination (Kara & Petrescu, 2018). The NDYA and FSM described and expressed any number of experiences that speak to their well-being resulting from entrepreneurship related activities linked to the many facets of self-determination or the development thereof.

Self-determination of disabled young adults is an important area of research given its correlation with postsecondary outcomes of employment and education (Shogren, Wehmeyer, et al., 2015b). These are ecosystems that generate repetitive cycles for disabled young adults develop responsibility, challenged by expectation, and learn from the evaluation of outcomes. The family supported entrepreneurship presents a comparable cycle for the NDYA to perform activities that build and define competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Here, no one attribute necessarily precedes any other, but instead they all act in concert to move—or transition—the entrepreneur forward toward adulthood. The skills and attributes that result from this process build NDYA agency that will serve their continued progress and shape their futures.

Generally, research on the self-determination of transition aged autistic young adults is contextually limited to acquisition of skills and role in postsecondary outcomes and is reported to influence quality of life (Moran et al., 2021; Simonsen & Neubert, 2013; White et al., 2018). This is of particular interest given that the causal agency theory speaks to the embodiment of self-determination, described as the execution of agentic action in response to volitional action (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Forber-Pratt, et al., 2015). As an example, both FSM and NDYA anecdotes captured the spirit of entrepreneurship in the power of NDYA confidence, when harnessed and reinterpreted as a clear work ethic. Again, all three dyads described instances of undirected initiative taken by the NDYAs in the interest of their business. Taken as a whole, if experienced in a traditional employment setting, these would be the conditions for evaluating competence. Evaluation of competence in the workplace is often described as the degree to which people are able to take and execute direction; as well as positively respond to correction. Such an interpersonal exchange could be defined as relatedness.

Relatedness is another necessary attribute in the process of establishing competence within the course of entrepreneurship. Studies reveal autistic young adults, and in particular those with intellectual developmental delay, are deemed by their parents and caregivers to fall short of their potential for self-determination. Their common refrain is confusion over where to access opportunities to acquire and exercise self-determination, or lack of such opportunities altogether (Carter et al., 2013; Cheak-Zamora et al., 2020). Relatedness is an aspect of entrepreneurship that is both experienced in and demonstrated through the business dynamic of family support, customer service, marketing, and networking. Again, all three NDYAs engaged in these activities to varying degrees.

The relatedness NDYAs experienced through the activities of entrepreneurship is an important concept to them as they are encapsulated in their active social media accounts. The three NDYA entrepreneurs had both personal and business Instagram and/or Facebook accounts. They personally managed the former by themselves, while the latter involved some family assistance. Despite NDYA1's significant verbal communication differences, he keeps his social media current relative to his business activities. On these accounts he reaches out and responds to his friends and customers, whom he refers to as his "fans." NDYA2's business figures prominently in community events, and he himself has been an invited speaker on topics ranging from postsecondary transition to entrepreneurship. For these NDYA, entrepreneurship is a means to establish an identity that both incorporates and transcends their neurodiversity.

By extension and elevation, relatedness includes identity development, of which leadership is a prominent feature. Inhabiting a leadership role as a neurodiverse entrepreneur gives rise to situations where invitation to inspirational performance must be weeded out. For instance, NDYA2 was often called upon to represent his business in civic events where he

expressed a marked disinterest in being recognized specifically as an autistic entrepreneur, rather than primarily an entrepreneur. To say that their success is exemplary relays a subtle message that entrepreneurship is not expected from autistic or intellectually developmentally delayed people. Of course, engaging in leadership need not always occur on a public stage. NDYA3 volunteered to set up a Discord (online community social media platform) meeting room with his classmates for an online community college course group assignment, going so far as to walk some classmates through the difficult account registration. It is in these seemingly small scenarios that self-determination is both expressed and developed: NDYA3 was confident in his competence with an online system unfamiliar to his cohort, so he took the initiative to assist them, facilitating a group responsibility. When NDYA3's expertise was called upon and appreciated, he received pride from his relatedness. Although this anecdote took place outside of entrepreneurship, the attention he received from peers (when his transition program successfully supported his entrepreneurial talent) possibly informed this event.

Leadership also informs NDYA autonomy, a common attribute of all self-determination theories. Leadership that stems in part from the confidence imparted by the acknowledged competence embodied in the entrepreneur identity indicates an autonomous agentic self. Per causal agency theory, volitional acts emanate from the belief that a decision or choice will have a desired outcome when exacted through agentic action (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Forber-Pratt, et al., 2015). This process grounds the responsibility of an entrepreneur who is centered in their entrepreneurship rather than one commodified by family. Both FSMs and NDYAs acknowledged responsibility in the context of a routine consistent with the expectations of an established entrepreneurship. Participant descriptions of situations they believed represented NDYA autonomy often included elements of competence and relatedness. Moreover, autonomy

was reified through NDYA self-advocacy in response to FSM queries regarding the direction of the entrepreneurship.

Some of the more explicit examples of NDYA self-advocacy in the interest of autonomy occurred during requests to pivot the business or queries about their commitment to their entrepreneurship. Latent interpretation of the commitment to entrepreneurship was possibly revealed when responsibility was found to co-code with tension or ambivalence. This combination of coding was most common for NDYA3, whose entrepreneurship was still in the nascent stage. Whether or not this status informed the decision by NDYA3 and his family to reapply to a postsecondary immersion program cannot be known, but the progression of this realization that unfolded over the course of our interviews seems to suggest as much. NDYA3's acquiescence to reapplying emerged from what seemed to be his personal sense of autonomy, as the FSM adamantly expressed that this would be his choice during a dyadic interview. In this regard, autonomy was one of the more difficult conditional attributes to pinpoint in the data analysis. Although it is central to self-determination, its nuanced nature was more likely to be ascertained from NDYA empowerment.

The behavioral attributes contingent upon empowerment is a thread that carried through to the following themes, contextualizing transition that resulted from entrepreneurship in family and community domains. Theoretically, the measurement of self-determination in autistic and intellectually developmentally delayed people based on the functional model, underscores self-advocacy and self-realization, autonomy, and psychological empowerment to be defining characteristics (Wehmeyer, 1995, 1999). If these conditions reflected in entrepreneurship were to have one descriptive variable, it might be control. This not a reference to the small quotidian exchanges within business, although also important; rather, here control represented in self-

determination is more global in the sense that a NDYA entrepreneur lacking these characteristics ultimately could not be the center of entrepreneurship.

C. **Entrepreneurship through Family Support**

How NDYA experience entrepreneurship that informs self-determination depends on the interdependence that results from the endeavors of family support. Interdependence related to entrepreneurship can be located in consent to engage and navigating conflict. The desire to engage with the market economy through entrepreneurship refers to the individual entrepreneur capitalizing on their knowledge, which has material value. Family is more likely to be involved in entrepreneurship, often when a change in family dynamic motivates the family venture (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). Such a change for these families might not represent one singular event; instead, it may be that change towards the decision to engage in and support entrepreneurship unfolded over time.

The subtheme of family support represented the myriad of resources and efforts of the many members NDYA families dedicated to their entrepreneurship. For NDYA1, before he expressed any entrepreneurial intention, the family invested in his talent. However, for NDYA2 and NDYA3, this support came later in anticipation of entrepreneurship. FSMs inferred that the entrepreneurship was less about business and more about keeping their NDYA involved, engaged, and happy. All FSMs mentioned their NDYA's lack of active friendships. Therefore, the question arises as to whether entrepreneurship would be pursued if the NDYA had a more active social life outside of the home. Regardless, family investment in NDYA entrepreneurship can have multiple valid goals in the interest of the NDYA.

