

A STUDY OF STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM TRANSFORMATION IN
A HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAM

by

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation explores as ethnography the transformative process of ten participants in a program for students with Asperger Syndrome transitioning from an urban high school setting to college, which includes the extracurricular extension referred to as Ethos. The dissertation considers the experience in the context of specialized education, and the broader contexts of curricular development and instruction concerning school reform and design. Fundamentally, the study intends to examine and explain the extent to which these students experience transformation during their transition to higher education in this progressive program. Embedded in the program design are in-depth inquiry driven discussions and experiences to enhance interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and higher level cognition. The exploration examines whether the in-depth inquiry driven design does contribute to academic and lifelong learning, fundamentally improving students' over-all self-perception, empowerment, and actualization of life goals, which is the underpinning purpose of an exceptional education.

Keywords: constructivist learning, transformative education, 21st century skills, cognitive curriculum.

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- ▶ My Team/Colleagues
- ▶ My WONDERFUL Students

Dedication

To My Father, Donnell Moore PhD..

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The dissertation brings together the theoretical and empirical practices of traditional informative education, radical transformative theory, and sustainable education reform. An analysis of learning disability and constructivist learning are used to elucidate the socio-complexity of historic academic constructs concerning educational leadership and social justice. This study is the beginning of a larger future exploration of alternative academic practices as transformative learning in radical school reform. This ontological perspective considers where in the realm of education does the student with ASD (specifically with Asperger Syndrome) exist? The study provides access to student experiences that drive discussion to ponder equity and power in education and society by removing historic constraints.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) face significant challenges in socialization, communication and flexible behavior and thinking that impact their school experience. For purposes of this dissertation, ASD refers to a broad definition of autism that manifest in severe, moderate, and mild forms as proposed for the future edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* due out in May 2013 (American Psychiatric Association 2012). As is relevant to this dissertation, High Functioning Autism (HFA) and Asperger Syndrome (AS) are commonly used to refer to individuals with mild forms of ASD. A neurological-based developmental disability, the autism spectrum is characterized by qualitative impairments in reciprocal interaction, and verbal and/or non-verbal communication

and the presence of restricted, repetitive, or stereotyped patterns of activities and interests. These core challenges manifest differently for each individual while changing across the lifespan (Attwood, 2008).

Once rare, ASD has reached epidemic proportions with estimates as high as 1 in 50 school aged children identified in the United States (Blumberg et al., 2013). Already a heavy burden on educational facilities, autism has had a large impact on public schooling, and the number of students coming of age who have Autism has had an enormous effect on the economy as the affected children reach adulthood (Matson & Kozlowski, 2012). Data from the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network support the inference that there has been an increase in ASD recognition by community providers. While all children defined as ASD cases in ADDM have previously come to the attention of a special education or health care provider in their communities, not all of these children had a previous diagnosis or school classification specific to ASD. Each surveillance year, a percentage of children who had clear documentation of autism traits in their records, but not a specific ASD diagnosis or educational placement, are nonetheless classified as ASD cases by ADDM clinical reviewers. This proportion of “ASD, but no previous diagnosis” cases has declined steadily as total ASD prevalence rates have shown marked increases. (National Health Statistics Reports *Number 65* March 20, 2013).

Originating as the Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990; 2004) ensures equal educational opportunities for children identified with disabilities, including those affected by autism. IDEA entitles all children the right to a Free Appropriate Education (FAPE) within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). They will be educated alongside typically developing peers to the

maximum extent possible. Students that have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that designates special education and related services to prepare for further education, employment, and independent living to the maximum extent possible. In addition, parents are afforded the right to exercise due process to ensure that their child is receiving an appropriate education.

The U.S. Department of Education is mandated to report yearly to Congress in accordance with IDEA. When this policy was first enacted, cases of autism in U.S. schools were few with identified cases relegated to other disability categories (e.g., Other Health Impaired, Speech and Language Delay, Emotional Behavioral Disorders). As the rate of autism steadily increased, a decision was made to list autism as a separate category of disability starting in 1991 (Apling & Jones, 2002). Once considered a low incidence disability, statistically students receiving services for autism have increased (marginally with emotional disturbance and intellectual disability) among the thirteen disability enrollment categories.

The California Department of Education (CDE) (2011) Special Education Division reports that from 2000 to 2010 the number of students identified with autism attending public schools had quadrupled, increasing from approximately 15,000 students to 65,000. During this same period, at the district level where this study was conducted, the number of students identified with ASD more than tripled from 106 to 391 (CDE 2011). Currently CDE Special Education Enrollment by Age and Disability December 2011 reporting cycle at district of study totals 443 students, ranking fifth among the thirteen diagnostic categories. Specific Learning Disability ranks highest, Speech and Language Impairment second, Mental Retardations third, Emotional Disturbance fourth (CDE 2011).

State law emphasizes that a student is to be referred for special education instruction and services *only* after the resources of the general education program have been considered and,

where appropriate, utilized. In the unified school districts this "pre-referral" requirement is usually met by utilizing the Student Study Team (SST) process. The SST is typically composed of the student and his or her parents, a school administrator, counselor, the student's general class teachers, the school psychologist, and a special education teacher. During the SST meeting, members review the student's educational strengths, areas of concern, and previous attempts at interventions. Members discuss possible programs and interventions to meet the student's needs and an action plan is developed (Thompson 1999). One of the many possible recommendations from the SST may be a referral for a 504 Plan (i.e., developed to facilitate that a student with a disability identified under the law receives accommodations that will ensure academic success and access to the learning environment). If more intense services are needed, the SST may make a direct referral for a special education assessment. Parents are by law permitted to request an assessment referral for services at any time (IDEA, 2004).

Upon receiving a referral from the SST to the school psychologist for a special education assessment, parents are notified of the referral and development of an evaluation plan by a school psychologist. The school psychologist notifies the parents that their student has been referred for special education assessment and the reasons why the referral was made. The school psychologist enters the referral information on the WISER (Web Integrated Special Education Resources) Referral Screen. The school psychologist then has fifteen calendar days in which to send the parent a written evaluation plan and related documents including: (1) A request for Initial Special Education Assessment; (2) An Evaluation Plan (specifies the areas to be assessed and requires signed parent permission to access); (3) The Special Education Rights of Parent and Children: Notice of Procedural Safeguards; (4) An Authorization for Educational Decisions (which indicates who can legally make educational decisions for the student); and (5) A Special

Education Parent Questionnaire, which provides parents with an opportunity to share with the assessment team relevant background information about the student as well as parental viewpoints and concerns (Thompson 1999). Figure 1 below presents the IEP process as a cyclical continuum. While the process begins at the point where the parent or school official report a reason for concern to the SST and possible assessment is determined, the annual IEP cycle is continuous for the duration of the student's academic career while qualifying for services. Every three years a Triennial IEP re-tests student with diagnostics to assess categorical qualification. It is important to note parental viewpoints and concerns are a significant component in this process. Reporting from the Autism Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network the consistency in independent estimates of parent-reported ASD prevalence for children born in 1994-2005 and diagnosed in or before 2007 increases confidence that National Health Statistics Reports (NSCH) data were not subject to differential survey measurement error over time and, therefore, can be used to monitor changes in the prevalence of parent reported ASD over time. Increases in the prevalence of parent-reported ASD continued through 2011-2012, and much of the recent increase—especially for children aged 6 to 13—was the result of diagnoses of children with previously unrecognized ASD. A more detailed report will further explore these findings within socio-demographic subgroups and with further consideration of the relationship between health care system factors and ASD case ascertainment (National Health Statistics Reports *Number 65* March 20, 2013).

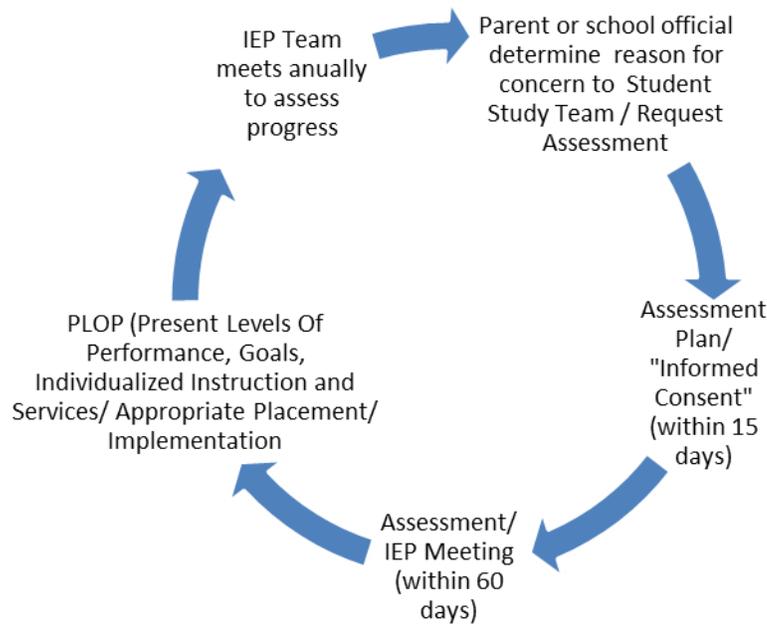


Figure 1. The cycle shows the IEP process as initiated by a school official or parent and continued annually.

The complexity of engaging diagnostic criteria, academic assessment tools, and pedagogical practices for an individual student center educational program supportive of students on the spectrum is illustrated below. With the increasing number of students identified with ASD, the need for public schools to address appropriate and ethical diagnoses, services, and effective delivery of curriculum is not only an educational concern but also a social justice concern. During an informal interview with the researcher and a practicing district psychologist the following statement was made in response to the question: *What specific tests do you give students that are referred for Autism supports either very impacted or less so, and are there one or two specific tests you use?* The following is the psychologist's response.

“I know that some use rating scales specifically for Autism--but these are usually when we are making a diagnosis and trying to figure out if the kid has Autism or not -- they are not as routinely used for triennials or once a kid already has a diagnosis. Lately we have been using the ADOS (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule) as support for diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Again, this scale is used primarily when we are trying to figure out if the student is on the spectrum and would not be used for a review or triennial. And then we usually use our regular battery of tests, the Differential Ability Scales and various measures of processing, as needed. Well, we don't really have a "policy" per se, but they have to meet the district's eligibility criteria. Do you have the Special Ed "Bible"? It is a white binder with the criteria for each diagnosis. I will see if I can find a website that might have the same information. We just test kids and see if their scores or their behavior or whatever meet the criteria.

Diagnosing Asperger is a lot more subjective than diagnosing a learning disability, which is just based on test scores. One person's take on "restricted interests" might be different than another person's....You probably know about the new ASC classes, right? They have a mix of "quirky" kids with similar behaviors, some with Autism/Asperger diagnosis, some with SLI (Speech Language Impaired) and some with SLD (Specific Learning Disability). They just started two of those classes at the high school level last year and we have two at middle school. I think they probably want to keep the ASIP (Asperger Inclusion Program) classes for the more straightforward Asperger kids and your kids are higher functioning academically than the kids in the ASC program. Another group of kids who might be a good fit for your program are kids with Nonverbal Learning Disabilities, a much under diagnosed group who

don't quite fit into any of the eligibility categories but who have many similar characteristics to kids with Asperger.” (Weaver 2010)

The perspective of the school psychologist demonstrates the connection between student diagnostic criteria eligibility and the complex process of accurate academic placement. This process is significantly influenced by the students Present Level of Performance (PLOP), which may pose complications in light of the discrepant learning profiles of students on the autism spectrum. As the coordinator of the Asperger Inclusion Program, I have students with diagnostic tests results indicating and interpreted as not able to access grade level general education curriculum, often performing at peer expectation and excel academically with appropriate supports despite significant lower scores in very effective and reliable diagnostics such as Beery VMI Fifth Edition, Test of Visual Perceptual Skills (TVPS), Test of Auditory Processing Skills (TAPS), The Behavior Assessment System for Children-Second Edition (BASC-2), Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fourth Edition (WISC-IV), Adaptive Behavior Assessment System-Second Edition (ABAS-II), and Gilliam Autism Rating Scale-2nd Edition (GARS-2).

Walberg, Paik, Komukai and Freemann (2000) have stated, moving academic community decisions from the national to the state or district level was not important; however decentralization to the level of the individual school *did* make a difference. The school psychologist's insight illustrates the benefit for macro (larger) level (national/state/district) legislation and policy to be managed with scientifically researched relevance and reliability and determined at the micro (smaller) collaborative expertise level within the school site SST. The macro-level disabilities rights legislation assures students diagnosed by scientific criteria are eligible for services. The micro-level SST assures the implementation of best practices at the

school site to identify concerns per individual student who may *not* meet *DSM* criteria yet demonstrate certain diagnostic category characteristics. Some students do not measure low scores on diagnostics yet demonstrate consistent social behaviors and academic experiences. Autism Spectrum Disorders impact the educational environment as a complex of challenges ranging from academic cognitive processing (which may result in intensive curricular support), to supporting students challenged by social cognition with high academic performance, along with how each of these domains impact the other. It has been my experience that the diagnostic and assessment process work hand-in-hand in constructing a unique profile of strengths and challenges across domains of learning and social development.

Evaluations explicitly include *DSM* diagnostic and district level educational code eligibility tools, with individualized approaches to the student. However the subjectivity in the determination of diagnosis, eligibility and individualized education plan for the student as the school psychologist implies, is as implicit as the social cues that evade these students. The evaluations at times are challenging to determine. Considering the variability in the range of expression of core characteristics in ASD, there is a need to elucidate these complex issues by exploring experiences of students with ASD within a contextually relevant educational setting.

Statement of the Problem

American schools as structured and administered today are fundamentally incapable of reforming themselves to ensure equitable student outcomes. As a special educator, I offer as an example the current concern regarding services for the increasing number of students with ASD. This concern historically resembles the academic issues of the international Rubella epidemic in 1964-1965. While the epidemic increased national awareness for the need to begin researching new techniques for teaching and analyzing the cause and effect of new pedagogy and prompted

focus on how children are educated, the assurance for implementation of the innovative educational efforts required nationally mandated legislation in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10). The legislation began as a significant part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" movement, a nationwide mandate to ensure the continuum reform specialized education practices and laws required response to inadequately prepared students (Malloy, 2004). The extensive statute funds primary and secondary education and explicitly forbids the establishment of a national curriculum. It emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability to shorten the achievement gaps between students by providing each child with fair and equal opportunities to achieve an exceptional education. As mandated in the act, the funds are authorized for professional development, instructional materials, and resources to support educational programs, and parental involvement promotion. The act was originally authorized through 1970; however, the government has reauthorized the act every five years since its enactment, currently titled *Race to the Top* with the President Obama Administration ("Educational Resources Information Center").