It may be that a family, having the financial and intellectual capital resources, chooses to invest in the talents or skills of a disabled family member with more limited employment options

(Bird & Wennberg, 2016; Danes et al., 2009; Steier, 2009; Thoresen et al., 2018). In the telling of their stories, each FSM recounted a considerable investment of time, money, and the dedication of some degree of square footage within their homes toward the entrepreneurship. As an example, for NDYA3, this included a recording studio with the necessary audio equipment. Indeed, much of the research regarding intellectually disabled entrepreneurs and small business owners reveal family to be instrumental in initiating entrepreneurship (Caldwell et al., 2020b; Percival, 2021; Thoresen et al., 2018). Organizational, environmental, and cognitive factors all have the potential to influence the entrepreneur's access to self-determination. Scenarios having such an impact present in the context of challenges and dilemmas of entrepreneurship. Both the NDYAs and FSMs described their respective entrepreneurship as a process where these events took place over a period of time, where each informed the next. As the entrepreneurship proved less a possibility and more a reality for the participants, intention of and consent to engage in activities could get lost in the demands of the business.

What motivates the entrepreneur is a primary consideration in the early stages of entrepreneurship. Therefore, effort must be made to ensure that the nascent entrepreneur consents to engage in the entrepreneurial endeavors in which the family sees value (Schröder & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013). All family members, including the siblings of NDYA1 and NDYA2 (and members of the extended family, when present), were involved in the entrepreneurship. The dynamics of the family relationships potentially influenced the motivation of the entrepreneur and the health of the entrepreneurship. The NDYAs expressed their unsolicited appreciation of the assistance and personal sacrifice that family members contributed toward their entrepreneurship suggesting that they were centered in the entrepreneurship. However, it may also indicate subconscious obligation to maintain engagement in the entrepreneurship.

The conditions under which consent and information are secured demands great responsibility from family as well as the NDYA. As is true for any family firm, inherent power dynamics of parental authority and cognitive or communication difference underscore the importance of entrepreneurial participation being free of any said or unsaid family exclusive expectations (Chrisman et al., 2012; Petner-Arrey & Copeland, 2015). Securing consent anticipates an autonomy that suggests relatedness or unconditional belonging. The recognition that the entrepreneur is free to revoke consent at will also speaks to the autonomy expected of and within a healthy family relationship. Data on the health of the family relationship in the context of entrepreneurship are described in the family business dynamic sub-theme findings.

Family business dynamic is influenced by the family obligations outside of the entrepreneurship, whether employment or other family demands. Of interest, the mothers of NDYA1 and NDYA2 were the primary FSMs who, while employed full time, took the lead role in acting as a manager, with FSM1 referring to herself as NDYA1's job coach. That mothers are the primary support member begs the question of the degree to which other family members, to include the mothers themselves, are consenting to support the entrepreneurship. Neither mother elaborated as to why they took the lead role in entrepreneurial support, although they took measures to relate their husband's support of the NDYA, the FSM, and the entrepreneurship (and the NDYAs concurred in this appreciation of the maternal and the paternal support that they received). FSM management of the entrepreneurship for NDYA1 and NDYA2 was quite involved, given that they were both actively established and the nature of the businesses and to accommodate communication and cognitive demands. Their contributions and responsibility to both the NDYA and the entrepreneurship were time consuming and demanding.

Tensions regarding the degree of involvement and amount of work required from the FSMs was sometimes palpable. Conflict is understood to be typical of family located entrepreneurship that could be as much about the family navigating boundaries between matters of business versus family, as it could be about family dynamics having nothing to do with entrepreneurship (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). Although the data were scrutinized to see if there was any correlation between this content and FSM discussion with NDYAs about their continued entrepreneurial commitment, none could be detected. These were either semantically expressed or latently interpreted from the content of the conversation. However, there was no indication that entrepreneurship was even minimally conducted without NDYA participation. This was not necessarily attributable to the FSM's recognition of the ethical importance of centering the NDYA, but more pointedly to the reality that the business simply could not operate without them. There appeared to be no tangible incentive for FSM to continue entrepreneurship without the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship could come to an abrupt halt if either the FSM or the NDYA choose to cease their involvement—a distinctly possible scenario. The establishment of the entrepreneurship for NDYA1 and 2 became established within their communities gave their business a sense of permanence that was related to their empowerment and self-determination.

D. Community Participation through Entrepreneurship

The NDYA entrepreneurs experienced an increase in their exposure to, and dealings with, their immediate communities through their business. Engagement with the community promotes NDYA communication located in their interests and growing comfort level given the routine of business performance. This, then, approximates if not eclipses possible community engagement expected from employment in the transition to adulthood. Transition-aged young adults' postsecondary social networks are typically located in larger community settings, represented by

employment and education (Arnett, 2001). Although they prefer competitive employment in an integrated setting (which exemplifies community participation), they are more likely to be disengaged or situated in sheltered facilities (Bush & Tassé, 2017; National Core Indicators, 2019). It is often this disengagement FSMs expressed was always a major concern and what motivated families to support their NDYA's entrepreneurship.

Disengagement represents barriers specific to transition that are both behavioral and institutional; the former describes social differences (including communication), and the latter relates to lack of accommodations and stigma. Bridges to community participation presented in the literature are accommodations that emphasize routine, capitalizing on interests and talents, and disability-allied mentors as behavioral models (Giarelli et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2022; Tomczak, 2022). These facilitators are familiar to the NDYAs' entrepreneurial experiences when building self-advocacy and disability identity. Arguably, for the NDYAs and their FSMs who shared their stories, family and their support of entrepreneurship is integral to these facilitators.

All of the NDYAs participating in this research resided with their family, and this arrangement appears to have been instrumental in their entrepreneurial development. Families have both direct and indirect roles. As an example of the latter, autistic and intellectually developmentally delayed young adults who reside with their family were significantly less likely to participate in their communities relative to individuals living alone, with significant others, or with roommates (Song et al., 2022). Intellectually developmentally delayed transition-aged youth reporting on the family support of their community participation identified themes that parallel community located experiences of the NDYA with their families during entrepreneurship (DuBois et al., 2020). The core theme identified from the survey represents a complex of

supports, of which the most instrumental could be found in the logistics of entrepreneurship (such as transportation and scheduling), in addition to decision and choice making. Similar findings from the FSE research are exemplified more in the sub-themes “family support and family business dynamics”, further connecting family and community with entrepreneurship. The findings from this research contextualizes community participation beyond these parameters described by the survey.

The discussion of family members’ social or cultural networks as a factor of community participation is germane to thematic development of NDYA transition through community participation involvement during entrepreneurship. Family or parental social networks were instrumental in the initiation of entrepreneurship. For one entrepreneur, this involved assistance with pop-up store opportunities and volunteers outside of family. For all entrepreneurs, members of the families’ networks at times acted as grassroots boosters, marketers, business references, or overall resources of intellectual and social capital. These informal helpers could be found in family members’ places of employment, fraternal organizations, or friends of friends.

The entrepreneurship itself created networks from which both family and community benefited. For example, the mother of NDYA2 was promoted to a position for which an acquaintance she made through her son’s entrepreneurship invited her to apply. NDYA1 shared the success of his business in the form of a yearly scholarship for special education student teachers and therapists at his former high school. Here, entrepreneurship comes to embody a greater power than business alone by becoming part of the fabric of their immediate community’s culture. The community had invested in his future; now he was investing in the future of the community. In general, NDYA were definitely invested in their community

although their personal expressions of community participation include alternative mediums that are yet to be fully explored in the current literature.

When surveyed, autistic adults were more likely to engage in activities having limited social exchange, such as shopping, with community participation seeming to decrease as demand on social interaction increased (Shea et al., 2021). However, regardless of the degree of participation, autistic and intellectually developmentally delayed adults appreciated the importance of activities in which they were less likely to have engaged (Song et al., 2021). This suggests that participation is likely often limited by access to opportunities within communities (Chun et al., 2022b; DuBois et al., 2020; Giarelli & Fisher, 2013; Gray et al., 2014; Myers et al., 2015; Orsmond et al., 2013). Or it may be that definitions of opportunity do not include vibrant virtual communities. As an example, two of the NDYAs share the personal rewards of entrepreneurship through their social media, further engaging with a wider audience while simultaneously marketing their business.

There is some evidence to suggest that social media and internet gaming communities are particularly viable environments for autistic people to develop social and soft skills (Gallup et al., 2017). Whether the NDYA or their businesses benefited from social media was not analyzed; instead, an established and continued participation with their virtual community can be surmised from an increase in NDYAs' followers and online presence. Their social media presence could also be considered instrumental in the formation of social identity, a necessary process in the transition to adulthood. Moreover, when shared with the public, the neurodivergent entrepreneur identity positions the NDYA as a role model, conceivably empowering interdependence with the larger disability community. Research regarding how NDYA interface with their wider social surroundings could be well served to embrace contexts that are identified by NDYA themselves.

The importance of definition is underscored by the recent requirement that agencies in receipt of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers evidence meaningful community participation of clients to reduce the isolation experienced in segregated settings (CMS, 2014). This research contributes to continuing the conversation of what community participation means and how it can be achieved.

Concomitant with community engagement is the swell in community visibility of the entrepreneur in socially engaged diverse capacities. The two active entrepreneurs have been the subject of both print and television news reports. Their invitation to, and participation in, civic events illustrate how entrepreneurship might embody NDYA citizenship. Those in the community who themselves are customers of the entrepreneurship or otherwise engage with the neurodiverse entrepreneurs may come away with a better understanding of neurodivergence that can be disruptive of ableism. However, this broaches the subject of the inspirational or charity model of disability. One of the neurodivergent entrepreneurs was not entirely comfortable with the association of his disability with his business. Although he understood the importance of disability representation, he questioned whether his success resulted from and required his continued identification as an autistic entrepreneur. His is a valid quandary, which no one was in a position to answer during the interview. It may be this entrepreneur's success, or his engagement with his customers, had precipitated this digression.

Community participation informs the transition to adulthood in the many roles of social engagement required of NDYA entrepreneur in the same ways were they employed in competitive integrated employment. Although the US Department of Labor restrictions on active FLSA 14(c) certificates have significantly reduced the number of cognitively disabled people in community rehabilitation provider placement, cognitively disabled young adults have only

experienced small gains in competitive community integrated employment. However, under WIOA informed state policy transition programming stipulates gains need be made (Winsor, 2022). Transition policy that recognizes the NDYA intrinsically motivated toward activities societally defined in the context of entrepreneurship could realize an improvement in as much. The neurodiverse entrepreneur's contribution to society is given meaning through entrepreneurship within their community engagement and their receipt of community support. Consequently, visibility within the community via entrepreneurship reifies their interdependence in the interest of a civic understanding that supports community integration. This understanding enriches a productive disability identity of purpose within their larger community. Moreover, this representation could enlighten policy to include entrepreneurship education and supports in secondary and post-secondary transition employment programming.

E. **Transition to Entrepreneurship**

The experiences of NDYA and their family that informed the decision to engage in entrepreneurship often occur in high school, the last phase of publicly mandated education for children in the United States. Students eligible for special education services receive an individualized education plan (IEP) that sets the goals and objectives of their curriculum. For intellectually developmentally delayed and autistic students, their IEPs are likely to fall short of the standards and best practices established by federal law (Findley et al., 2022). NDYA and FSM plans to pursue entrepreneurship may buffer their disappointment in the limited options provided in the young adults' IEPs. Participants anchored their decisions to pursue their entrepreneurship in the NDYAs' entrepreneurial proclivities, though they seemed resigned to the probability that postsecondary placement risked arresting their potential. Furthermore, all of the families had invested in their NDYAs' talents upon recognizing their motivation to improve their

practice of their passions. Aligning family investments with IEP objectives would be an ideal opportunity for NDYA to make strides in transition while also informing secondary school stakeholders about the real world potential of their students to improve postsecondary outcomes.

Those IEP objectives common to autistic students address their core needs of instruction in social, communication, and behavior skills. The rates for typical postsecondary goals (of continued education and employment) among autistic students remain significantly behind members of their cohort having other disabilities. Within this population, autistic young adults are more likely than their peers to be disengaged, while intellectually and developmentally delayed young adults are likely to find themselves in segregated settings, including subminimum wage workshops. Moreover, IEP postsecondary vocational rehabilitation service referrals are less likely to result in placement for autistic students (Lugas et al., 2010; Roux et al., 2021; Smith & Lugas, 2010). The postsecondary IEPs were specific to the diverse needs of the NDYAs, all three included referrals to their local vocational rehabilitation agencies.

Unfortunately, COVID-era service shutdowns prevented the younger NDYA from accessing the local vocational rehabilitation agency; ultimately, all participants chose entrepreneurship over recommended employment options. While one NDYA attended a vocational entrepreneurship program offered by his school district, the two other participants (lacking this resource) welcomed their respective schools' valiant efforts to support their talent. Alternative employment programming could positively impact vocational rehabilitation outcomes were their policy to support NDYA engaged in entrepreneurship with family.

Parental postsecondary expectations of their autistic children may be mediated by their investment in preparatory activities (Holmes et al., 2018a; Kirby et al., 2020). Family commitment to NDYA interests is, as FSM1 stressed, no different than that shown neurotypical

children in finding extracurricular instruction and purchasing equipment. The professional development of NDYA1 included international conferences and subsequent networking. Families found agencies that provided resources for entrepreneurship, developing business plans for NDYA2's entrepreneurship course and NDYA3's successful grant application for disabled entrepreneurs. NDYA2 and his FSM both acquired municipal food handling training to obtain food handling licenses. NDYA2 and his brother were also members of 4-H, a youth agricultural professional organization known for their inclusion of neurodivergent youth and their accommodative investment in their communication and leadership skills (McCormick et al., 2022). Although the families displayed such dedication in the context of entrepreneurship, it was not necessarily specific to it; rather, the focus was clearly the NDYA's holistic well-being.

Entrepreneurship may not be a lifetime commitment, however. It is possible that the causal agency that results from the NDYA's experience with entrepreneurship is concomitant with the self-awareness they may someday no longer want to pursue it. For example, in addition to his business, NDYA1 currently works part-time at the library, even though his business was flourishing when he gained this position. Were the library to offer full-time employment and medical benefits, however, NDYA1 might need to curtail his entrepreneurship, considering that he ages out of his parents' medical insurance next year. This was a gnawing concern for NDYA2's family as well. This may likewise explain why, after NDYA3 received Medicaid and Social Security Disability benefits, he and his family were ready to reapply to a university-based autistic and IDD student immersion program. Attending the program should not be interpreted as abandoning entrepreneurship; rather, both NDYA3 and his parents see the program as an opportunity to network and build skills that might benefit his entrepreneurship.

The institutions with which the NDYAs and their families currently engage (and to which they look to gain access in the future) have their usefulness. Although the institutional barriers are many, this does not preclude the potential of organized programs to adopt practices that best serve the needs of entrepreneurs. Many institutions—including educational, disability services, small business administrations, and publicly funded community-based organizations—are positioned to improve entrepreneurial proficiency, or even simply to recognize the capacity of entrepreneurship to build the aptitudes needed to obtain competitive integrated employment or continued education. The advantage of entrepreneurship is personalized focus on NDYA productivity that empowers self-determination.

F. **COVID-19 Influence on Entrepreneurship**

Within the first month of the COVID shutdown in March 2020, close to 22% of active small businesses in United States indefinitely shuttered operations. Although the number of disabled business owners affected is not known, other historically marginalized business owners (including people of color and immigrants), were disproportionately impacted (Fairlie, 2020). Each of the entrepreneurship in the study experienced changes to their usual activities to varying degrees, albeit in relatively different domains. However, because the intention of these entrepreneurships was noneconomic, their pandemic-related experiences were different than those businesses that were more financially dependent on pre-pandemic sales.

COVID restrictions banning community gatherings prevented NDYA participation in public entrepreneurial activities. For NDYA1, this critically curtailed his balloon art bookings at parties and otherwise public events. After his father was hospitalized with a symptomatic COVID infection, however, he pivoted to making balloon representations of first responders to thank them. This focus may have been a way of coping, while also keeping him active. Whatever

the reason, it ultimately drew the attention of local tri-state news coverage. It was during these events that NDYA1 poignantly displayed his support for both his family and the community through his entrepreneurship. Importantly, although autistic people are believed to have no theory of mind, NDYA1's response to the events of COVID would arguably suggest otherwise.