Allowing access to a marginalized population, also as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty," a new institution, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting now known as PBS, was enacted as the bill (S. 1160) in Public Law 90-129 (81 Stat. 365). "The purpose of this act...to build a great network for knowledge -- not just a broadcast system, but one that employs every means of sending and storing information that the individual can use...rededicate a part of the airwaves--which belong to all the people--and we dedicate them for the enlightenment of all the people...." (The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967). In the conclusions and recommendations chapter this study considers Presidents Johnson's vision as in

the public interest to encourage the growth and development of public radio and television broadcasting, including the use of such media for instructional, educational, and cultural purposes. The Public Broadcasting Systems' Education and Media Learning Department has done extensive research on education through television and media resources. Consistent with the findings capacity theory or capacity model, it states students effectively learn when a lesson is presented according to capacity to remember and understand subject matters. This theory's focus on non-conventional educational tools, such as television and media learning, supports knowledge gained in resources familiar to children such as television or more currently computer technology, particularly for atypically developing learners (Fisch, 1999). For the residency required in my doctoral program for this study, I interned in the Educational and Media Learning Department at KQED, here in the Bay Area. From the lens of researcher, anthropologist and educator, particularly for underserved students, residency outcome with the education team at KQED is presented in the conclusions and suggestions final chapter.

The fact that current Autism diagnoses are dramatically increasing is generally accepted and not a point of debate. Because public schools are required to educate students with these disorders, specialists, school leaders, and policy makers are now engaged in discussion to varying degrees concerning the educating of children on the Autism Spectrum. For example, National Autism Center (2009) published The National Standards Project addressing the need for evidence-based practice guidelines for autism spectrum disorders. Only two (18%) of established treatments are associated with favorable outcomes for individuals with Asperger Syndrome. To some degree, it is not surprising that the research on the Established Treatments has not yet been fully extended to individuals with Asperger Syndrome. For example, Asperger Syndrome is less likely to be diagnosed during the time frame in which Joint Attention

Interventions are likely to be implemented; an early social-communicative behavior where two people share focus on an object or event for language and socio-cognitive development (Bakeman, Adamson 1984), so this treatment may not become extended to the Asperger Syndrome population for quite some time. In addition, Asperger Syndrome is a more recent addition to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* used to diagnose individuals on the autism spectrum. Given the fact that reviewed studies were published over a 50-year time frame, it is not surprising that this more recent addition to the diagnostic nomenclature is not as well-represented. On the other hand, Asperger Syndrome has been included in the *DSM-IV* since 1994. This means that we have had well more than a decade in which research could have been conducted. Clearly, additional research is necessary in this area (National Standards *Report 95*). The growing number of students with ASD currently educated in public school systems is substantiating conversation regarding provisional supports offered within unified districts. Appropriate and ethical diagnoses of the disorder are an educational challenge, and lack of correct diagnosis and effective implementation and access to learning for student achievement are social justice concerns.

While the search for answers to the cause and cure of this neurological-based developmental disability continues to baffle leading medical experts, the medical and educational needs of these children still remain severely under-served by the federal and state governments and local school authorities. Clearly, there is not enough being said or done to bring solutions to children and families living with this disability, particularly those who are often disadvantaged socially and economically (Autism Speaks Organization 2012). How parents have had to self-educate, and how families with fewer resources are dependent on over-worked and understaffed schools are social justice concerns.

The dissertation considers the practices servicing diverse student populations, specifically with ASD, from the perspective of relatively recent sociological phenomena. Curt Dudley-Marling conveys in his article, “The Social Construction of Learning Disabilities” (2004). The author argued the underpinning technical gaze that dominated learning disabilities theory and practice was the assumption that learning disabilities were a pathology that resided in the heads of individual students, rather than in the realm of academic institutional constructs (Gergen 1990). To be clear how this connects to the study consider that Dudley-Marling is suggesting as a social construct that schools label students learning disabled when the educational pedagogy is not able to reach the student; assuming the pathology lies in the heads of categorical ‘disabled learners,’ not the pedagogy. Also consider that the students begin to identify themselves as disabled and engaged with the learning community accordingly. This study considers removing both of these constructs from the learning experience. Because the current public school student population is so diverse, consider the need for inclusive pedagogical development and design, as well as shifting assumptions and beliefs from students *not* able to access learning. The dissertation aims to shift thinking toward innovative techniques in new learning paradigms and programs.

Heterogeneity describes the student diversity in classroom/school domains. My research concerns *homogeneity* in pedagogical practice and curriculum delivery, despite diverse student populations and learning variances. Relevant to academic and life-long learning performance outcomes, students with ASD (and specifically Asperger Syndrome) are consistent with other marginalized populations that are not connecting with curriculum. Students with ASD are a growing population underrepresented in the realm of educational research, practice, advocacy and policy. The study aims to explore the experience of students with ASD in an inclusive urban

high school. President Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability to shorten the achievement gaps between students by providing each child with fair and equal opportunities to an exceptional education. Understanding the pathology that resides in the experience of individual students is essential when considering the delivery of curriculum designed for all students to access. The responsibility to explore and reach that pathway remains in the realm of the academic institution.

Since *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) mandated that public schools cannot be segregated based on race, the community members began to realize that special education students were also being segregated, and being sent to state hospitals. *Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education* (1989) began a basic inclusion movement and the court ruled that if a student can receive a satisfactory education in the mainstream classroom, he or she must be educated there as the Least Restricted Environment (LRE). Ryan's (2007) constructivist epistemology's central tenet posited the individual learner constructed knowledge of the world by interacting with it. To understand the legislation is to understand the limitations of *homogeneity*-based pedagogical practices in diverse student population. Ryan (2007) proposed that essential *Constructs of the Individual Learner* were critical thinking skills, in-depth social insight, and familiarity to affect and implement educational reform that develops pedagogy for productive change and social justice in educational practices. The study revealed Knuth and Cunningham's (1993) critical principles in designing *constructivist learning* were paramount as unexpectedly aligned with the AsIP practice which informed student transformation process:

- Authentic learner tasks embedded in contexts that are relevant in the real world;
- The social context is developed, where dialogue and negotiation of meaning provide learners with the means for developing, testing and refining ideas;
- Learners are encouraged to have a voice and ownership in the learning process;
- Learners experience the knowledge construction process, and
- Learners reflect on their own thinking and decision making process.

To create the *constructivist learning environment* Knuth and Cunningham include multiple perspectives, and multiple modes of representation (video, computer, photographs, sounds, etc).

The learning variances inherent to public schools are guiding the research to understand how students process information to support the structural paradigms for effective pedagogy. Because public schools are required to educate all students, specialists, school leaders, and policy makers are now engaged with the educating of a vastly diverse student community, including the growing number of students with ASD. Prior to the publication of the fifth edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* in May 2013 Autism and Asperger Syndrome (AS) belonged to the group of disorders called Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Persons with AS share certain characteristics with Autism, and there is debate if AS is an independent diagnostic category or a higher level of functioning along the Autism continuum. Although AS shared characteristics with HFA, there were unique characteristics, and different developmental progression and prognosis (The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), 2008). One of the most significant changes made in the *DSM-V* (2013) was that the separate diagnostic labels of Autistic Disorder, Asperger Disorder, and PDD-NOS would be replaced by one umbrella term “Autism Spectrum Disorder.” Further distinctions were made according to severity levels. The severity levels were based on the amount of support needed, due to

challenges with social communication and restricted interests and repetitive behaviors. For example, a person might be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3. *The DSM-V* revision website says the reasons for using the umbrella term of “Autism Spectrum Disorder” are as follows: 1) The old way is not precise enough—different clinicians diagnose the same person with different disorders, and some change their diagnosis of the same symptoms differently from year to year, and 2) Autism is defined by a common set of behaviors. and it should be characterized by a single name according to severity. The removal of the formal diagnoses of Asperger Disorder and PDD-NOS is a major change. People who currently hold these diagnoses will likely receive a different diagnosis when re-evaluated. This has the potential to be confusing for parents of children with these diagnoses as well as children and adults who identify strongly with their diagnosis (Fall 2012 Autism Research Institute Conference by Pamela Compart, M.D.).

The research is emerging from developing concern for students with observable and measurable characteristics consistent with identified students receiving special education services according to policy, yet they themselves are not formally diagnosed, or often are diagnosed, but do not meet categorical criteria. Consequently, these students are not receiving appropriate supports and are, therefore, considered low performing. Disabled student services centers on higher education campuses are recognizing the specific and unique concerns regarding these transitioning students formally diagnosed, as well as students demonstrating comparable challenges that have not met K-12 eligibility. The concerns exist on high school and college campuses for transitioning student supports which address the concerns of the growing population’s academic and professional goals.

IDEA requires states to educate students with disabilities for transition to employment and provide transition services. Considering the data documenting the growing number of Autism diagnoses, it is reasonable and responsible to recognize the growing number of students with related characteristics exhibiting observable and measureable academic and social challenges. These students are uniquely impacted as they face particular problems concerning transition to higher education (Autism Society of America Indianapolis, 2002):

- Navigating admission process to college/university of choice/ potential arrangements for on campus dorm or residential living adjustments.
- Academic guidance and communicative counseling with administration and professors.
- Time management, budgeting, stress management, transportation, emerging social adjustments.
- Transitioning to post college career technology goals.

Purpose of Study

The foundation of this dissertation draws on the perspective of educational leadership and social justice of a population of students under-represented in curriculum design and development. The purpose is to explore the transformative process for 10 students identified with mild forms of ASD as influenced by their experience participating in Ethos, a progressive inclusive high-school/transition program in an urban public school setting. The study aims to elucidate the complex relationship concerning individualized eligibility, range of expression in core social characteristics, and access to curriculum. The study also seeks to understand the process that coordinates transformation in the students while equitably providing a potentially exceptional education in the program.

Rooted in linguistic and cultural anthropology theory and behavior and social constructivist learning (Knuth & Cunningham 1993; Vygotsky, 1978), the Ethos program focuses on creating an inclusive community that supports inquiry driven discussions and experiences to enhance interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and higher level cognition that contribute to academic and lifelong learning (Ryan, 2007). The program is designed to include self-paced core studies and elective courses to make real-life connections to subject matter in consideration of the specific individual student challenges. Students apply the acquired information and skills as cross-curriculum projects that are designed by the student with organization and academic support from both core and elective teachers; also identifying student individual learning styles toward development of lifelong learning these skills. These skills can be generalized across environments of educational, social and professional communities. The principles of the Ethos program aim to guide the content of academic lessons to create a learning environment of reflective contemplation of ourselves and the world around us.

This investigation will be guided by the following questions:

1. What is the students' interpretation of the world/situation in which they find themselves within Ethos?
2. How do students identify and see themselves and others who share their own experiences and situations?
3. How does constructivists learning and transformative education affect the integration of students on the spectrum, particularly those who are mildly affected?
4. How do constructivist learning practices change student performance outcomes that demonstrate the idea of the socially constructed "disabled learning?"

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intention of this chapter is to use literary scholarship to navigate the dissertation's theory of change. The aim is to provide historic context for current structure of schooling, considering the impact of systemic political and socio-economic factors on student performance outcomes, curriculum design, and implementation. This theory of change is aligned with the study's aim to elucidate the complex issues that students with ASD face by exploring the pathways of their experience within a contextually relevant educational setting. From the lens of social justice, concerning this under-represented community regarding educational policy and curricular design and implementation, this chapter addresses the educational and social justice concern outlined below:

- School reforms are necessary and sustainable: (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) Spec Ed Law/ Public Broadcasting System (PBS).
- School reforms inform research to develop pedagogical practice, policy and implementation.
- Reforms informed by cognitive process/how students learn, guide advances in systems to explore and enhance socio-cognitive function.
- Evolved educational system reach all students through constructivist instruction practices redefining/ minimizing / eliminating learning disability social construct.
- Understanding differences in cognitive function guide special education services AND general education institution to support restorative social justice for an equitable society.

Socio-Academic History

The following is a brief theoretical framework on how the impact of social constructs of race has shaped education and the impact of inequities within the educational system.

Relevant to the study is the theoretical iniquitous foundation of public education's impact on students, particularly with ASD as an underrepresented multicultural population, due to atypical social-cognitive development. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have theorized race and used it as an analytic tool for understanding school inequity. In the Understanding Race and Property section the article states three central propositions: (1) Race continues to be *a* significant factor *in* determining inequity *in* the U.S.; (2) U.S. society is based on property rights; and (3) The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which social and school inequity can be understood. The intersection of race and property is a central construct in understanding a critical-race theoretical approach to education. This critical-race theory in education offers a political perspective of economic and political structures within American society that influence school policy-making, and for the purpose of this research ultimately impacts student performance, including those affected by autism. Critical race theory challenges school objectives, theorizing the historical perpetuation of the American educational and sociological system is based in property rights, not human rights. While the research is not intended to look at school performance of students with autism through the lens of critical race theory, the researcher proposes a parallel consistent with other underserved populations; individuals with ASD are a growing population that is dramatically underrepresented within the realm of educational research, practice, advocacy and policy. Current data concludes school reforms have not provided productive outcomes in standardized test data. Gross, Booker and Goldhaber (2009) noted that all student level research revealed that specific populations were not

benefiting from the implementation of reform efforts. The data demonstrated African American, English Language Learners (ELL) and special education students exhibited no significant benefit from the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR) project and its successor the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) project that the federal government devoted enormous resources for implementation between the late 1980s and early 2000s. Ironically, these reforms were intended as initiatives to support these student populations that are historically underperforming in American public schools. It can be argued that the reform policy, design, and implementation are ineffective due to a lack of specific focus or understanding of the significant issues for these populations in urban public schools. Critical race theory asserts that historic economic inequities within the system that construct financial incentives for schools to implement reform models that are ill-matched, by design, to the school's community and culture. Consequently, not scaffolding school success, they instead impose upon potentially productive curricular designs. The funding penalties inflicted on lower performing schools impose tighter restraint as the school community experiences the pressure for performance in conditions that are economically and academically binding. Critical race theory asserts historical foundation for the contemporary conditions of the public school system to maintain socio-economic status quo of power and control through the influences between politics and education. If race and property rights can be considered an analytical tool to understand inequities in society and education, the connections can easily be made to why the schools in affluent communities of homeowners are experiencing higher quality education (Ladson-Billings, Tate1995).