NDYA2's business was less impacted by his absence from the community. In fact, the closure of restaurants during this time might explain the request from the local grocery chain distributor to add five more locations to their account. FSM2 described the uptick in family support during COVID, including from family members now working from home, who contributed to the production manpower needed to meet the demand. The question of whether the family would be able to accommodate without this option will probably become apparent when members returned to their offices. NDYA2's personal response to COVID with respect to his entrepreneurship was an inconvenience rather than the abrupt halt NDYA1 experienced.

For NDYA3 and his family, although their experience did have parallels, the influence of the pandemic on his entrepreneurship had an entirely different outcome. The downtime of the shelter-in-place order allowed NDYA3 more time to devote to making audition demos, but the offers did not immediately materialize. With the farmer markets closed, the bath bomb and soap sales dried up. NDYA3's mother, looking to keep him engaged, registered him in online community college courses. It is possible that the increased isolation at home, along with the remote introduction to college, yielded the combination of events that readied him for reapplication to a university located postsecondary program. However, this does not preclude entrepreneurship-derived skills influence in this decision.

The experience of the pandemic and the resulting lockdown presented new and complicated challenges to autistic young people and their families. It ended avenues of

productivity and engagement, while shuttering services and resources that families would turn to were they not engaged in entrepreneurship. Autistic people, like many people in general, have difficulty with the unknown. Maybe the increase in agency and greater familiarity with their wider community from entrepreneurship lessened this anxiety. This is a larger question that this study cannot fully answer; instead, it can shed light on how the NDYAs and their families experienced the pandemic in the context of its impact on their entrepreneurship. By the end of the Interviews, the country was slowly reopening, and the entrepreneurs seemed to be actively and seamlessly reentering their previous entrepreneurial activities with aplomb.

G. **Limitations**

There are many limitations to this study. Outside of those addressing the trustworthiness of data described in the Methods chapter, concerns include their interpretation with respect to participant representation. Not for lack of attempts to include female entrepreneurs during recruitment, all were young men and the FSM they identified for the dyad, their mothers'. Furthermore, excepting for one Asian American dyad, the small sample size precluded racial or class diversity, given the other two dyads were Caucasian. To what extent class, race, and gender homogeneity amongst the participants informed the collected data and their subsequent analysis cannot be known. Recognizing power dynamics in the context of family supported entrepreneurship inherent to these factors, to include disability, is in part expected and addressed in the research design framed by feminist care ethics theoretical framework. Regardless, these limitations reinforce the demonstration aspect of the favorable findings presented here, thereby, leaving room for those having more varied outcomes.

H. **Conclusion**

The main contributions of this study are detailed in the thematic findings which clearly reflect the complex answers to understanding the process and outcomes of family supported entrepreneurship for neurodivergent young adults as queried by the research questions. Participating NDYA having varying degrees of cognitive and communication differences prove to be successful entrepreneurs given their talent and motivation. The families in this study were willing to invest resources and revealed unflagging dedication to seeing NDYA realize their potential by supporting entrepreneurship, given barriers they face to postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment. These families supported NDYA entrepreneurship, capitalizing on their talents and interests more to encourage their continued socio-behavioral development and community integration than for NDYA financial self-sufficiency. It was found, NDYA engagement in entrepreneurial activities offered opportunities to advance their interdependence and access to self-determination in ways that empower their transition to adulthood. Moreover, the NDYA all made clear strides in their personal development as evidenced by their willingness to conquer new challenges presented by entrepreneurship and continued entrepreneurial success. As such, family supported entrepreneurship is an alternative employment that both encourage and is indicative of NDYA transition to adulthood.

Where entrepreneurship leads these talented and wonderful young people to cannot be known; however, how far they have come through their entrepreneurship is. They are vital and active members of their community, barring that, all prove dedicated to their practice. The work they do is definitive of their identity, endowing them with a sense of purpose that delivers pride and well-being that propel them toward brighter tomorrows. Their entrepreneurial successes have delivered a sense of self having an active role in determining how they move through their

worlds. Having the opportunity to tell their stories revealed neurodivergence is not who they are but who they can be. Profit margins and working capital may not be the language of their business but the fungible capital of empowerment and the recognition of their talents are. These young people have shown the world where their entrepreneurship has taken them, where they go from here, as with everyone, may depend on others.

The families of the young entrepreneurs are tireless in their efforts to support their young people. Recognizing their potential and bringing it to fruition is not easy when facing the many barriers that their loved ones may not be aware of or are actively shielded from. Therefore, it is unlikely many families can gather the emotional and financial resources to tackle the challenges of entrepreneurship. The many emails sent to programs serving autistic and intellectually developmentally disabled clients during the recruitment phase solicited a rather piqued response from an individual seemingly outraged that the objective of this research was suggesting autistic entrepreneurs could not be successful without family. This is an example of the current tension over autonomy between self- and family advocates.

In the context of family support lies the contention family are denying their young person's "independence" by trapping them in entrepreneurship. There may be some truth to this if there were proven routes of competitive integrated employment to be a viable option. There is also the distinct possibility the family member's autistic identity was fraudulently commodified by family in bringing a product they had little role in, to market. However, the entrepreneurship presented here would not have been realized if not for the intimate knowledge and adamant faith of the entrepreneurs' families in their entrepreneurial potential. Moreover, in the absence of immediate profits, there are few who would put in the work to take that risk. Family was integral to the NDYA entrepreneurs' success, where well-being, interdependence, and pride were

outcomes that no amount of money could guarantee. For that matter, family is the successful entrepreneurs' bottomless resource.

Community engagement and subsequent participation, then, is the proof of the entrepreneur's embodiment in their entrepreneurship that gives them access to the behavioral outcomes expected of adulthood. Moreover, it represents the potential of both community, family, and entrepreneur to challenge ableist attitudes in a culturally emancipatory context. It is the stage of all the world to perform disability representation that eclipses inclusion. It is also the phenomenon where the public actionably participates to effect policy that has the power to make a real difference in the lives of disabled entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, recognition of family's efforts in supporting disabled family members on a policy level might deliver the resources to their entrepreneurship necessary to enfranchise fuller and richer social participation that redefines disability representation that is equitably inclusive. For this to be feasible, future policy directions that foster potential would start when the future entrepreneur is young and be available throughout all ages, beginning with entrepreneurship education through school systems possibly starting in elementary school when idiosyncratic talents become evident. Other systemic policy considerations can have immediate impact on the initiation and subsequent maintenance of entrepreneurship, such as small business development center disability inclusion efforts that support awareness and accommodation training; as well as vocational rehabilitation service agency increasing support for entrepreneurship and rescinding policy that prevents business co-ownership. Moreover, disabled people should not be denied economic progress by prohibitive earned income ceilings that risk disability benefits. Emancipatory praxis requires theory driven policy development, implementation, evaluation, and enforcement for the entrepreneur to realize their opportunities and appreciate all outcomes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Approval Notice Amendment – Expedited Review UIC Amendment # 4

April 14, 2021

Christianna Danguilan, MPH
Disability and Human Development
Phone: (347) 564-7159

RE: **Protocol # 2020-0274**
**“Alternative Pathways to Postsecondary Employment: Family Supported
Entrepreneurship for Neurodiverse Young Adults”**

Dear Mx. Danguilan:

Your application was reviewed and approved on April 13, 2021. The amendment to your research may now be implemented.

Principal Investigators must complete a [COVID-19 Human Subjects Research Review Worksheet](#) for a protocol COVID safety assessment prior to initiating or re-starting any research activities that require in-person contact between research subjects and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For additional information about this process, please refer to the [Human Subjects Research Review page on the OVCR website](#). If you need assistance, questions may be directed to research@uic.edu.