Comprehensive School Reforms

A brief understanding of concerns regarding policy agenda and school reform follows. Gross, Booker, and Goldhaber (2009) explained that between the late 1980s and early 2000s,

schools, districts, states, and the federal government devoted enormous resources to the implementation of CSR models. With more than 1.6 billion federal dollars distributed through the CSRD project and its successor, the CSR project, stated that districts made CSR adoption a central reform strategy for their lowest performing schools. The CSRD program provided 3-year grants for schools to implement one of several CSR designs. This grant program evolved from a demonstration program into a reform policy embedded within the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and continued to provide schools with funding to implement CSR designs (Tushnet, Flaherty, & Smith, 2004).

For the purpose of this research this funding initiative is reviewed to consider distortions from President Lyndon B. Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10). The act is an extensive statute that funds primary and secondary education, while explicitly forbidding the establishment of a national curriculum. It emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability. The bill aims to shorten the achievement gaps between students by providing each child with fair and equal opportunities to achieve an exceptional education. As mandated in the act, the funds are authorized for professional development, instructional materials, for resources to support educational programs, and for parental involvement promotion. The act was originally authorized through 1970; however, the government has reauthorized the act every five years since its enactment, currently titled Race to the Top by the President Obama Administration.

Student Level Research

This section briefly looks at the efficacy of reform using student level research, indicating inaccurate data of productive school reform efforts, specifically populations of students requiring individualized educational plans (IEP) reports. It considers the impact on

typically developing / general education student data that also showed very minimal productivity from financially incentive reform efforts. To understand why data continues to indicate unsuccessful school performances, despite continued reform implementation, Gross, Booker, and Goldhaber (2009) studied student level research using disaggregated data from specific populations within a school site or district which provided the opportunity to examine the differential effects of CSR awards across students of different types. This typically cannot be done with school or district level performance indicators, thus making it difficult for policy makers and school leaders to understand the specific reasons why the reforms were not successful. The study yielded student level significance:

- Cooper and Jordan (2003) suggested the recruitment of African American male teachers along with CSR design implementation would be necessary to meet the unique needs of African American male students.
- Hamann, Zuliani, and Hudak (2001) found that the CSR designs failed to provide specific accommodations for English Language Learner (ELL) students, providing little additional benefit to this population.
- Koh and Robertson (2003) investigated teacher perspectives of three CSR models and determined the fast-paced curriculum and lack of modifications presented more challenges for the special education students.

The question if school success should be measured solely by standardized testing may be argued; however, the failure for schools to produce students performing at standardized state test levels is revealed by a continually below basic test score data. Using analytic techniques for non-

experimental studies to investigate the effects of federal CSR awards on student achievement, the authors (Gross et al., 2009) found that CSRD funding:

- Did not significantly affect students' reading performance of general education students data gathered for the study.
- The effect on math performance varied across different student types. CSR funding did affect some students, but it has not always served to improve the performance of all student subgroups.
- The largest effects being only 4% of a standard deviation, one standard deviation difference in raw score equates to approximately 8 to 10 points in the Texas Learning Index (TLI).

Texas Learning Index (TLI) scaled score—the scale used to report Texas Assessment of Academic Skill (TAAS) and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) results to schools and students.

Constructs of the Individual Learner

Research shows constructivist epistemology's central tenet is that the individual learner constructs knowledge of the world by interacting with it. Constructivism is rooted in cognitive psychology and biology, and knowledge is constructed when information comes into contact with existing knowledge developed by experiences; constructivist education asserted knowledge must be constructed by a person, not just transmitted, to adapt to the world (Cooper & Ryan 2007).

Restructuring reforms to individual learner focus rather than financial incentives yield significant performance outcome. Ryan (2007) addressed the essential critical thinking skills, in-depth social insight, and familiarity (emerging brain research supported merging community

with learning produces increase in performance) to affect and implement pedagogical reform for social justice. As stated earlier, Knuth and Cunningham (1993) proposed several critical principles in designing constructivist learning, significantly developed in the body of this study:

- Learner tasks are embedded in *contexts that are relevant in the real world*.
- Learners are provided with the social context where *dialogue and negotiation of meaning develop* a means for developing and refining ideas.
- Learners are encouraged to have *voice and ownership in the learning process*.
- Learners experience the *knowledge construction* process.
- Learners *reflect on their own thinking and decision-making process*.
- *Multiple perspectives* are available.
- *Multiple modalities* are available (Knuth & Cunningham 1993).

The intellectual health of any field of study depends on persistent and penetrating critique. Therefore, the ability of a field such as learning disabilities to shield itself from criticism in the short term may seal its fate in the long term (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). In the area of learning disabilities, Reid and Valle (2004) further challenged conventional and naturalized ways of thinking about difference” by which they “seek to bring greater balance to the intellectual grounding for understanding school failure.

Counter Story Telling

Documenting data from student experience as well as assessment outcomes can effectively impact efforts for restructuring reform implementation. Student level research reveals the inaccuracy of current assessment data. Freire (2001) framed a story of pedagogy that the learner educational narrative situated reform in concern for the Other, specifically articulated as Student Voice. The implications of CSRD funding’s lack of impact on student outcomes revealed

by *student level research* provides the opportunity to examine the effects of CSR awards across students of different types (Gross et al., 2009). The constructivist epistemology presented in designing constructivist learning by Knuth and Cunningham (1993) presented a *counter story* to generic reform designs. The understanding attained by critical reading of a text implies perceiving the relationship between text and context (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Flett and Wallace (2005) reported the pressures of accountability requirements mandated by government created scenarios of predictable failure. This dissertation's in-depth exploration of the transformative experience of students on the Autism Spectrum illustrates the power of counter storytelling as means to elucidate these students' pathways within the context relevant educational setting.

Learning Disabled vs. Marginal Learner

This section considers the impact of the marginalized population on developed ethical practices within society if: 1) Society evolves through ethics; 2) Laws protecting the marginalized communities benefit society; 3) An ethical society is a just society; 4) A just society is able to be productive and evolve. Okihiro (1994) pointed out that people and groups in the margins have been the conscience of the United States throughout its history. They have kept the United States committed to its democratic ideals as stated in its founding documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. He argued that the margins have been the main sites for keeping democracy and freedom alive in the United States. It was the groups in the margins that reminded and forced America to live up to its democratic ideals when they were most severely tested. Examples include: (a) slavery and the Middle Passage; (b) Indian removal in the 1830s; (c) the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and (d) segregation and apartheid in the South that crumbled during the 1960s and 1970s in response to the African American led civil rights movement (Banks 2001). Foner (1998) made an

argument similar to Okihiro's: The authors of the notion of freedom as a universal birthright, a truly human ideal, were not so much the founding fathers who created a nation dedicated to liberty but resting in large measure on slavery, but abolitionists . . . and women (p. xx).

From the perspective of the special educator, the idea that marginalized groups remind and compel America to live up to its democratic ideals can be measureable as the growing number of students on the autism spectrum increase national awareness for the need to begin researching new techniques for teaching and analyzing the cause and effect of new pedagogy and prompt focus on how children are educated. Historically, the epidemic diagnoses may resemble the academic issues of the international Rubella epidemic in 1964-1965 causing advocate parents and community members concern for the increasing number of sick children hospitalized without adequate education. This widespread advocacy yielded the mandated implementation of innovation legislation as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10). The movement required nationwide legislation to ensure the continuum of reform specialized education practices and laws to respond to inadequately prepared students (Malloy, 2004). This exemplifies democratic human rights ideals for marginalized children. The increase in autism within the American public school system may idealistically be an opportunity for democratic ideals to demonstrate how marginalized groups have been the conscience of the United States throughout its history as mandated judicial legislative initiatives that represent American ideals.

Marginal to Multicultural

This section considers a paradigm shift in how a society gaining understanding of the marginalized experiences impacts the development of equitable outcomes that benefit all community members through varied perspectives and strengths. Equity in education mandates

inclusion, as special education practices research and laws demonstrate. Multiculturalism research focus is in response to the lack of preserving the founding fathers' visionary focus during this time of multi-abled, multi-cultural, multilingual, socio-economic variance and instead preserving power for the class and race that originally obtained it (Asante, 1991). Ravitch (1990) is recognized by Asante as highly quoted and an influential professor of Columbia University's Teacher College. Asante cautions that Ravitch's limited Afrocentric, Asian, and Latino historic education was grounds for ignorance of substantial and substantive infusible material into current Eurocentric curriculum. Asante (1991) asserted that multiculturalist pluralism created a society in which the best of all inputs continued to integrate and improve baseline values, and the injustices of policy were explained by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). However, Asante (1991) asserted that the sophistication of an ever-evolving socio-democratic community of diversity was advancing education institutional structure with innovative perspective and technological advantage taking a different look at systems.

Constructive Critique

A major criticism to varied academic cognitive based practices is a concern that "truth" will become subjective. This section considers the theory that argues constructivist learning lacks critical foundation and structure as a universal premise for teaching and understanding the world around us. The concern is that there must be one universal truth and that all others are opinions and perspectives; otherwise, the intellectual community will be reduced to rubble and not continue to advance forward as it has. Constructivist learning explained earlier as the phenomena that the individual learner constructs knowledge of the world by interacting with it (Knuth & Cunningham, 1993) asserts the significance of considering the students' perspective, including the marginalized as the multicultural mentioned above. This assertion considers the cognizing of

knowledge from student experiential variables and calls into question the creation of knowledge, as a cognitive experiential process. In his article “Seven Posers in the Constructivist Classroom,” constructivist critic Ben Kotzee (2010) created seven fictitious classroom scenarios concerned with constructivism as a theory of knowledge for learning and teaching. There was an underlying skepticism about the rationality of the methods of science and even of the very possibility that people may come to know much about the world that we inhabit at all. Poser 1: Mixed messages about truth. Poser 2: Mixed messages about cultural relativity. Poser 3: Opinions drown out opinions. Poser 4: Who decides what counts as evidence? Poser 5: You say you ‘facilitate’ you don’t ‘teach’. What’s the difference? Poser 6: Assessment, assessment, assessment. Poser 7: How does epistemological constructivism fit pedagogical constructivism (Kotzee 2010)?

Kotzee (2010) continued that radical constructivism was an attempt to develop a theory of knowing that was not made illusory from the outset by the traditional assumption that the cognizing activity should lead to a ‘true’ representation of a world that existed in itself and by itself, independent of the cognizing agent (von Glasersfeld, 1996). Constructivism constitutes a break with the foundations of empiric-realism, which claims to encode reality in terms of substances and phenomena that are independent of the observers involved. It challenges age-old beliefs, which maintain that facts speak for themselves, that knowledge is the reflection of ontological reality and that language refers objectively to this reality (Laroche & Bednarz, 1998). Put into simple terms, constructivism can be described as essentially a theory about the limits of human knowledge, a belief that all knowledge is necessarily a product of our own cognitive acts (Confrey, 1990).

Reasonable Response

In response to constructivist critics, the Constructivist Learning Environment Survey (CLES) was able to create an experiential model of teaching. The experiment was designed to demonstrate that logic is not destroyed through the constructivists teaching practices. The experiment was maintained in a mathematical curriculum. In the majority of experiences experiment revealed the theory that inquisitiveness drives learning. Cognition researchers determine interrelated evidence from brain science, biological science, archaeology, and anthropology. Taylor, Fraser and White (1991) designed the Constructivist Learning Environment Survey (CLES) to enable teacher-researchers to monitor their development of constructivist approaches to teaching. The goal in designing the original CLES was to provide teachers with an efficient means of learning more about their students' perceptions of the extent to which the classroom learning environment enabled them to reflect on their prior knowledge, develop as autonomous learners, and negotiate their understandings with other students. Although the original CLES was found to be psychometrically sound with a sample of over 500 high school students in science and mathematics classes, and was found to be very useful in a number of studies (Roth & Bowen, in press; Roth & Roychoudury, 1993, 1994; Watters & Ginns, 1994), its theoretical framework supported only a weak program of constructivist reform. Ongoing research program revealed major socio-cultural constraints to the development of constructivist teaching approaches (Taylor, 1992, 1993, 1994; Taylor & Williams, 1993). However the revised CLES (Taylor & Williams, 1994) enables teachers to address these restraints. Subsequently, the revised CLES incorporated a critical theory perspective on the socio-cultural framework of the classroom learning environment (Grundy, 1987; Habermas, 1972, 1984), and developed a critical constructivist theoretical framework. Hosin Shirvani

(2004) examined whether the instruction of an elementary mathematics education methodology course corresponded to constructivist learning.

The investigator of this research used the CLES to examine whether or not the instructor maintained a classroom that promoted a constructivist learning environment. The researcher administered the CLES at the beginning and at the end of the treatment. The participants were pre-service teachers in their senior year at a college in the southern part of the U.S. There were 49 students (3 men, 46 women) enrolled in three sections of a teacher certification course, one in the K-4 program and two in the K-8 program. During the first half of the semester, the instructor taught all students via direct instruction and during the second half by using a strategy involving hands-on activities, group work, and empowerment of students. Results showed that the classroom learning reflected a constructivist environment in four of six sections of the survey, indicating a moderately favorable outcome for constructivists learning, considering complexity of the CLES (Taylor & Williams, 1994).

Relevant resources used to organize and support this research include theoretical exploration of the functions of cerebral experience relative to child development. Empirical research justifies the benefit and importance for teaching practices to structurally focus upon cognition as well as content of material when developing curricular reform. Abbott and Ryan (2003) confirmed that constructivist learning collided with institutional arrangements for learning. Inquisitiveness drives learning; cognition researchers determine interrelated evidence from brain science, biological science, archaeology and anthropology. Constructivist learning is a dynamic process and structure that each person constantly and actively modifies in light of new experiences. Learning is best explained by neuroscientists Chang and Greenough (1978) that two sets of neurons enabled us to learn; one set captured general information from the immediate

environment, while the other constantly searched through the individual's earlier experiences for meaning; they were inseparable. Regarding school reforms and constructivist learning, the 19th century industrial basic skills productivity and the short term accountability of 19th and 20th century behaviorists dominating education routine rewarded tasks, created a school environment where the world was unintelligible and disconnected to the learning process (Abbott & Ryan, 2003).

Public School Culture

National data states public K-12 schools graduate large numbers of students not adequately prepared for university. They lack career technical training and are not capable of participating in democratic citizenry (i.e. knowledge of local and federal government structure or process). These educational outcomes significantly articulate justification for researching new techniques for teaching, determining cause and effect of new pedagogy, conducting assessments and developing staff personnel and administrator vision to create legislation specifically acting upon changes in how children are educated.

Gross, Booker, and Goldhaber (2009) reported more than 1.6 billion federal dollars distributed through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR) project and its successor the CSR, to address the low performance of students who have traditionally struggled in American public schools, historically low income and minority students. This school site study considers how the school's culture has a direct impact on student performance concerning socio-constructed disabled learning environment. Banks (Date) identified and described five types of knowledge: (a) personal/cultural knowledge; (b) popular knowledge; (c) mainstream academic knowledge; (d) transformative academic knowledge; and (e) school knowledge. A divisive national debate is taking place about what knowledge related to ethnic and cultural diversity

should be taught in the school and university curriculum (Asante, 1991a; Asante & Ravitch, 1991; D'Souza, 1991; Glazer, 1991; Schlesinger, 1991; Woodward, 1991). Although the school should recognize, validate, and make effective use of student's personal and cultural knowledge in instruction, an important goal of education is to free students from their cultural and ethnic boundaries and enable them to cross cultural borders freely (Banks, 1988, 1991, 1992). This dissertation references these principles as theories also applicable to diverse learners as a cultural population within the school community, specifically students with on the Autism Spectrum diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, High Functioning Autism and related social cognition atypical development.

Summation

The dissertation brings together the theoretical and empirical practices of traditional educational theory of informative learning, sustainable education reform, and radical transformative learning theory, as ethnography of transitioning students on the Autism Spectrum. An analysis of the contexts for constructivist learning and learning disability in education is used to elucidate the socio-complexity of historically constrained educational structures. This dissertation is the beginning of a larger future study of exploration for ways to coordinate alternative education to function as transformative learning in radical school reform. Through the ontological lens of participating students in Ethos, inclusive of the high school Asperger Full Inclusion transition program, this dissertation aims to articulate the in-depth transformative process in the context of academic and personal development.

American schools as structured and administered today are fundamentally incapable of reforming themselves to ensure equitable student outcomes. A special educator can offer as an example the current concern regarding services for the increasing number of students with

Autism related spectrum challenges. The chapter intended to explore opportunity within education research and legislation to support the inclusion of individual constructivist experiences and learning in curriculum development and implementation. The dissertation supports community based organization collaboration to reflect student body and implement cultural relevance for academic success and democratic citizenry. Typically children with special education designations especially students on the spectrum are not sufficiently challenged and/or their learning styles are not understood or accessed and these are social justice concerns.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study employs a multiple case-study research design using qualitative methods grounded in the ethnographic tradition of anthropology (Patton, 2002). Consistent with the research characteristics described in Table 1, the design and methods were selected as appropriate for exploring questions pertaining to the people and phenomena situated within the AsIP/ Ethos program.

Table 1

Qualitative Research: Some Simple Characteristics

-
1. Often begins with a simple case chosen because of its convenience or interest
 2. Often studies phenomena in the context in which they arise through observation and/or recording or the analysis of printed and internet material
 3. Hypothesis are often generated from the analysis rather than stated at onset
 4. There is no one agreed way to analyze your data. Multiple research models exist (e.g. grounded theory, constructionism, discourse analysis) and sometimes conflict with each other
 5. Where numbers are used, this is usually in the form of simple tabulations designed to identify deviant cases and do not lead to statistical correlations or tests
-

David Silverman (2011)

Participants

The participants include 10 students with a mild form of ASD who have been enrolled in the Ethos program as a part of the Asperger Inclusion Program (AsIP) in a public high school in the East Bay region of San Francisco, California. The participants were intentionally selected from current students and recent graduates of the program who are transitioning or have made the transition from high school to higher education.

The students invited to participate in the study include: 8 male students -- 2 African American, 1 Asian, 1 Asian/Caucasian mixed race, 1 Caucasian, 2 Mexican, 1 Mexican/Caucasian mixed race; within the age range of 18-22 years and 2 female African American students within the age range of 19-21 years old. Consistent with the former *DSM-IV* diagnostic criteria (American Psychological Association, 2000) all of the participants have been diagnosed with a mild form of ASD corresponding to either HFA or AS to qualify for participation in AsIP. Each student demonstrates individualized manifestation of the impact of categorical characteristics and academic ability while all students maintain grade level academic coursework consistent with general education peers' typically developing range of academic strengths and challenges. Diagnostic eligibility confirmed that all participants presented varying degrees of difficulty establishing social relations with peers and accessing academic curriculum due to core challenges in social communication and flexible behavior associated with ASD. While inhibiting productivity in conventional classroom environments, all participants presented varying degrees of social and academic growth during the time they participated in the Ethos program. Table 2 presents demographic information for each of the study participants.

Table 2

Participant Demographic

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education Status	Impact of ASD Observable Behaviors Determined by School Psych and AsIP Coordinator
1. Kyle	Male	22	Caucasian	Junior year at California State University	Notable social and academic impact of HFA
2. Naomi	Female	21	Eritrean	Sophomore at California State University	Impacted by high levels of stress and low self-esteem

3.	Aaron	Male	21	Half Chinese half Laotian	Junior at local junior college in Multi-Media Arts	Socially impacted
4.	Roland	Male	19	Mexican American	Freshman at private Jesuit University	Mildly impacted socially and academically
5.	Jasper	Male	19	African American	Freshman at California State University	Mildly impacted socially and academically
6.	Alley	Male	19	Half Mexican American/ half Caucasian	Freshman at California State University	Notable social and academic impact
7.	Jules	Male	20	Half Chinese / half Caucasian	Freshman at local junior college in Multi-Media Arts	Mildly impacted socially and academically.
8.	Dante	Male	18	African American	Senior in AsIP transferring to California State University	Mildly social and academic impact
9.	Val	Male	21	Mexican American	Training for martial arts sensei, intends to return to junior college	Mild social and academic impact
10.	Taylor	Female	22	African American	Senior at local junior college	Mild social and academic impact

Procedures

All data were collected by the researcher in the context of Ethos and AsIP as (1) Interviews with participants. Interviews were conducted on the urban public school campus or the Ethos program location considering travel convenience for students. Since all of the participants excluding one are graduates of the AsIP, scheduling and travel were considered and determined would take place at either location.

Data Collection

The interviews were approximately 30 minutes long (see attached protocol in Appendix 1), and participants agreed to be available at a later time for possible future interviews for continued data collection. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. (2) Participant observations in Ethos program that includes field notes and reflection logs with teacher comments and parent perspectives. One hour observations were conducted for each of the participants within the Ethos program. All observations were transcribed as field notes. The field notes are written as reflective journals by the researcher concerning issues that arise in the AsIP for program development and design (See example of field notes reflection log in Appendix 2). (3) Artifacts collected from participants in the AsIP include student records, academic work, and artwork. Artifacts were collected from participants by the researcher and were logged for purposes of analysis.

Data Analysis

An inductive analytic approach was used to examine the accumulated qualitative data (transcribed interviews, field note observations, artifacts and related documents) gathered in the field. The data were examined for meaningful and symbolic content through an inquiry driven and exploratory process using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparison method involves an iterative process of reviewing, sorting, assembling and coding multiple sources of data to generate detailed narratives, emergent themes, hypotheses and theory “grounded” in the data.

The process of data analysis for the current study corresponded to Figure 2 and Figure 3. Following data collection, the researcher transcribed 10 thirty-minute interviews and 10 hours of field notes based on naturalistic observations for each participant in preparation for analysis.

Transcriptions required writing detailed descriptions of the student affect and individual behaviors and overall attitude/demeanor during the interview and observations, including the transactions between researcher and student. The researcher next read through the data to gain a general sense of the material. The next phase involved coding and compiling the data for each of the 10 participants to construct *staff and student narratives* (see Chapter 4). The final phase of analysis involved coding the data within- and across-cases to identify *emergent themes* (see Chapter 5). For this final phase, the researcher utilized visual displays (Miles & Huberman, 1992) and the Hyper Researcher Program (Copyright © 1997-2013 ResearchWare, Inc.) as tools to support the coding process. Ultimately, the goal was to assemble a coherent understanding of the data by building a logical chain of evidence to support this study's findings.

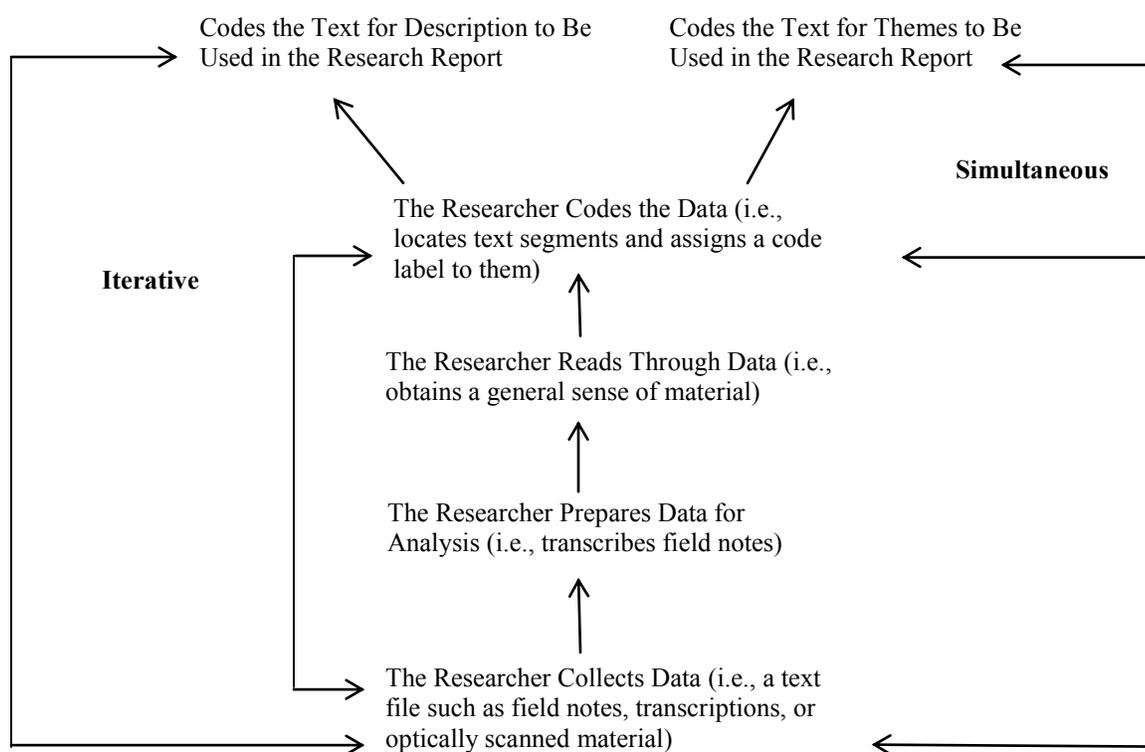


Figure 2. A visual model of the quantitative process of data analysis from Arriaza and Creswells's

EDLD California State University, East Bay (2011).

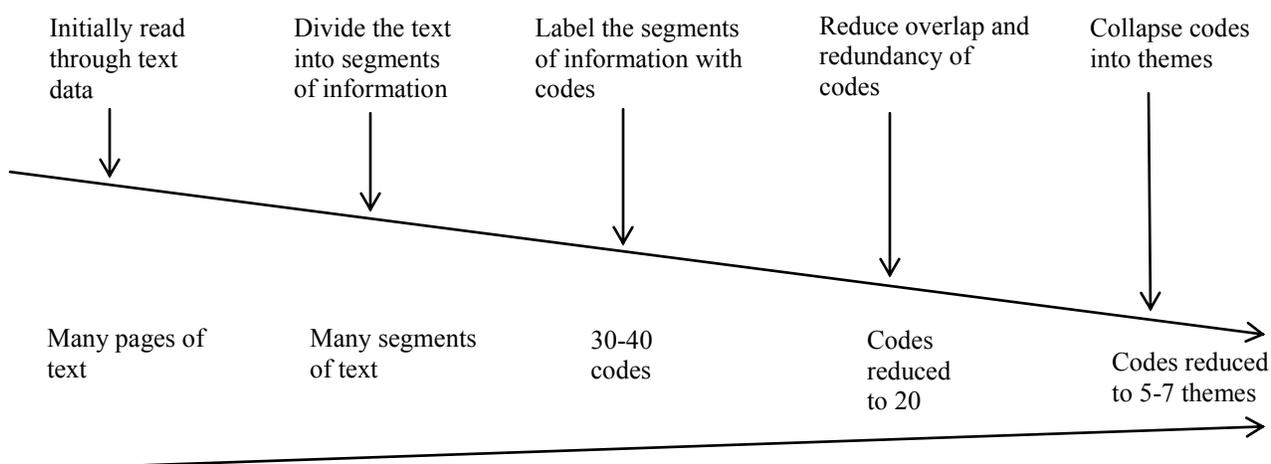


Figure 3. A visual model of the coding process in qualitative research from Arriaza and Creswells's EDLD California State University, East Bay (2011).

Verification

Sophisticated rigor was applied using detailed description and triangulation of data sources, participants, methodologies and theoretical perspectives for quality assurance in the verification and application of methods (Denzin, 1978). For this study, a major source of triangulation consisted of corroborating evidence with a team of 4 independent reviewers using educators with either either an MA in Educational Psychology or Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. This involved successive stages for identifying common themes based on a systematic review of student interview data and instructional assistant interview data, respectively.

Initially, two independent reviewers were asked to read interview data without knowledge of one another's findings. Specific and intentional measures were taken to prevent cross contamination of research findings by electronically sending each independent reviewer a personal table consisting of only student questions and one column to record key themes. Next,

the first two reviewers were shown the findings of the second two reviewers and were asked to identify common themes. The second two reviewers were then asked to confirm the common themes that were identified by the first two reviewers. At the conclusion of each successive stage, the researcher constructed a matrix as a visual display showing evidence for the occurrence of common themes by the researcher and each respective reviewer (see Appendix Tables C-H).

Narrative

The findings are presented in the form of detailed descriptions of staff and students (see Chapter 4) and emergent themes (see Chapter 5) supported by evidence drawn from the accumulated data. Research is defined as a systemic method of knowledge construction; evaluation is defined as a systemic method of determining the merit, worth or value of a program, policy, activity, technology or similar entity, to inform decision making about such entities (Mertens 2009). Trochim (2006) claimed that program evaluation was one form of social research from the organizational and political context from which it was conducted, thus requiring management, group and political skills not always needed in generic research. Trochim's claim in context to this study considered the researcher was also program coordinator. Since evaluation as a discipline has emphasized the importance of critically examining and *valuing* as a component of systemic inquiry, the development of methodological approaches that *prioritize stakeholder involvement*, and use of criteria to *judge quality* include utility, feasibility and propriety (Mertens, 2009); to eliminate bias the researcher methodological collaboration included four colleagues three with an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership to triangulate the data. This ensured that the study would be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals or process. In this way it encourages the researcher to develop a

report that is both accurate and credible (Arriaza & Crewsell, 2011). Student experiences narrated through emergent themes generate essential information to understand their transformative process while participating in the program. Emergent themes are also effectively used as program analysis and evaluation discussed in conclusion integrating guiding research questions.