Please note the following information about your approved amendment:

Amendment Approval Date:

April 13, 2021

Amendment:

Summary: UIC Amendment #4 (response to conditions required) dated 9 April 2021, and submitted and accepted 12 April 2021, is an investigator-initiated amendment regarding the following:

(1) revising inclusion/exclusion criteria to include participants on the autism spectrum who have a legally authorized representative (LAR), as many neurodiverse young adults have acquired LARS (usually their parent/guardian); participant verbal assent and LAR verbal permission will be obtained at the beginning of the telephone or remote audio/video conference; participant assent/consent must be obtained in order to proceed with data collection even if the LAR provides permission; all participants must have the capacity to verbally communicate, read, navigate in and engage with the community, and be engaged in family-supported entrepreneurship (Claim of Exemption, 3/26/2021; Appendix V); and

APPENDIX A (continued)

of Exemption, 3/26/2021; Appendix V); and
(2) revised recruitment and consent documents reflecting the above (Recruitment Flyer Family, v4, 3/26/2021; Recruitment Flyer Entrepreneur, v3, 3/26/2021; Direct Recruitment Letter, v4 3/26/2021; Verbal Assent Checklist, v2, 4/26/2021; Consent Letter, v6, 4/13/2021; Informed Consent Verbal Checklist, v4, 4/13/2021).

Approved Subject Enrollment #: 6
Performance Site: UIC
Sponsor: None
Research Protocol:

- a) Alternative Pathways to Postsecondary Employment: Family Supported Entrepreneurship for Neurodiverse Young Adults; 04/08/2021

Documents that require an approval stamp or separate signature can be accessed via [OPRS Live](#). The documents will be located in the specific protocol workspace. You must access and use only the approved documents to recruit and enroll subjects into this research project.

Please note that consent and assent documents have been administratively revised for consistency, and only these approved and stamped documents may be used to consent/assent and enroll participants.

Recruiting Materials:

- a) Direct Recruitment Letter; Version 4; 03/26/2021
- b) Recruitment Family Flier; Version 3; 03/26/2021
- c) Entrepreneur Recruitment Flier; Version 3; 03/26/2021

Informed Consents:

- a) Consent Letter: Version 6; 04/13/2021
- b) Informed Consent Verbal Checklist; Version 4; 04/13/2021
- c) Exceptions to informed consent for identifying, recruiting, or eligibility screening of potential participants has been acknowledged under 45 CFR 46.116(g)
- d) A waiver of documentation/signed consent document has been granted for this minimal risk research under 45 CFR 46.117(c) (participants will be provided with an information sheet containing all of the elements of consent)

Assent:

- a) Verbal Assent Checklist; Version 2; 04/26/2021

Please be sure to:

→ **Use only the IRB-approved and stamped consent documents when enrolling subjects.**

APPENDIX A (continued)

- Use your research protocol number (2020-0274) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.
- Review and comply with the [policies](#) of the UIC Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) and the guidance [*Investigator Responsibilities*](#).

Please note that the IRB has the right to ask further questions, seek additional information, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the [scope of work](#) in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-2014. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS via [OPRS Live](#).

Sincerely,

Sandra Costello
Assistant Director, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

cc: Sarah Parker Harri (faculty advisor), Disability and Human Development
Tamar Heller, Disability and Human Development

APPENDIX B



I am looking for young neurodiverse entrepreneurs who will help me learn more about themselves and their business.

Have you turned your passion, interest, or hobby into a business?

Would you like others to learn more about what you do and how you do it?

If you are interested, please let me know. I am doing a study to explore entrepreneurship and understand your experience. If this sounds like you

- Between 18 years of age or older.
- Identify as neurodiverse, autistic, or have Aspergers.
- Started a business your family helps you with.
- Your business is up and running.
- At least one family member is currently helping you with your business.
- If you have a legal authorized representative and are able to secure their consent.

I would like to talk to you if your

- business is selling a product you have created or providing a service, that you were not contracted by an outside vendor to sell.
- You currently have a family member helping you with your business.
- That person, or persons, can be a mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.

Will allow me to

- Conduct up to but no more than 90 minutes interviews twice a week with you for four weeks and
- a family member who helps you with your business.

Each participant will receive a **\$24 stipend** for **each** interview, up to eight interviews.

If you are interested, please contact Chris Danguilan by email at cdangu2@uic.edu or by phone at (312)285-0008. I am available to answer any questions and talk with you about the study in more detail.

APPENDIX C



Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where I have developed a research project to explore the family supported entrepreneurship of neurodiverse young adults. I am writing to ask if you have any clients that are engaged in a small business who would be interested in participating in a research study. A family supported entrepreneurship is a business, or microenterprise where a product or service is created based on one's personal interests. This interest may be a hobby or passion that was developed into a business. The business venture is also one that began with the support of family for a son or daughter who is currently working with at least one family member.

If you have clients that fit this description, could you please forward the attached recruitment flier? If they are interested in participating in this study they can contact me directly.

The goal of the research is to better understand the experience of the entrepreneur and their family. I want to learn why the entrepreneurship began, what happens during the typical work-day, and what the struggles and benefits have been in the process. I am interested in how this experience has provided the entrepreneur opportunities to learn life skills, become personally responsible, and participate in the community more. Although there is great public interest in the entrepreneur with autism, little is known about the entrepreneurs or how the family supports and guides them through the process.

Participating in the study entails engaging in two interviews a week for four weeks via video conference or telephone, with the entrepreneur and support family member. The date of the interviews will be predetermined with the participant and will last up to but no more than 90 minutes. Participants will receive a \$24 stipend after each interview for a total of \$192 if participating in all eight interviews. Depending on preference you will be compensated via an electronic payment platform of your choosing (Venmo, PayPal, or Zelle) or an Amazon gift eCard. Additionally, the information provided may be useful to help others in the future as it will inform research and policy on neurodiverse entrepreneurs and the family who support them. I am happy to answer any questions you might have and look forward to talking with you about it in more detail.

Sincerely,

Chris Danguilan, MPH
PhD Candidate, Department of Disability and Human Development
University of Illinois at Chicago
LEND Fellow
AUCD Diversity Fellow
cdangu2@uic.edu
(312) 285-0008

APPENDIX D



Research Information and Consent and Parental Permission for Participation in Social, Behavioral, or Educational Research

Informed Consent Checklist: Alternative Pathways to Postsecondary Employment: Family Supported Entrepreneurship for Neurodiverse Young Adults

| | |
|--|---|
| 1 a) <input type="checkbox"/> b) <input type="checkbox"/> c) <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>You are being asked if you</p> <p>a) are neurodiverse and able to consent for yourself or</p> <p>b) are a parent or other family member or</p> <p>c) are the LAR of your child, to allow them</p> <p>to participate in a research study about young neurodiverse entrepreneurs in family supported entrepreneurship conducted by Chris Danguilan, MPH a doctoral student in the Department of Disability and Human Development from the University of Illinois at Chicago. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a young neurodiverse entrepreneur who identifies as having autism, on the autism spectrum, or have Asperger's, or are a family member who supports the entrepreneurship.</p> |
| 2 <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>Please ask any questions you may have during this consent before agreeing to participate in the research. You are welcome to ask any questions about the research at any time after agreeing to participate. If you have any questions later, feel free to contact her via phone (312)285-0008 or email cdangu2@uic.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Sarah Parker Harris, PhD at skparker@uic.edu or (312)996-5485.</p> |
| 3 <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. Participants may withdraw by contacting the investigator at cdangu2@uic.edu.</p> |
| 4 <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>This research is being conducted to learn more from young entrepreneurs and a supporting family member. The research explores whether the young entrepreneur learns life skills, increases personal responsibility, and participates in the community that may result during their entrepreneurship. The research also seeks to understand what the goals of entrepreneurship are beyond making a profit.</p> |
| 5 <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>If you choose to participate, I will interview you asking you to share your opinions and experiences about the entrepreneurship.</p> <p>If you agree to this research, I ask that you do the following things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a family member that helps you with your business for at least six hours a week. (young neurodiverse entrepreneur only) • Schedule a time to participate in an interview that will take no more than 90 minutes, twice a week, for four weeks. (entrepreneur and family member) • If you want to, take photos of your business, business activities, or business products or services, without taking photos of anyone except yourself and your family |

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Informed Consent Verbal Checklist: Clean

Page 1 of 3

APPENDIX D (continued)

Research Information and Consent and Parental Permission for Participation in Social, Behavioral, or Educational Research

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 6 <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>The only person who will know you are research participant is the Principal Investigator, Chris Danguilan. No information about you, or provided by you, during the research will be disclosed to other without your written permission, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, when the UIC Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or • if required by law. <p>The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will also take notes during our interviews. You are invited to share photos of your business, related products and/or activities providing they do not identify you or your family member. Only I and my faculty advisor will have access to the audio recordings, transcripts, and photos. Even without including identifying individuals, participants may still be indirectly identified. Therefore, sharing photographs is strictly voluntary and should be limited to images of the business site, related activities, and product or service. There are no other investigators so only I or my advisor will have access to these photos.</p> <p>These will be stored on encrypted password protected smart phone, computer, or the UIC cloud. In my absence, hard copies of transcripts and handwritten notes will be kept in a locked drawer in my personal office. Identities will be assigned a pseudonym for data collection and transcription with the link between the two destroyed after data analysis while documents having no identifiers may be kept indefinitely. Names or identifying markers will be changed if the data is published or reproduced in any way. If and when I am traveling with the data it will be contained in either a secure bag, computer, or smart phone. All research data, including audiotapes and transcripts will be destroyed after data analysis.</p> |
| 7 <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>You will not directly benefit from participating in the research. However, the information you provide may be useful to help others developing research and policy on neurodiverse entrepreneurs and the family who support them.</p> |
| 8 <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>No information about you, or provided by you during the research will disclosed to others without your written permission, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if the UIC Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or • if required by law. |
| 9 | <p>Will I be reimbursed for my time?</p> <p>You will receive \$24 stipend after each interview. You may receive \$192 if you participate in all 8 interviews. Depending on your preference you will be compensated via an electronic payment platform of your choosing (Venmo, PayPal, or Zelle) or an Amazon gift</p> |

V5_06_17_21

Informed Consent Verbal Checklist: Clean

Page 2 of 3

APPENDIX D (continued)

Research Information and Consent and Parental Permission for Participation in Social, Behavioral, or Educational Research

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| | eCard. Receipt of funds requires sharing your email or mobile phone number with the respective ePayment company, or your Venmo username, to process payment. While receipt of the Amazon eCard requires sharing your email. |
| 10 <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you understand what is being asked of you for this research project? |
| 11 | You will receive a copy of this checklist via email or USPS |
| a) <input type="checkbox"/> | a) Do you consent to participate in this research project |
| b) <input type="checkbox"/> | b) Do you agree to allow your child to participate in this research project? |

APPENDIX D (continued)

Research Information and Consent and Parental Permission for Participation in Social, Behavioral, or Educational Research

Name of Participant

Date of Consent

Signature of PI

V5_06_17_21
Informed Consent Verbal Checklist: Clean
Page 4 of 3

APPENDIX E

Research Information and Consent and Parental Permission for Participation in Social, Behavioral, or Educational Research



VERBAL ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Alternative Pathways to Postsecondary Employment: Family Supported Entrepreneurship for Neurodiverse Young Adults

- 1.____ My name is Chris Danguilan.

- 2.____ We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about your work on [*name of business, product, or service*] you do with your family. We want to know about your on the job responsibilities, activities where your work has you meeting people, what you enjoy, and what is challenging. We want to know about this to find out what you have learned while working on [*name of business, product, or service*].

- 3.____ If you agree to be in this study I will talk with you and ask you questions about you and your work for up to but no more than 90 minutes, two times a week for four weeks over [*virtual video platform or phone*]. The conversations will be audio-recorded.

- 4.____ Talking to me should be no different for you than talking to any other person about your work and your life. Because you will be speaking with me from your home or place of business there should be no unexpected problems or risks to you other than those you would might experience on any given day. There is a small risk that others may find out what you say during the research.

- 5.____ You will be receive \$24 after each interview for your time. Depending on your preference you will be compensated via an electronic payment platform of your choosing (Venmo, PayPal, or Zelle) or an Amazon gift eCard. Receipt of funds requires sharing your email or mobile phone number with the respective ePayment company, or your Venmo username, to process payment. While receipt of the Amazon eCard requires sharing your email.

- 6.____ What I learn about your work with your family will be shared with people who really want to know about it. They want to know about you and your family business to find ways to help other young people and their families start a business.

- 7.____ Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parent to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parent says “yes” you can still decide not to do this.

- 8.____ If you don’t want to be in this study, you don’t have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don’t want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.

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Verbal Assent Check List: Clean
1

9.____ You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me [insert your telephone number] or ask me next time.

10.____ If you say yes to the following questions means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this information.

Signature of PI upon completion of assent

Date

APPENDIX F

Alternative Pathways to Postsecondary Employment: Family Supported Entrepreneurship for Neurodiverse Young Adults

This document or the checklist may be used but both are not required.

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked if you

- ☐ are neurodiverse and able to consent for yourself or
- ☐ are a parent or other family member or
- ☐ are the LAR of your child, to allow them

to participate in a research study about young neurodiverse entrepreneurs in family supported entrepreneurship conducted by Chris Danguilan, MPH a doctoral student in the Department of Disability and Human Development from the University of Illinois at Chicago. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a young neurodiverse entrepreneur who identifies as having autism, on the autism spectrum, or have Asperger's, or are a family member who supports the entrepreneurship.

I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

What is the purpose of the research?

This research is being conducted to gain greater understanding of how the experiences of young neurodiverse entrepreneurs who have family that work with and support their entrepreneurship teach life skills, increase personal responsibility, and encourage community participation.

Although there are many stories in the popular media of successful neurodiverse entrepreneurs and their family, very little is known about why and how they start or sustain their businesses and what the outcomes are beyond financial profit. The information provided by this research will add to the body of knowledge on neurodiverse entrepreneurs.

If you choose to participate, I will interview you and a family member that supports your business. You will respond to questions and share your opinions and experiences about family supported entrepreneurship for the young neurodiverse entrepreneur.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to this research, I ask that you do the following things:

1) Schedule a suitable time to

- ☐ participate in an up to but no more than 90 minute audio recorded interview, twice a week for four weeks.

2) If you wish, take photos of your business site, activities related to your business, or the products or services offered by your business or like those offered by your business. Only take these photos if you want to and try to be careful not to take photos of people other than you and your family members.

Six people will be involved in this part of the research: Three neurodiverse entrepreneur participants and three family support members, each who have been identified by the neurodiverse entrepreneur as a key entrepreneurship support person.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. There is a risk that others may find about what participants, such as yourself, said or disclosed during the research, and the security of electronic data data collection cannot be 100% guaranteed.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

You may not directly benefit from participating in the research. However, the information you provide may be useful to help others in the future as it will inform research and policy on neurodiverse entrepreneurs and the family who support them.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only person who will know you are research participant is the Principal Investigator, Chris Danguilan. No information about you, or provided by you, during the research will be disclosed to other without your written permission, except:

- if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the UIC Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or
- if required by law.

You must consent verbally prior to participating in the research.

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Hand written notes written during the interview will be taken in a notebook. If given permission, photos of the business site may be requested that do not identify the participants. Only I and my faculty advisor will have access to the audio recordings, transcripts, and photos. Even without including identifying individuals, participants may still be indirectly identified. Therefore, sharing photographs is strictly voluntary and should be limited to images of the business site, related activities, and product or service. There are no other investigators so only I or my advisor will have access to these photos.

Recordings, transcriptions, and photos will be stored on the Primary Investigator's encrypted password protected smart phone and computers or the University of Illinois at Chicago cloud. Hard copies of transcripts and notebook with handwritten notes will be stored in a locked drawer accessible only by me in my personal office. Personal data and identities will be assigned a pseudonym when transcripts are created and the link between data and an individual's name will be destroyed along with raw audio recordings after data analysis while, while documents having no identifiers may be kept indefinitely. If the data is published or reproduced in any way, names will not be used, and major identifying markers will be changed. When I am traveling or off campus, research documents and materials will be in a locked briefcase, accessible only by me.