Researcher Role and Experience

Consistent with ethnography research was that of participant-observer and key instrument for collecting, interpreting, and assembling a coherent understanding of the data gathered from multiple sources in the field. The following personal narrative is a key to exposing potential biases that are intimately tied to the analytic process.

While carrying out this study, the researcher has been working with participants as coordinator of AsIP and founder of Ethos, an extended program of community support for participants and graduates of the AsIP including various community members who are on the autism spectrum. As coordinator, the researcher supervised a team of five intervention specialists who supported students in general education classrooms by modeling appropriate behavior, fostering self-advocacy and implementing accommodations and/or modifications if needed to course curriculum. The story of how the researcher came to be coordinator follows.

Eight years ago the researcher was in the final stages of completing coursework for a Master of Arts in Cultural Anthropology. A professor explained how to focus thesis research on a population of particular interest otherwise the process could be “torture.” The researcher recalled a book called *Radiant Child* by Thomas Armstrong that my father gave to my older sister when she was considering becoming a child psychologist, which she then gave to me when I had my first of three sons. In *Radiant Child* (1985) Armstrong explored the relationship

between the transpersonal nature of childhood consciousness and socio-psychological constructs. Carl Jung was the first scientist to use the term *transpersonal* to refer to unconscious contents and process beyond the ego or conscious personality. Consistent with Jungian analytical psychology, Armstrong considered this context as it applied to the concept of self. This inspired research of young people with social cognitive differences to explore where they perceived themselves in the world and where society places them in the collective whole for MA in Cultural Anthropology. As one of the students in this study profoundly stated, “To understand something is to be at home in your own mind.” The researcher contacted the local school district requesting the opportunity to conduct observational research of students identified with challenges in social cognition. A part-time position as a Special Education substitute teacher was offered. Within months a position opened as an elementary classroom teacher for the Autism Program. The assignment and begin the observational research and special education teaching credential program in Moderate to Severe, although the district closed that classroom at the end of the school term. The following fall the Asperger Inclusion Program would need a teacher with a Moderate to Severe Credential for the second year of the program on the high school level.

For the past seven years this researcher has coordinated the AsIP program, and reciprocally learned from students. The researcher immediately connected with the community, as one student stated regarding the connection to the researcher/coordinator, “You’re just like us except you can fake it.” To which the reply was, “Exactly, and it is the intention as teacher to show you how to do that.” Ironically, as the researcher scrambled for the first several years to find and implement materials for social skills support that explicitly instruct expected and appropriate behaviors, what began to emerge was the connectedness with and between students, reliably each year that constructed community and an informal curriculum. Transition to

college/university is an essential tenant in the AsIP because having purpose and direction maintains fulfillment for students' life-long learning. This served as the inspiration to launch Ethos.

By 2005 the first cohort of five students that began the Asperger Inclusion Program at the elementary school level in 1999 reached high school. Freshman year 2004 for the students in the AsIP was coordinated by a teacher who early in the school term was determined by the district not to be fully qualified since she did not possess the state required special education credential to teach students with Autism then categorized as a Moderate to Severe Disability. This researcher replaced the originating teacher (sophomore year for originating class) as a second year intern while pursuing a credential and Master's degree in Special Education at San Francisco State University. Public schools, including our district, employ credential interns in fulltime teaching assignments. Theoretical discussions abound among academics and teacher interns that consider the impact of districts placing interns in full teaching assignments. Debate considers if fully trained teachers who completed a credentialing program prior to placement in assignments have a greater impact on teacher performance or if placing teachers concurrently in full-time assignments as interns while they are concurrently doing certification allows for immediate practical application of teacher training theory with a greater impact on teaching effectiveness. This is a relevant discussion concerning this study for data analysis. It is the researcher's contention that the significant growth of the program correlated concurrently to the opportunity to implement best practices from knowledge and skill-based theory gained during extensive professional development.

Because AsIP was the first of its kind in the district, with no comparable program in neighboring districts, and for 5 years the only high school with this program in the district (2

additional high schools added programs in 2010), the need to begin researching new techniques for teaching and analyzing the cause and effect of new pedagogy was viewed of prime importance. This prompted the coordinator to focus on developing supports for ASD high school transitioning students to college/university, career technology and life-long learning. The benefit of continuous professional development and training during the development of specific supports for students on the high school campus was being able to communicate and collaborate with local college and university campuses and the broader learning community that support this population.

As related to the experiences of the participants in AsIP, the professional training and development that was supported in designing the program is relevant to the study. The official special education credentialing requirement (i.e., Moderate to Severe) and the additional professional development (i.e., Autism Spectrum Graduate Certificate (a.k.a. Project Mosaic) was at the discretion of the AsIP Coordinator. Descriptions of the training and development in these programs are presented in Appendix 3. How professional training and development interface with legislative and academic foundation of qualified teacher training as mandated for Highly Qualified Teachers is also of relevance to investigating potential influences on student outcome and the transformative experience of students participating in the study. As stated earlier in chapter two, criticism of constructivist learning and other progressive pedagogy is necessary for responsible peer review and because the intellectual health of any field of study depends on persistent and penetrating critique. Therefore the ability of a field such as learning disabilities to shield itself from criticism in the short term may seal its fate in the long term (Dudley-Marling & Dipbo, 1995).

Community Contexts

Consistent with ethnographic methods, the setting contexts within which study participants are situated were pivotal to the analytic process. The following offers an in-depth description of the community, school, and program contexts. This study was conducted in an East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area in Northern California. This historically underrepresented community of disenfranchised populations' parallel advocacy for marginalized students with atypical social-cognitive development within public education. Industrialization and World War II brought massive recognition to the Bay Area in 1938 under the Roosevelt Administrative Programs. The Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge were built, which connected vastly different communities while offering commuting ability. Aerospace, electronics, petrochemicals, nuclear power, and automobiles propelled the San Francisco population into the outer bay. These reliable transportation innovations moved the industries into regions that were once not accessible to workers, especially those that were lower skilled and earned lower wages. The war demands included the construction of expansive military bases and enormous ship building sites. Galvanized workers nationwide began to migrate to the Bay Area for employment, changing the face of the community.

With this change arose an enclave of socio-economic disparity. The population mainly consisted of African American and women relocating. This introduced the Bay Area, particularly parts of the East Bay to the concentrated ethnic majority that still exists today. The Chinese community flourished as Chinese workers migrated for the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. The Bay Area continues to be the Mecca for future industrial urban trends, such as Silicon Valley; however, the lower economic community has lived in the shadow of this

development as residents remain under educated and under skilled in contemporary career technologies in comparison to the affluent prosperous neighboring communities.

School District Context

The school district where this study was conducted is an organization within a dense and diverse community defined by a complex socio-political saga. The district's economic conditions impact reform, policy and design. The district's plan has been rigorous improvement of the Student Achievement Gap while reaching and sustaining fiscal solvency. The conditions leading to financial insolvency existed for many years with the majority of its fiscal crisis experienced during 2001-2002. Stabilizing the district began in 2002-2003 with drastic cuts in expenditures and borrowing from the State's line of credit. Figure 4 below shows how the district is funded.

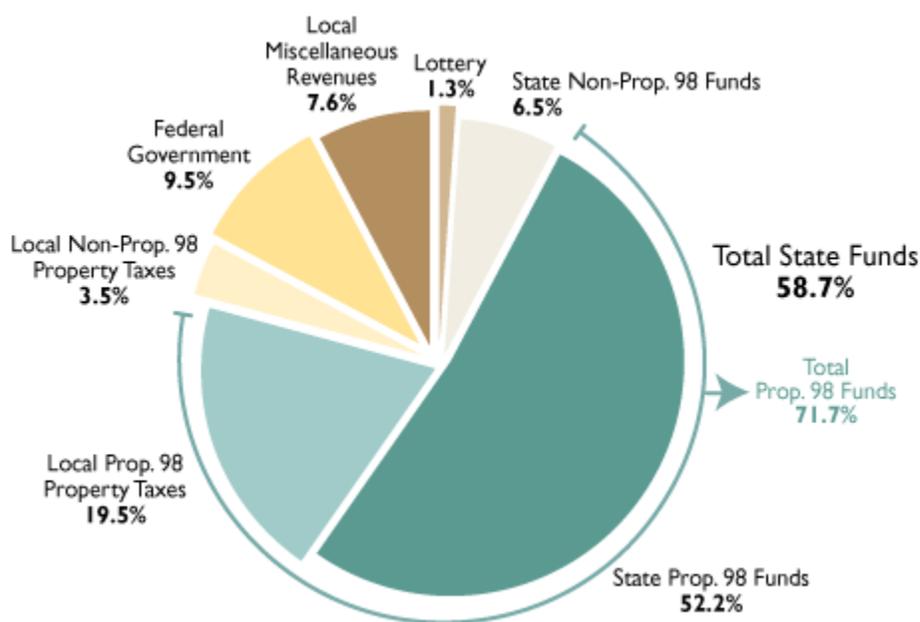


Figure 4. The figure shows the 2008-09 revenues for K-12 education.

“EdSource/ Revenues for K-12 education come from multiple sources.”

California districts receive the majority of their funding through a formula known as revenue limits, funded by local property taxes and state aid. Revenue limit funds can be used by school districts for general purposes, unlike funds received through categorical programs, which include restrictions on their use. Revenue limit funding is based on a complex series of formulas reflecting a long and complex history in response to a lawsuit over inequities in funding per pupil based on the relative wealth of each school district (“The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation”). Each district has a Base Revenue Limit (BRL) dollar amount per pupil shown below in Figure 5. In most years, the State tries to provide a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for school districts. This COLA is meant to help cover increasing operational costs. Unfortunately, in many years, the State has insufficient funds to provide all the school districts with the full amount of the COLA to increase each district’s revenue limit. When this occurs, the State applies a deficit factor. This deficit factor is a deduction from the funding owed to the school districts. When multiplied by millions of dollars, this becomes a considerable amount of money that is promised, but not provided, to school districts.

Tax revenue flows to California’s nearly 1,000 school districts through many different channels. According to the Governor’s Committee on Education Excellence (2007), this system was so complex that the state could not determine how revenues were distributed among school districts, and after reviewing a large number of academic studies in the Getting Down to Facts project, Loeb, Bryk, and Hanushek (2007) concluded that California’s school finance system was irrational, inequitable, inefficient, and inadequate. The consensus in both the policy and research communities is that California’s system is in dire need of reform (The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation) as the figure below shows the relationship between BRL and COLA.

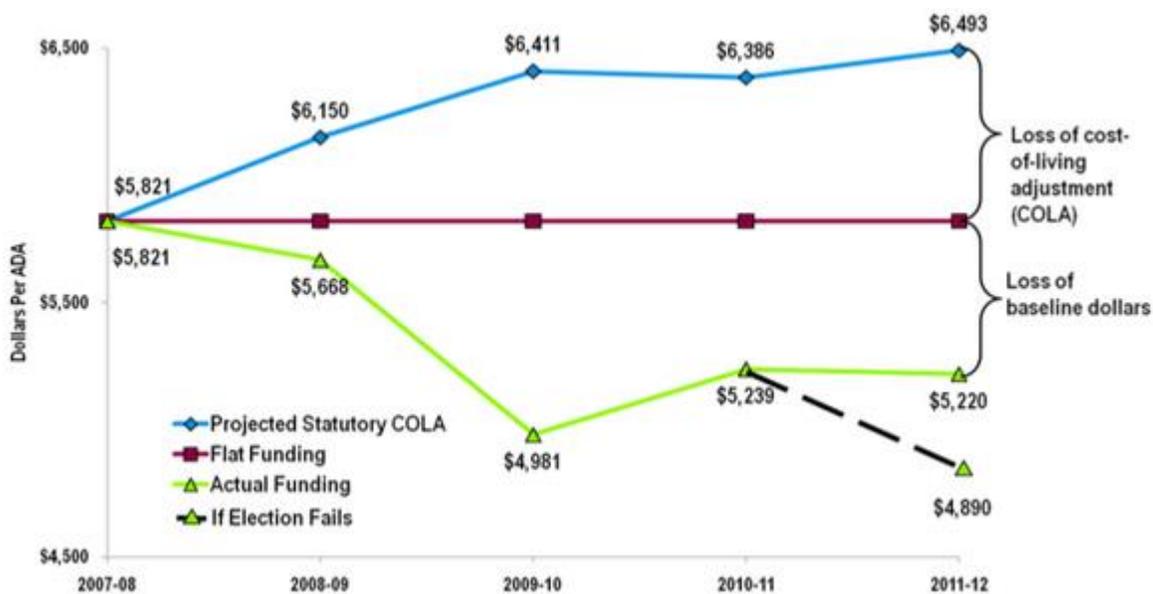


Figure 5. The figure shows the average district relationship with BRL and COLA.

From “Budget Crisis Information/ California Education Funding Facts.”

For the past five years, the district has been named the most improved urban school district in the state of California with an overall Academic Performance Index (API) growth from 568 to 719 (“teachforamerica.org,” 2012). However, statistics show a vast difference between student performances in the affluent hills versus students in the low- income flatlands. Understanding the impact of these socio-economic/political disparities is essential to investigating effective educational reform for the district. Either despite these conditions or due to these conditions, the seeds of radical educational reform and practice are planted in the community. As one example, the researcher offers the Asperger Inclusion Program: small in size yet potentially significant in implication since it is unique to the district compared to its affluent neighboring districts.

High School Context

In 1971 the Supreme Court, in *Swann vs Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, upheld busing as a legitimate means for achieving integration of public schools. As the demographics of the high school changed from an affluent neighborhood school to a bussed school, a decline in student performance became of concern. Arguably this may have been a result of “white flight” as local students living in the neighborhood changed schools when students of color began to be bussed onto the high school campus (see Appendix 3 for demographic information). This is contrary to the view that multicultural education is an education for functioning effectively in a pluralistic democratic society. Helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to participate in reflective civic action is one of its major goals (Banks, 1991). The original model of the high school structure reflected a judicial academic culture representing a community of unity capable of trust and accountability, provided that community was exclusive and homogenous.

This high school currently struggles to restore a level of academic and community excellence with a dramatically diverse socio-cultural and socio-economic student population. Relevant to this investigation, questions regarding the social and cultural demographic shifts in the high school student population are being considered as site reform designs are implemented. Fordham and Ogbu (2003) stated that the culture of many low- income African American students was oppositional to school culture. Although the school should recognize, validate, and make effective use of students’ personal and cultural knowledge in instruction (Banks, 1988, 1991/1992). These difficult issues have not been managed at this high school and these courageous conversations are just beginning to emerge.

Currently, teachers are held accountable for low test scores, creating a climate of pressure observably expressed by teacher attitudes toward administration and students. Due to time restraints and high test score expectations, teachers restrict this aspect of knowledge construction in curricular lesson plans. To address these concerns, smaller meetings with each department are considered most effective; however, requests to open leadership meetings to the whole school have been suggested by a few teachers to create a community forum of addressing whole campus culture.

A divisive national debate about what knowledge related to ethnic and cultural diversity should be taught in school and university curriculum (Asante, 1991; Asante & Ravitch, 1991; D'Souza, 1991; Glazer, 1991; Schlesinger, 1991; Woodward, 1991) has had a significant impact on the high school for this study. Banks (2009) identified and described five types of knowledge (a) personal/cultural knowledge; (b) popular knowledge; (c) mainstream academic knowledge; (d) transformative academic knowledge; and (e) school knowledge. Table 3 provides definitions and examples of Bank's Knowledge Construction Context reflected in the High School where this study is being conducted.

Table 3

Banks Knowledge Construction

Type of Knowledge	Definitions	Banks' Examples	High School in Study Examples
Personal/Cultural	The concepts, explanations, and interpretations that students derive from personal experiences in their homes, families, and community cultures.	Understandings by many African Americans and Hispanic students that highly individualistic behavior will be negatively sanctioned by many adults and peers in their cultural communities	Black, Hispanic, lower socio-economic and students that receive special education services are not expected to achieve success in many classrooms.

Popular	The facts, concepts, explanations, interpretations that are institutionalized within the mass media and other institutions that are part of the popular culture.	Movies such as <i>Birth of a Nation</i> , <i>How the West Was Won</i> , and <i>Dances With Wolves</i>	Inconsistencies in administration and staff decisions.
Mainstream Academic	The concepts, paradigms, theories that constitute traditional Western- knowledge in history and the behavioral and social sciences.	Ulrich B. Phillips, <i>American Negro Slavery</i> ; Frederick Jackson Turner's <i>Frontier Theory</i> ; Arthur R. Jensen's <i>Theory About Black and White Intelligence</i> .	Mainstream academic textbooks prescribed to state-wide assessments limited literature/text reflective of nonmainstream perspectives.
Transformative Academic	The facts, concepts, paradigms, themes, and explanations that challenge mainstream academic knowledge and expand and substantially revise established canons, paradigms, theories, explanations, and research methods. When transformative academic paradigms replace mainstream ones, a scientific revolution has occurred. What is more normal that transformative academic paradigms coexist with established ones?	George Washington Williams, <i>History of the Negro Race in America</i> ; W. E. B. DuBois, <i>Black Reconstruction</i> ; Carter G. Woodson, <i>The Mis-education of the Negro</i> ; Gerda Lerner, <i>The Majority Finds Its Past</i> ; Rodolfo Acufia, <i>Occupied America: A History of Chicanos</i> ; Herbert Gutman, <i>The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925</i> .	Largest special education department / staff innovative new teacher perspective and flexible veteran teacher collaboration. Asperger Inclusion Program specifically focuses on transformative learning for students and their responsibility to the Summit and academic community at large to contribute their process for transforming inclusion awareness.
School	The facts, concepts, generalizations, and interpretations that are presented in textbooks, teacher's guides, other media forms, and lectures by teachers.	Lewis Paul Todd and Merle Curti, <i>Rise of the American Nation</i> ; Richard C. Brown, Wilhemena S. Robinson, & John Cunningham, <i>Let Freedom Ring: A United States History</i> .	State standard level guidelines with little room for innovative teaching practices to address diverse student population.

The high school currently has one of the largest and most diverse Special Education Departments in the district, including a Resource Program, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program, Visually Impaired Program, Full Inclusion Program for students with Multiple Disabilities, Autism Special Day Class Program, and the Asperger Full Inclusion Program, though still incomplete without a Gifted and Talented Education Program. The Special Education department functions only as a full-inclusion model with no Special Day Program, providing supports for all

students receiving services in general education classes. The consistent unifying theme for students within the Special Education Department is each participating student has been tested and determined to be eligible for services, with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). However, students identified as Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), also eligible for legislated program regulations, have no formal services, as outlined in Education Code Sections 52200-52212. For the 2012 -2013 school year there were 53 GATE-identified students with GPA at 1.5 and below, and none of these students participate in the AsIP.

All students receiving services are mainstreamed and considered part of the general student body supported by their specific case managers and supporting team. The lack of structured collaboration between the special education (SPED) and general education (Gen Ed) teachers has created structural isolation of the SPED programs in implementing student support strategies. Since there was loss of the traditional guidance counselors due to budget cuts 3 years ago, special education teachers are now responsible for scheduling inclusion students. Special education teachers typically select specific general education teachers with inclusive teaching practices. These teachers are selected because of their effective collaboration to support students receiving services. Problems can quickly arise when teachers support multiple students from different SPED designations creating a significant work and collaboration challenge. This requires separate collaboration to provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for each student's IEP. Collaboration times to inform and/or train teachers in these interventions are inconsistent. Occasionally the supports necessary are non-academic and require behavioral and wellbeing support accommodations described below.

The Coordination of Services Team (COST) now present at the high school utilizes a clinical case manager from the County Health Care Services Agency to coordinate a

comprehensive psycho-socio services for students in need. Services include psychotherapy, wellness education, after school activities, a tutoring program, conflict resolution, parent liaison, and health services. Once per week COST meet and discuss each referral to assign and coordinate a combination of psycho-socio services to each case. Each case is monitored by the team throughout the year for progress. The team also maintains communication with the source of referral.

In past years there have been services on campus that were not coordinated, and as a result, referrals were neglected, and services sometimes overlapped or were insufficient. The purpose of the team is to create a system of coordinated services to students and to improve communication among all providers to increase the efficiency of services. On an average, twenty referrals are received by the team each week and eight to ten referrals are assessed and discussed. The goal for the team is to serve fifteen percent of the school population per year, which amounts to approximately four hundred students per year. The feedback heard from teachers is that cost is effective within their team. However the communication between the teachers and the COST team does not advise on emotional support.

Another issue impacting the high school is the teacher's responsibility for documenting increasing numbers of special education students. In 2005, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, O'Connell reported special education statistics indicated that the number of special education students and the need for special education teachers were increasing (California Department of Education, 2005). In 2009, he stated that in a desire to close the achievement gap and meet federal and state requirements, many districts and schools were implementing the latest research-based practices that ensured students were successful in school. As a means to utilize personnel effectively, some special education teachers are being asked to instruct students with

and without an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If there are changes occurring in the manner of how instructional programs are delivered, including special education services, it is necessary that these practices remain compliant with federal and state laws and regulations.

Clarification about delivering services to students with disabilities and how to implement laws and regulations effectively to meet compliance requirements is a social justice concern.

Asperger Inclusion Program (AsIP) and Ethos Context

The Asperger Inclusion Program (AsIP) was created in 1999 in response to students in attendance in the district diagnosed with ASD from private local psychiatric resources such as Kaiser and Children's Hospital. These students demonstrated specific areas of social cognitive deficit that impacted on their performance within the general education classroom environment. The concerns demonstrated came to the attention of the then acting administrator for Programs for Exceptional Children (PEC) and by teachers and parents advocating for unique supports. At that time, the support specifically available for students capable of accessing curriculum with low performance due to social cognitive challenges did not fit in any of the then categorical special education programs. As stated earlier in the introduction, students diagnosed with Autism were relegated to other disability categories (e.g., Other Health Impaired, Speech and Language Delay, Emotional Behavioral Disorders). As students with specific challenges attributed to autism spectrum diagnoses became more evident in the IEP process, consultants were hired by the district to provide consistent and meaningful support and a safe and supportive inclusive environment for students identified with Asperger Syndrome and related social-cognitive challenges that impact student learning and overall success in the general education classroom environment. The program identified a small number of students and created an IEP team that specifically strove to meet the multifaceted needs initially at elementary, later middle and

eventually high-school level as the first cohort of 5th graders advanced within general education curriculum.

Each school now has a case manager (full inclusion teacher) who facilitates each student's program. Central to each student's individualized program is the *direct teaching and support of social skills* development. This can be a complex and challenging endeavor. Each teacher is highly trained to create and implement these programs. The AsIP on Summit High School campus focuses on the transition program for developing post high school goals. The following is a parent perspective of the program beginning:

Hi Courteny,

We were not involved with the development of the elementary or middle school Asperger programs. Parents Lisa (and the late Jane) were involved at the beginning. We met at the local YMCA program for youth with Asperger Syndrome when Kyle and Carol were 10, and that was how we heard about the new program. Carol transferred from her first middle school to the middle school with an AsIP early in 5th grade.

There really wasn't much of a program for her. An intervention specialist met with the kids once a week for an hour or so. What was transformative for Carol was simply meeting Kyle and other students with Asperger Syndrome. For the first time ever, she had friends, and the teacher and the school administration were so open and helpful that 5th grade was great. The program was fantastic and Carol continued to thrive.

We (the interested parents) were involved in the planning of the high school program. Margret was the point person, working with us. We discussed which high school to request and decided on this High School for a number of reasons. I advocated for it

because of the Performing Arts program (how ironic, right?). Kyle had been in band for years, and his parents were artists, and we all thought it important for the kids to be at a high school where they could pursue artistic endeavors, as well as academics.

There was a teacher all picked out and she helped with the development of the program. Then, she skipped out of the country, leaving us all high and dry. Margret said, "Never again will we develop a program around one person." And then, somehow, somebody found you and the rest is history! Does this help? It's not much. . . .Best of luck in finishing the project!

The following is an overview of the AsIP for elementary, middle and high school:

Purpose

- To address social and communication deficits including: social initiations, reciprocity and terminating interactions, social cognitions, perspective taking and self-awareness, social anxiety and social withdrawal.
- To address executive functioning deficits including: organization, time management, self-monitoring, goal setting and work completion.
- To address academic deficits in areas such as writing skills, comprehension, and higher order thinking

Training and support

Staff is trained and supported throughout the year by Educational and Behavioral Consultants in order to support the social, executive functioning and self-regulation/behavior management skill development with the AsIP students.

Academic support

Students are supported in all areas of their day using techniques such as prompting, scaffolding, and curricular accommodations with the focus on increasing the students' skills to access curriculum and succeed independently.

Staffing

AsIP students are supported with trained staff at a high student to staff ratio to ensure that support is available to each student at those times when the support is needed.

The staff's main roles are to facilitate the students' social interactions with their school community, support students in using systems to improve their executive functioning skills, support the students' access to general education curriculum and implement behavioral programs.

Workshop or Social Skills Groups

Social skills and executive functioning skills are directly taught in a small group setting to ensure that discrete skills are being learned. Once skills are learned in a small group setting, students are supported to practice and generalize those skills with their general education peers, across their school day.

Related Services

Related services such as Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy are incorporated into the program. Direct services are provided to individual students in accordance with their IEP.

Student Profile

Student requires academic accommodations but is performing at or near grade level and student displays social skills and/or executive functioning deficits.

The Summit High School AsIP team consists of the AsIP full inclusion coordinating teacher (on the Summit campus this is also the researcher), and 3 Intervention Specialists. The program strives to meet the multifaceted needs of high-school student advance within the general education curriculum. With the support of Intervention Specialists that shadow the students in the general education classroom environment the Intervention Specialists responsibilities are to:

- Provide and/or coordinate intervention instruction to students in grade level core curriculum;
- Provide small group instruction to addressing academic gaps and skill areas based on diagnostic assessments;
- Support teachers in providing interventions in the classroom;
- Be knowledgeable of scientifically researched diagnostic and performance-based assessments in reading and math;
- Collaborate with teachers in planning instruction to meet the student needs; and
- Attend District Resource Teacher meetings.

The AsIP team also consists of outside agency one-to-one support aides for students identified to benefit from behavioral support specialists. The AsIP student's general education teachers work collaboratively with the AsIP coordinating teacher, team of Intervention Specialists, and if applicable, a behavioral specialist, to support peer level curriculum access in an individualized education plan.

The students participating in the AsIP program follow the same full inclusion academic schedule as their peers. With supports designed for students with ASD, the general education core curricular graduation requirements are acquired. Students participate for one period per school day in the AsIP workshop. The AsIP classroom acts as headquarters for a base pull out

learning environment for students any time during the day if/when students and the team require a quiet private setting. The goal is not to target students by creating natural supports in the general education classroom community. On occasion, when the general education classroom may become overwhelming, students have a place in the AsIP classroom to work in a more comfortable environment.

The principles of the AsIP program guide the content of the general academics tasks and expectations. The AsIP creates, whenever possible, a learning environment with cross discipline curriculum objectives. The cross-curricular theory structures the learning process and lesson plan design to reflect and incorporate practical socio-cognitive implementation. When it is possible, students participate in group projects. This can be a challenge considering time and collaborative constraints. For example, one student taking a computer course, English IV and American Government and Economics and works with teachers to create an elaborate fictional government document developed by the student who aspires to be a professional historical fiction writer. His first work of historical fiction is used for his cross-curricular project by applying the information learned in history, demonstrating writing skills with knowledge of literary genre, creating a flow chart comparing his fictional world with contemporary American government political views on specific social issues (Gumora & Ropp, 2011).

The academic structure for participant's curriculum is performance based that combines research based best practices into graduated activities that mirror Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) and have student options and engagement that encompass Gardner's (1985) Multiple Intelligences, considering varied student learning styles. This collaboration between the AsIP team is an advantage for our participating students because it directly supports California content standards mandated and addresses practical lifelong learning skills in high school general education,

organized in Bloom's Taxonomy and cognizant of Gardner's multiple intelligences. This allows a highly structured support for both basic and complex curriculum expectations and activities in class with significant student choice within that framework. The Summit High School's overall teaching practices have a wide range of experiences for the students from teacher to teacher and class to class. Students benefit from the stability of their support team remaining with them for the duration of their high school experience, and this structure of academic support develops a notable social bond between students and the AsIP team, which is pertinent to the focus of this study.

Teaching the higher-level skills of Bloom's Taxonomy (see Figure 6) is the academic focus of curricular activities for understanding of the cognitive process, work analysis and life-long learning for individual academic plans, as recorded in student IEPs. The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) works effectively for students when they have participation in the activity options development with the AsIP team and successfully co-assess their work for content competency. This serves to demonstrate student knowledge, comprehension, and application competency as they begin to make connections between information, individualized strengths and interests. These closely interface with the California standards as incorporated into their personalized learning and post high school higher educational goals.