All of the identifiable research material, including audiotapes and transcripts, will be destroyed at the end of research. De-identified data such as de-identified transcripts that can no longer be linked to your identity will be maintained. When the research results are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Will I be compensated for my time?

Participants will receive a \$24 stipend after each interview. Participants may receive up to a total of \$192 per participant if participating in all eight interviews. Depending on your preference you will be compensated via an electronic payment platform of your choosing (Venmo, PayPal, or Zelle) or an Amazon gift eCard. Receipt of funds requires sharing your email or mobile phone number with the respective ePayment company, or your Venmo username, to process payment. While receipt of the Amazon eCard requires sharing your email.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain in the study. Participants may withdraw by contacting the investigator at cdangu2@uic.edu.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Chris Danguilan, MPH, a PhD candidate. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, feel free to contact her via phone (312)285-0008 or email cdangu2@uic.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Sarah Parker Harris, PhD at skparker@uic.edu or (312)996-5485.

What are my rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions of this form, or you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) of the University of Illinois at Chicago at (312)996-1711 (local) or 1(866)789-6215 (toll-free) or email OPRS at uicirb@uic.edu.

Remember: Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Illinois. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

I have read the above information. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. If you are unable to print out a copy of this information for your records, please let the investigator know and they will mail you a blank copy via USPS to keep.

APPENDIX G

Interview Guide

Week 1

Building Rapport and the Lay of the Land (Entrepreneur and Family Support Member, separately)

1. Where product is
made
sold
or

Where service is
provided
brokered

2. Who
makes product
sells product
or
provides service
brokers service

3. What is
used to make product
needed to sell product
or
used to provide service (special tools or skills as necessary specific service)
needed to broker service

4. How long is spent
making product
selling product
or
providing service

brokering service

5. When is
product made
product sold
or
service provided
service sold

APPENDIX G (continued)

Purposive activities

➤ What are your activities specific to business? (Entrepreneur)

- customer interaction
- payment
- preparation for start of business day
- close of business day responsibilities
- amount of time spent engaged on their own
- amount of time spent working with family
- community participation

➤ Related to business

- growing business
- skill development
- personal development
- family communication
- social engagement
- community participation

Outcome Activities

Social engagement

- What are your child's activities specific to business? (Family Support Member)
- customer interaction
- payment
- preparation for start of business day
- close of business day responsibilities
- amount of time spent engaged on their own
- amount of time spent working with family
- community participation

➤ Related to business

growing business

- skill development
- personal development
- family communication
- social engagement
- community participation

APPENDIX G (continued)

Week 2

The Neurodiverse Entrepreneur and their Entrepreneurship

Questions with prompts as necessary:

- Tell me about yourself and your (product/service)
- When did you become interested in it?
- How did you become interested in it?
- What interests you about it?
- Does your family share this interest?
- What does your family think about it?
- Have they always felt this way?
- How do they encourage you?
- What do they with you to encourage you?
- How did you learn to (make your product/provide service)?
- What and how did you teach yourself? Books? Internets?
- Did you learn anything from your parents to do this?
- Did you learn anything in school that was useful to (make product/provide service)?
- Did school encourage/discourage your interests?

The Family and the Entrepreneurship (Family Support Member)

- Tell me about your child's product/service
- When did they become interested in it?
- How did they become interested in it?
- What interests them about it?
- Do you share this interest with them?
- What does your child think about that?
- Have you always felt this way?
- How do you encourage them?
- What have you done together to share this interest?
- How did they learn to (make product/provide service)?
- What and how did they learn to (make product/provide service)?
- Did you teach them anything about (product/service)?
- Did they learn anything in school that was useful to (make product/provide service)?
- Did school encourage/discourage their interests?

The Entrepreneurship and the Family (Entrepreneur and Family Support Member)

- Tell me how and why the business started?
- What resources did you need to start business?
- -how did it go from passion to business?
- What skills were needed to start business/where did you learn them?
- Was there any assistance for the business outside of the family?

APPENDIX G (continued)

Week 3

The Entrepreneur and the Business

- What are you learning from your business?
- How have your job responsibilities changed since the beginning?
- What can/do you do now that you could/did not do before the business?
- e.g. decision making, skills that you use outside of the business, customer relations etc
- How is this different from going to college or working at a typical job?

- Would you rather be going to school or work elsewhere?
- Do you find yourself in the community more than before you started the business?
- Do you find yourself in the community more than before you started the business?
- What do you do when you go out?
- Do you have plans to be out more? What will you do?
- Have you made any friends working on your business?

- Do you spend time with them outside of your business?
- Have you made any new friends outside of the business?
- How has the business changed you?
- What are you most proud of since you started the business?
- Does the business make you a happy?
- What stresses you about the business?

The Family and the Business

- What is your child learning from your business?
- How have their job responsibilities changed since the beginning?
- What can/do they do now that they could/did not do before the business?
- e.g. decision making, skills that you use outside of the business, customer relations etc
- How is this different from their going to college or working at a typical job?
- Would they rather be going to school or work elsewhere?
- Do you find they are in the community more than before the business began?
- What do they do when they go out?
- Do they have plans to be out more? What will they do?
- Have they made any friends working on the business?

- Do they spend time with them outside of “work”
- Have they made any new friends outside of the business since it began?
- How has the business changed them?
- What are you/they most proud of since they started the business?
- Does the business make them happy?
- What stresses them about the business?

- What dreams do they have for their future?
- What dreams do you have for them?
- Where do you see them in five years?

APPENDIX G (continued)

The Business and the Family (Entrepreneur and Family Support Member)

- What is the mission for the business?
- Has it changed since the business started?
 - Where will the business five years from now?
 - What does the ultimate success for the business look like?
- Who is the dream clientele?
- What resources would you need to achieve this?
 - What does the ultimate success for yourself look like?

Week 4

Impact of Covid 19 at the Intersection of Enterprise and the Family

Impact on the Entrepreneur

- What changes have there been to your business?
- Accessing supplies
- Production or service delivery
- Sales, reduction in customers
- Time spent on business related activities
- Business community contacts
- Pivot or consideration of changing business plans in response to change in above?
- What changes have there been with respect to family support during this time?
- How family functions relative to the business?
- Your relationship with family support member?
- What have you learned about yourself or your family, with respect to the business?

Have you received any COVID related outside support or services for your business from the state or government?

Have you lost any support or services from the state or government as a result of the COVID epidemic?

Family Support Member's Experience

- What changes have there been to the business?
- Supplies
- Production
- Sales
- Time spent on business related activities
- Business community contacts
- Pivot or consideration of changing business plans in response to change in above?
- What changes have there been with respect to family support during this time?

- How family functions relative to the business?
- Your child's relationship with you?
- What have you learned about your child in relation to the business during this time?

APPENDIX G (continued)

Have you or your child received any COVID related outside support or services for the business from the state or government?

Has your child lost any support or services from the state or government as a result of the COVID epidemic?

Closure questions

Both the entrepreneur and the supporting family member will each be asked these questions in separate interviews:

Now that the study is over, do you have any questions for me?

Do you have any thoughts about the time that we have spent during our interviews or about the questions that I asked you?
Including concerns or criticisms?

Entrepreneur only

Is there anything you want the world to know about you and the work you do?

Family Support Member

Is there anything you want the world to know about your son our daughter and the work they do?

Is there anything you want the world to know about you and work you do with your son or daughter?

Both the entrepreneur and the supporting family member will each be asked these questions in separate interviews: Now that the study is over, do you have any questions for me?

Do you have any thoughts about the time that I've spent observing your business or about the questions that I asked you? Including concerns or criticisms?

Entrepreneur only

What do you want the world to know about you and the work you do?

Family Support Member

What do you want the world to know about your son/daughter and the work they do?

What do you want the world to know about you and work you do with your son/daughter?

APPENDIX H

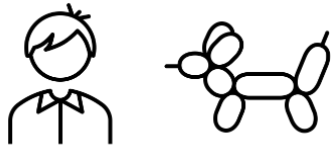
CS2.1.3_08_13_21 Customized Interview Guide

I want to thank you both again for Wednesday's interview. Our next interview is tomorrow. The final interview of every week will be with both of you.