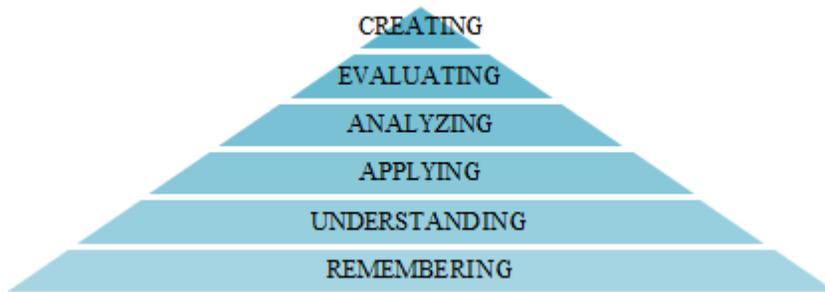


Figure 6. The pyramid relationship shows Anderson's (2001) revised methodology of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Transition to college/university is a primary focus for the AsIP support strategies and the scaffold design intended by the AsIP coordinating teacher. While reaching academic and social cognition, success is the context for support in the AsIP, the continuous over-arching focus is preparing students for post-secondary transition. This is the essential principle of the AsIP the inspiration for launching Ethos. Ethos is an off campus extension of the AsIP where current and graduated students, as well as new members of the group from affiliations outside of AsIP, meet Sunday afternoons. Students have an online Facebook group for cyber continued connections and conversations with AsIP participants not able to make local meetings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA

Staff-Student Synergy

Hanushek and Rifkin (2006) researched the relationship between teacher characteristics and student achievement, the supply of teachers with different characteristics, the role of aggregate salaries, and the direct estimates of the value-added of teachers. While the focus of this ethnography is on the transformative process of students on the Autism Spectrum transitioning from high school to college, a core emergent theme is the impact of the learning community, specifically as participants in the AsIP, on student development, performance and well-being. This dissertation is an in-depth exploration of the students' pathways that is narrated to understand more fully the post-secondary goal development for each student. Within the AsIP learning community, extensive consideration is focused on student strengths and most significantly, student interests. This develops post transition goals for academic, life-long learning and career development. This dissertation asserts that as Hanuseck and Rifkin (2006) researched, the relationship between teacher (or program) characteristics, which construct the learning community, impacts student achievement. This study's core emergent themes communicated by student's state the significance of this relationship between student and teachers.

AsIP Community

Students are encouraged to use their elective or hobby as "lab" activities to apply the information taught in their core classes. This process is demonstrated earlier in the example of the student aspiring to transition to college and write historic fiction. More common examples

are identifying student interests, and using that as motivation for success in all classes and to develop transition goals, with cross curriculum coordination as often as possible. Application of the vocabulary, concepts, and skills learned in their core classes are applied in a deep and meaningful way that maximizes student engagement and subsequently their learning process. The cross-curricular, problem-solving element helps to ensure that students will be able to transition targeted skills into adulthood by placing the process into a real life scenario. As will later be discussed, one participant, Jules, struggled dramatically with abstract literary text and essay writing. The computer technology teacher stated Jules was one of his two best students in his 20- year career, stating his focus and immediate grasp of program design was astounding. Jules eventually connected his transition goals into a Media Arts Major with Game Design emphasis at a local junior college. This required storyboard writing to acquire the certificated degree, making the connection that English class assignments are a necessary and valuable skill.

Students take the Birmingham Grid of Learning - Multiple-Intelligence Test to identify individual learning styles toward self-paced development of lifelong learning skills. The study reveals these skills are determined and demonstrated in the academic learning environment by:

- Developing Executive Function
- Self-improving Academic Assessment Competencies
- Managing Personal Antecedents
- Clear and Functional Communication
- Diverse Peer-mediated Population Competencies
- Facilitating Social Integration
- Social Meta-Cognition

The Summit Asperger Inclusion Program has a base or headquarters referred to as the AsIP room; this is no ordinary classroom. It has been considered a lab, our hip hide-away, a space for organized chaos, and most often a home away from home for all of our students both current and graduated. Currently the program is housed in a large converted workshop where Skyline once trained students in vocational courses no longer offered in public school systems, such as woodshop and automotive mechanics. The reconstructed walled over original garage door gives an idea of the size of the room and of the illusionary reference to a school very different from the one now, comparable to archaeological sites with excavated remnants of cultures having inhabited a space where new communities currently thrive. The room is now carpeted with ceiling panels covering original skylights and, unfortunately, natural lighting. Our room is located on the brilliant wooded hilltop Summit campus, so just outside of our adapted door that sticks, and only we seem to be able to open (always gets either a laugh or a frustrated sigh listening to others struggle), there is an enchantment of being in a forest amidst urban sprawl. The room is a mixed bag of décor with plush office chairs, computers on desks against the walls, mounted white-boards, and a free standing chalk board used to section off space. There are no individual student desks. We have four large conference tables that designate workspaces for small group academic tasks and all group participant in-depth discussions and/or reflective activities.

Intervention Specialists

Researcher asked each Intervention Specialists to capture their experience and philosophy as a team member in the Asperger Inclusion Program:

Bejon: My personal philosophy is based on building strong personal relationships with students. I believe that the only way to create positive change is through positive

relationships. I also personally believe that every interaction with the students must have fun and enjoyment maximized. I attempt to inject levity into every interaction. When I first began working with this population, a student was making a documentary film for a class. The student went around filming other students on the spectrum. He was asking basic questions about their lives. After watching the final edited version of this documentary, I was struck by two facts. Number one, the majority of students affected by Asperger are unable to describe the symptoms or hallmarks of the syndrome. Number two, every student in the documentary reported an overwhelming feeling of sadness and depression, so I base my approach on the reports of these original students. I attempt to create enjoyment, fun and a feeling of personal satisfaction in each and every interaction I have with students on the spectrum. I have created a game day Friday in our program. This creates a situation where students must use social and cognitive flexibility because some of their most glaring deficits become more pronounced during these intense game days. I have been able to assist in creating many off-campus field trips during the school year. Our students have given speeches at a former team member's-- now teacher's--class about their personal growth and the changes they have gone through. The relationships enable me to become a more effective instructor. Students are more responsive and responsible. The quantity and quality of their work improves. And their interactions with students' friends and other teachers become more positive (personal communication).

Hanna: I have been trained as a creative arts therapist. I am in my seventh year at Skyline High. A lot of prior work has been with individuals with Alzheimer's and related disorders. I have learned from being in this program and from my work with the elderly that we all need the same things in life, no matter what our age. My philosophies,

motivation, and goals here in the AsIP program has been to help foster an environment of validation, awareness of self and others, fused with creativity, and compassion, and humor for all. Sounds like The Pledge of Allegiance, no? While we work with students who have been identified as being on the autistic spectrum, we are all on one spectrum or another, and we are all on the spectrum of life together. Academically, we want to be able to get our students to take responsibility for learning on their own, and working with them to make any modifications needed, if at all. I have envisioned our staff like training wheels that can be pulled off when the student is ready. We have seen this with students in the past who are still part of our extended community. Our elder students and graduates speak to each other with authority and compassion about how their own awareness and growing sense of self and responsibility has paved the road to greater success in life and in school. Since I like to cook, I implemented a cooking class called “Fast, Fresh, and Fabulous,” where we introduced healthier eating choices and snacking for success. Students tried food combinations they never had before, and this inspired food related conversations while cutting, chopping, and chewing. This created a healthy pathway, and planted seeds for our students to create awareness of greater overall health. Some that took root right away and some may take months or even years. I like to fuel dreams while trying to be in the present with mind-full meditations, and writings, both in poetry and prose. This engenders positive communication, validation, and recognition between students and staff. Isn’t that what life can be about whatever spectrum we’re on (personal communication)?

Ivan: As an Intervention Specialist in an Asperger inclusion classroom for the past 6 years I have had the opportunity to work closely coaching students to advocate for and

understand themselves better through disability awareness and socio-emotional supports, I have developed an interest in fostering self-confidence and designing personalized action plans that help students overcome social anxiety and give students the tools to be independent. I began my undergraduate degree at DePaul University as a Communications Major because I had an interest in interpersonal and small group communication. Though I did not pursue that path then, I still hold those interests today. One of the reasons for my success as an Intervention Specialist is my ability to build trusting relationships with students and staff. I feel it is very important to take time to get to know all students as individuals and to take an interest in their specific interests, as it opens the pathway to meaningful communication. Often the students I work with are socially isolated, so the most important first step in overcoming social deficits is to establish a comfortable, open, and trusting relationship with another individual. I offer students that foundation of trust, and build from there. I have worked to help students overcome anger-management issues, develop self-advocacy with teachers to maximize learning, develop inter-personal communication skills with peers, and devise strategies to overcome self-defeat. Recently, I supported students in writing, filming, and editing a public service announcement about dealing with bullying for a class project. The film itself addressed anger management through the bully character. Since the students I work with are usually on the bullied side, this gave them an opportunity to share ideas they thought would improve relations between bullies and the bullied. Additionally, this film was screened in class and entered into a nationwide contest, giving the students a voice and a sense of accomplishment. Their peers responded positively, and it gave them an opportunity to communicate openly with other students (personal communication).

The above Intervention Specialists have been with the AsIP since beginning, technically the second year of the program, with the researcher as coordinator. Our team has welcomed other members during the years dependent on the number of enrolled students. The program is designed to have a 2:1 student staff ratio to ensure highly engaged support and accessibility. Students with IEP recommendations for 1:1 aid support are often out of district hires from out of district behavioral support agencies. It is important to state the original design of the Asperger Inclusion Program was facilitated by the out of district support agency. While one-to-one aides are hired from various Applied Behavioral Support agencies, the primary consulting agency for students participating in the AsIP elementary through high school has been consistent since 1999. In the discussions chapter, the relationship between unified school districts and the broader educational community is reviewed. The number of AsIP Summit students has varied as high as 21 to the 7 currently enrolled students. Because the AsIP room is often occupied with current and graduate participants, the interviews for the study were conducted on Summit campus. Ethos is an off campus extension of the AsIP where current and graduated students and new members meet Sunday afternoons and have an online Facebook group for cyber connections and conversations with AsIP participants not able to make local meetings. Cyber and technological connections are reported to have had an impact on student engagement and career technology development analyzed from data interviews. The cyber community has helped to keep students in communication after graduating from AsIP, including students that may not attend Ethos meeting times. Table 4 lists participants and other students who graduated from AsIP and their current academic placements.

Table 4

Graduates of AsIP and Current Academic Placements

Participants in Study	Graduation Year	Current Academic Status
1. Kyle	2010	California State University
2. Naomi	2011	California State University
3. Aaron	2011	Berkeley City College matriculated
4. Roland	2012	Pacific Union College
5. Jasper	2012	California State University
6. Alley	2012	California State University
7. Jules	2012	California State University
8. Dante	<i>Anticipated 2013</i>	<i>Transitioning to California State University</i>
9. Val	2011	Some classes at Berkeley City College, Martial Arts Instructor in training
10. Taylor	2010	Diablo Valley Junior College matriculated.
Former Graduates	Graduation year	Academic Status
11. Nathan	2009	Sonoma State lives on campus.
12. Daniel	2009	Alameda College Continuing Adult Program
13. Carmen	2009	Laney Junior College matriculated.
14. Alfred	2009	Laney Junior College matriculated.
15. Tosh	2010	Berkeley University lives on campus.
16. Eli	2010	UC Santa Cruz lives on campus.
17. William	2010	Full-time Safeway employee – offered full tuition paid by company as business major w/ intent to return in management; applying for carpentry at CSUEB fall 2013.
18. Jerry	2010	Some classes at Laney, looking for employment.
19. Andrew	2011	Berkeley City College matriculated.
20. Eric	2012	Berkeley City College matriculated.

The following parent perspective captures staff-student synergy precluding student introductions:

Kyle's father: Our family came from the inclusion program at middle school. We were delighted with the prospect of the Autism Spectrum Inclusion Program (AsIP) for high

school. The program model encouraged parental participation which, in turn, helped to create individualized supports for the students. It was easier to help students exploit their strengths while learning ways to develop strategies for coping with challenges. Parents are often excellent judges of which academic and behavioral approaches are working for their students. The approach at ASIP really engendered collaboration amongst the students, families and staff. Participation at this intimate level provided an opportunity for growth amongst the families in support of community building. The community that grew from ASIP provided social contexts and opportunities for friendships to develop away from school. Several ASIP families are still in contact today. Courteny Moore-Gumora and her staff created a nurturing yet demanding environment for the students in the program (personal communication).

Students Speak

The following portrait of each student's experience provides further evidence of staff-student synergy as reflected in the ASIP and associated Ethos program.

Student 1: Kyle is a male student, age 22, graduated from the ASIP in 2010, currently a junior at California State University East Bay in the College Link Program (College Link Program discussed in the conclusions and suggestions chapter). Kyle accomplished general education diploma requirements, CHASEE exempt. Kyle is significant for the study to consider the critical degree of required curriculum modification and accommodations for some students with varied social cognition and access to academic theory. Kyle communicates symbolically, using metaphors to articulate thoughts and ideas. For instance when Kyle notices a peer behaving inappropriately Kyle will say "_____ should stop or else they may be put into permanent detention." Kyle qualified for individualized speech and language services. While Kyle's

creative and colorful language adds a dimension of humor and theatrics to conversation and engagement, it creates challenges in typical social and academic environments. Kyle participated in all group sessions conducted within the AsIP classroom with a focus on increasing social conversation while minimizing self-dialoging of favorite anime in a social setting. At the beginning of each of our sessions Kyle often required verbal and physical (tap on the shoulder) cues to join in, and he was very responsive to these cues. Kyle appears not to be listening in group conversation based on body language, vocalizations, and other self-talk and continues to require multiple cues to initiate and maintain a topic, make appropriate comments, ask questions, and respond to comments and to join an ongoing conversation.

Q: How do you perceive or look at life?

Kyle: I think I look at it as a different perspective. It's a different path seeing as now I am marching to adulthood. I will be the same age a young girl that aired in an anime cartoon in the 2000s that fights the forces of darkness to protect our planet from destruction.

Q. If you had a time machine and you could go back to before you began AsIP what would be the key thing you would advice yourself?

Kyle: Never, never, never give up. But I am not as omnificent as John de Lancie in Star Trek.

Q. If you were telling a story about a main character (that is you) in elementary and middle school what would be the theme of your story?

Kyle: Marching through the very fabric of time. Like the doctor in Dr. Who, he prefers to be called the Doctor. He had eleven different actors playing the doctor in different times of his life. He can regenerate up to twelve times. The final regeneration

transformation transformed him into Matt Smith, the eleventh doctor. The twelfth is unknown but in later series he might regenerate. I can relate to this.