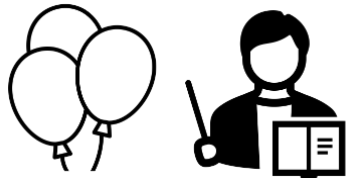
This interview is a little different than the last. I want to hear the both of you tell the story of [REDACTED] in the beginning. Like maybe I am listening at the dinner table while you recount your experiences.

Here are the questions I will ask and if these questions bring up any specific memories that you would like to recount please share them with me so that I can bring them into the [REDACTED] story.

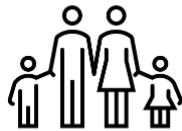
1. Do you remember the conversation you had in the family about having a pickle business?
2. Do you have any memories of making the first batch of pickles for your first sales event?
3. Can you please tell me all about your first public [REDACTED] sales event?
 - What was your favorite memory of that sales event?
 - Was there anything you repeated from the first sales event at the next event?
 - Was there anything you knew you did not want to repeat at the next event?

APPENDIX I

Please tell me about you!



How did you learn to make balloon art?



Who in your family helps with balloon events?

Images from powerpoint slide used in CS1.1 interview.

APPENDIX J

Code Book

| Codes | Definition | Merged Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Family | | |
| family support | Dedicated effort to entrepreneur and the entrepreneurship outside of expected support unrelated to entrepreneurship. | family support required; family interdependence; expectation of support |
| Appreciate family | Recognizes family and their support of entrepreneurship. | |
| Family business dynamic | Established expectations, responsibilities, and/or roles of entrepreneur, FSM, or family members in the execution of defined entrepreneurial activities. | |
| Family pressure | Unfulfilled, miscommunicated, or misunderstood or responses to expectations of entrepreneurial activity or support. | |
| FSM check-in about entrepreneurial interest | Parent concern about NDYE's continued interest or disinterest in entrepreneurship. | exploitation awareness; parent-directed entrepreneurship |
| Entrepreneurship | | |
| Agreeableness | Willingness to compromise, take direction and criticism, akin to relatedness. | cooperation; emotional control |
| Autonomy | Self-determined actions and interests outside of family participation to include possible community engagement | |
| Competence | Familiar with a life or job skill such that can independently undertake and complete activity/responsibility relevant to or possibly as a result of entrepreneurship. | |
| Confidence | Experiences of personal satisfaction and accomplishment possibly leading to new interests or challenges. | |
| Empowerment | Transformative experiences that instill confidence that have potential to encourage and manifest self-determination. | want for respect |
| Identity | Personal or interpersonal defining moments, experiences, or self-awareness of NYDE identification with entrepreneurship. | |
| Initiative | The display of independently engaged action in the support or interest of entrepreneurship. | independent/self-start; self-directed; self-taught |
| Leadership | Engaging in opportunities that share; or reveal the desire to share skills developed | managerial skills |

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|---------------------------|--|--|
| | and displayed during the course of entrepreneurial activities that display confidence and competence. | |
| Pride | Moments or expressions/self-awareness of personal achievements, challenges overcome, milestones achieved in relation to or result of entrepreneurship. | Family pride |
| Relatedness | Entrepreneur's sentiments of belonging, attachment, and interpersonal security | |
| Responsibility | Personal effort made by entrepreneur to address and correct mistakes. Entrepreneurial activities that are solely to be completed or conducted by entrepreneur although possibly with assistance. | Routine; daily job responsibility |
| Self-advocacy | Able to voice preferences, discontent, and request recognition of reasonable desires in a manner that evokes aspects of self-determination that leads to or displays effect of autonomy. | Self-advocates |
| Talent | Indication, recognition, or recognition of special skill or talent having the potential to develop into entrepreneurship. | |
| Work ethic | Discussion of activities, behavior, and/or character that speaks to or represents an invested interest in the entrepreneurship. Applying oneself given dedication, perseverance, and/or job stamina with respect to job responsibilities. | Dedication; perseverance; endurance; job stamina |
| Community | | |
| Civic understanding | Engagement in activities that, or otherwise displays an understanding of, common good. Something for further consideration, disability representation a civic duty? | Give back to community |
| Community engagement | Interaction with community during or as a result of entrepreneurial activities. | Job duties; customer engagement |
| Community interdependence | Community receipt of support (in form of social or financial capital) from entrepreneurship through disability advocacy, civic event participation, local business. | Parent advocacy; neurodiversity parent community |
| Community support | Support of entrepreneurship in the form of sales, bookings, civic recognition, public relations, or donations | Community clientele |

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|----------------------------|---|---|
| Community visibility | Mainstream news coverage of family or entrepreneurship. Recognition through marketing or invitation to civic function participation, civic award events or presentations. Community member recognition. | Family recognition; News publicity; Public recognition; Public media |
| Transition | | |
| Disability benefits SSI | Risk to Medicare or SSI eligibility from entrepreneurship income. Prioritization HCBS dollars to benefit entrepreneurial skills. Barriers experienced to accessing federally funded services and programs. | HCBS; disability services bureaucracy; health insurance insecurity |
| Postsecondary employment | Employment, or the expressed intention of, outside of the entrepreneurship. | Transition to CIE; traditional employment |
| Postsecondary transition | Events, activities in the interest of, or actions that evince postsecondary transition. References to local Rehabilitation Services Administration and accessing vocational resources to support, or alternatives to, entrepreneurship. | Vocational rehabilitation agency services; lack of training |
| Postsecondary education | Mentions of, or plans for, postsecondary transition. | Postsecondary program |
| School support | Early Intervention, Speech Therapy, or other allied services found beneficial to entrepreneurship. Additionally, school engagement that encourages or benefits entrepreneurship with the wider school community. | Special education |
| Extracurricular support | Acquiring, learning, training, active and intentional development of skills used or to be used in entrepreneurship. | Secondary job skills; computer skills |

APPENDIX K

Thematic Development Progression Chart

| Open Codes | | Collapsed and Group Codes | Themes |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Accommodations | FSM check-in | <u>Entrepreneurship</u> | <u>Self-determination through Entrepreneurship</u> |
| Adulthood milestones | Identity | Agreeableness | |
| Agreeableness | Independence | Autonomy | |
| Ambivalence | Initiative | Competence | |
| Appreciates family | Inspiration | Confidence | |
| Autonomy | Interest | Empowerment | |
| Business Acumen | Leadership | Identity | |
| Business bureaucracy | Life skills | Initiative | |
| Business growth | Marketing | Leadership | |
| Business logistics | Networking | Pride | |
| Character | Origin story | Relatedness | <u>Entrepreneurship through Family</u> |
| Civic understanding | Ownership | Responsibility | |
| Community engagement | Performance | Self-advocacy | |
| Community interdependence | Postsecondary employment | Talent | |
| Community support | Postsecondary education | Work ethic | |
| Community visibility | Postsecondary transition | <u>Family</u> | |
| Competence | Pride | Appreciates family | |
| Confidence | Professionalism | Family business dynamic | |
| COVID-19 | Relatedness | Family pressure | |
| Disability awareness | Resources | Family support | |
| Disability benefits | Responsibility | FSM check in | <u>Transition to Entrepreneurship</u> |
| Dreams | Salary | <u>Community</u> | |
| Empowerment | Sales | Civic understanding | |
| Enjoyment | School support | Community engagement | |
| Entrepreneurship | Self-advocacy | Community interdependence | |
| Family business dynamics | Self-awareness | Community support | |
| Family pressure | Skill training | Community visibility | |
| Family support | Skills gained | | |
| Fear | Social Anxiety | <u>Transition</u> | |
| Friendship | Social Isolation | Disability benefits | |
| | Social Media | Postsecondary employment | Stand-alone theme: <u>COVID-19</u> |
| | Social Skills | Postsecondary education | |
| | Success | Postsecondary transition | |
| | Talent | School support | |
| | Tension | Skill training | |
| | Transition | Skills gained | |
| | Work ethic | | |
| | Covid-19 | | |

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