Intervention Specialists working with Kyle utilized his areas of interest as openings to convey concepts across disciplines. Accommodations were designed to access theory through generalizing material in meaningful associations. Consistent with the findings of capacity theory or capacity model, Kyle effectively learns when a lesson is presented according to capacity to remember and understand subject matters (Fisch, 1999).

The following are examples for accommodations/ modifications:

Intervention Specialist 1 (IS1)

I make a template for Kyle when supporting essay writing. I begin at the computer with him as he writes the first/starter five lines of the intro, five for the first, second and third body paragraphs, and five for the conclusion. Kyle has done this independently.

Math visuals are very helpful, graphing ordered pairs, finding ordered pair solutions, and translating. Homework grades improve with more practice showing work for practice problems. The primary focus is to have him start showing work step by step and doing the problems on paper. This is to help him on quizzes and exams. Extra copies of class worksheets in his binder will help him with his homework.

Motivation, motivation, motivation. . . The dialogue Kyle does in the form of chatter is actually huge amounts of script which is text that he has memorized, although he has memorized it from verbal input rather than written text. However, it speaks to Kyle's ability to totally be capable of comprehension and memorization of huge amounts of data.

There is no need for memorization here of course, but it again speaks to the volume of

data Kyle can absorb. Can we get the books on tape for him? I know Kyle was a Department Of Rehabilitation consumer when he graduated from AsIP. Lastly feel confident that Kyle IS capable, despite the challenges. So hold him accountable.

Intervention Specialist 2 (IS2)

Drama is at the very core of Kyle's being. Whatever class Kyle is in, he has a commanding presence. He was a member of the Drama Department all four years. He has taken part in student written and performed productions. He has a gift for memorization and attention to detail; we have implemented and integrated aspects of drama throughout across curriculum. Given a science research assignment, Kyle created a power-point presentation on UFOs integrating his interest in space and drama. He used photos, research, visual and sound effects and background music by his favorite composer John Williams. Kyle has taken part in the Berkeley Repertoire Summer Program where he honed his fencing skills. After reading the poem "Chimney Sweep" by Blake, the English class assignment instructions were to write an introduction to a book on the same subject. We modified this with a rubric used in drama class to create a free- standing poem on the same subject to bring the assignment alive for Kyle:

(Time)	At the crack of dawn
(Place)	In a small, cramped, cluttered bedroom
(Feeling Body Part)	He awoke to pangs of hunger at the depths of his belly
(Sight)	Looked out onto the street, onto a cold wet and dreary day
(Sound)	and heard clip clopping of horses hooves
(Touch)	Ran his fingers through his greasy locks
(Color)	looked at his decaying grey teeth in the cracked and cloudy mirror

(A Want) He just wanted to stay home and do nothing

(A Need) . . .but he really needed to work.

Student 2: Naomi is a female, age 21, who originally emigrated from Eretria, Africa, graduated from AsIP in 2011 and is currently a sophomore at California State University. Naomi's placement changed from the Special Day Class (SDC) Communicatively Handicapped Program for English, Social Studies, and Science; mainstreamed for Math and P.E. to the Asperger Inclusion Program. She was tested using the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement in Reading. For the Broad Reading part of the test, scores indicate significantly below grade level in reading fluency and passage comprehension. On the Woodcock-Johnson Broad Written Language test, scored grade level, and above grade level on the Spelling, low score for writing samples and writing fluency, although Naomi expressed her thoughts through writing particularly when experiencing difficulties conveying ideas verbally. Middle school teachers report Naomi had a hard time working independently. This remained the primary IEP goal focus in AsIP, minimizing supports, developing confidence and independence completing tasks. Naomi exhibits atypical social-emotional development or immaturity pressured with rigorous academic challenge. Naomi experienced a breakdown causing her current professor concern exhibiting what the AsIP team refers to as "the loop." Students find themselves in a spiraling of behavior exhibiting particular unique and specific atypical response. Naomi's loop is dramatically expressing exaggerated doom. Developing executive functioning skills Naomi is able to re-direct and mitigate as an efficient student. Naomi is independently attending university accomplishing her classes; however, her experience is overwhelmed. Naomi attends Ethos sessions relieving stress with her peers.

Q. How do you view the history of others who share your experiences and situations?

Naomi: I just ignore them whenever they feel stress. I feel indifferent toward them.

Sometimes I feel connected to them but I just don't think too much about it. I don't think too much about them. I just usually think about my own problems, and that is about it.

Q. How would you describe yourself and how do you feel about this description?

Naomi: Over- worker lazy childish pessimistic. . .

Q. How do you perceive (look at) life now?

Naomi: Hard. College is really hard.

Student 3: Aaron is an Asian male, age 21 who graduated from AsIP in 2011 and is currently a sophomore at a local junior college majoring in Multi-Media Arts. When transitioning into AsIP, Psychological Evaluation reports state Aaron's overall cognitive ability as above average range, with above average to superior levels in non-verbal reasoning and spatial ability. He demonstrates age-level skills in verbal ability. Processing skills scored in the average range on auditory processing tasks (phonological awareness) and visual motor integration skills. Conversely he scored below average to border line range on tasks measuring auditory memory, auditory comprehension, and short-term visual memory. Social-emotional functioning behavior rating scales scores indicate Aaron exhibited escalated levels in the following areas: Depression and Personal Adjustment Composite (relationship with parents, inner-personal relationships, self-esteem, and self-reliance). Aaron reportedly demonstrated significant challenges coping positively with negative situations, exhibited low self-esteem and difficulty getting along with family members and peers. Aaron's reports indicate two incidents during his primary school years where he was taken to the hospital on a 5150 report (suicidal

ideation and behaviors that were “out of control”). Ultimately, due to Aaron’s “intensity of focus on violence, killing and being killed as well as his inability to negotiate inner-personal interactions,” he qualified under Autism (AUT), as he exhibited behaviors that were characteristic of students with Asperger Syndrome.

Academically, Aaron maintained a high GPA with accommodations to be a focused student. Encouraged to utilize his ability to focus and accomplish favorable outcomes academically, Aaron was encouraged to redirect experiences of frustration and anxiety through a creative outlet. In freshman year Aaron began paper origami and paper sculptures, which led to anime cartooning and developing a portfolio of drawings. Aaron also wrote commentaries for the Summit Oracle voicing appropriately and often humorously campus issues. Aaron began to exhibit calm demeanor and connections with staff and peers, and his self-esteem improved. Communication improved measurably with considerably fewer outbursts to eventually not at all. In junior year Aaron confided that his stepfather and mother were divorcing, and he was very concerned and anxious because he understood his mother could not maintain the household. Aaron expressed his mothers’ mistrust of teachers and government would cause them to be isolated and eventually homeless. Aaron articulated his concerns demonstrating a notably different response to anxiety, frustration, and fear. Students with diagnoses are able to receive government funding, and with assistance, Aaron negotiated the application process. Qualifying for Social Security Disabilities Funding, he became the primary source of income for his family before graduating high school. This had a profound impact as a shift in Aaron’s confidence and anxiety. Aaron is a consistent participant in the Ethos meetings on Sundays. Since graduating from AsIP, Aaron maintains communication and friendships with regularity, quality time activities and opportunities for discussions about new experiences in college. He and other AsIP

graduates support one another artistically, forming a network to express art collaborations.

Figure 7 shows Aaron's digital animation character.



Figure 7. Aaron's art.

Student 4: Roland, age 19, is a Mexican American male who graduated from AsIP in 2012 and is currently a freshman living on campus in a private Christian University. Roland's

assessment reports indicate his overall cognitive functioning within the Average range (GCA SS: 90). Auditory perceptual functioning indicated some variability (possibly due to focusing and attention issues) while comprehension and reasoning is estimated to be within his cognitive level. The BASC2 and GADS indicate that his Social Interaction, Restricted Patterns of Behavior/Interests, Cognitive Patterns, and Pragmatic Skills are in the high probability range for a diagnosis of Asperger Disorder. DAS (Assesses Cognitive Functioning) reports Roland is within average range. Psychologist reports indicate that Roland had difficulty with inferences and idioms, reflecting his tendency to take things very literally. When I asked Roland for an interview, he asked if he could post it on my Facebook Wall and add it to the Ethos Facebook group. The interview is so powerful that it is presented intact:

Q: What is your interpretation of the world/situation in which you find yourself within AsIP?

Roland: Well, if this is about kids with Asperger Syndrome, I would have to say that they tend to find themselves cut off from the world, in their own world. It's easy to say that it is a common symptom to not care about what others think. That is my answer to this question.

Q. How do you come to have that point of view?

Roland: I come to have this point of view because I, myself, was in the exact same situation. I know what it's like to feel that way mainly because I really did used to feel this way.

Q. How do you relate to others within their world?

Roland: There's always a way to relate to someone, no matter what your situation is. At one point in time, everyone has felt alone, cut off from everyone else, and at least felt nothing, like they just didn't care. Every one of us has an example to share. With those examples you can reach out to kids with Asperger Syndrome and help them see that they are not alone, that they can change themselves, not to change what other people think about them, but for themselves.

Q. How do you cope within your world?

Roland: As I said before, I know what it's like because I used to be like them at a point in time. A lot of people say that there is no cure for Asperger Syndrome. In my case, I was documented to have Asperger Syndrome, but I no longer have qualities of those with that Syndrome. I can either say that I have cured myself from it with tons of help from the ASIP program, or I can say that I have overcome this and became a completely different person. Either way, it is the truth.

Q. How do you view the history of others who share these experiences and situations?

Roland: I have to say that kids with Asperger Syndrome have it rough. They really do. I know because I was one of them. The reason being is because other students, they don't understand what it's like to have Asperger Syndrome. They're not used to people who are different. So they mistreat them. It's a common symptom to feel embarrassed about having this title to their name. It's a common symptom to not care what other people

think. It's a common symptom to be very stubborn. It is hard, but if you're willing to work for them, and so long as you're committed and patient, you can change their lives around and have people grow to love them. So long as they have cooperation with you, they can overcome it.

Q. How would you describe yourself and how do you feel about this description?

Roland: Well, I would describe myself as a sanguine person. I am very outgoing, compassionate, and I love being around people. I love to socialize, and I love to interact and I love just getting to know people. I can't deny that the description is true. I'm not going to be offended about what it says to me if it speaks the truth. I can't keep rejecting who I am. It's who I am, and it's my choice to think of it as a gift, or a curse. I choose to think of it as a gift. Why? I think it's a gift because this was a test for me, a test for me to change my life around and turn me into a walking testimony. I can use this to inspire people by saying, "Hey. I had problems in the past. I was different from everyone else, and I had it rough. You're not the only ones. I learned to accept this and turn myself around. I did it. So can you."

Q. How do you perceive (look at) life now?

Roland: Life is hard. It's easy to complain about how hard it is and how everything isn't going your way. Well I have a challenge for that. Go to a third world country. Come back and tell me that you think you had it bad, but really you are one lucky person to live in a country like America. Life is something to enjoy. We shouldn't waste our time complaining, focusing on the past, and crying about how everything isn't handed to you

on a silver platter. Each and every one of us has a purpose in life, and each and every one of us can change the world in our own way. Don't think that you can't. You can!

Q. If you had a time machine and you could go back to before you began AsIP what would be the key thing you'd want advice yourself about?

Roland: If I could go back in time, I would tell myself to shower every day, if I have a problem with jeans, at least try them on because they look cool, and to not be afraid to talk to people. I would advise myself to be friendly, and that way, I could get all the girls.

Q. If you were telling a story about a main character (that is you) in elementary and middle school what would be the theme of your story?

Roland: The theme of my story would be this: Don't worry about what other people think about you. Consider, what other people think about you.

Q. Describe your experience in elementary and middle school socially (as a friend), academically (as a student) and personally (inside feelings)?

Roland: During those times, I wasn't very social at all. I only had like 5 friends. I was considered awkward, quiet, dirty, and weird. I flunked the third grade because I chose not to do any homework. I didn't earn the best grades in middle school either, because I was really huge on procrastinating. I felt alone. I felt angry at everyone around me. I felt sad. I felt like I didn't belong anywhere, that no matter where I went, I didn't belong. It was

unpleasant, that people would treat me differently. They would either try to avoid me, or they would sweet talk to me like I was that cute little shy boy, instead of a mutual friend. It was pretty rough.

Q. How has participating in AsIP changed your perspective of school and life?

Roland: A lot of the other students at first felt no need for that class what so ever. They refused to participate and hated the class. I on the other hand, wanted to change myself. I wanted to feel accepted, and I know that I was put in this class for a reason. I knew that people were trying to help me, and I knew that the only way I could be better was to let the help come to me, and act on it. I used to have that mentality that I wanted to do things my way, nobody else's. I had that mentality that because so many kids were mean to me, the only people I could feel comfortable talking to would be other kids with Asperger Syndrome, and adults. I used to think that there was no place for me, that I never belonged anywhere but my home. Now, it's different. It's okay to socialize with everyone. Let go of the past, but don't ever forget it. Use it to inspire people. Be open to all suggestions because no matter how smart you are, you can't make it by yourself. That's my take on school and life.

Q. How does AsIP effect what is meaningful and important to you/ your interests?

Roland: It affects me because people are what is most meaningful to me. People are what is most important to me. Teaching me how to interact with other people really made me grow to love community as I put these skills I've learned into practice.

Q. How has the program been beneficial to your life inside and outside of school?

Roland: Both inside and out of school, with these skills I've learned, I put them into practice, and with that, I've made countless friends inside of school, inside of my church, and now I communicate with my parents a lot better. They no longer baby me and think of me as a vulnerable little puppy that needed to be protected at all times; they now think of me as an independent man who everyone loves and respects. Yes, they respect me.

Q. What effect does the program have on your education?

Roland: The program helped me a lot with my education. The aids would always make sure I'm doing my work, taking notes, and they would sit down with me and tutor me, and help me study for my tests. Because of this, slowly and slowly, my grades have been going up.

Q. What would life be like without this program?

Roland: To be honest, I really don't know. But, I guess I can say that, I probably would not have changed. I would still be that awkward, quiet, dirty, weird person. I probably wouldn't even make it through high school.

Student 5: Jasper is an African American male, age 19, who graduated from AsIP in 2012 and is currently a freshman at California State University East Bay in the College Link Program. Jasper skipped 3rd grade due to high SAT scores. Language Assessment was requested due to concerns with Jasper's pragmatic (social) language skills. Jasper classified as a student with a Speech/Language Impairment and received services in the Resource Specialist Program

for 2 years; however, he was placed on independent study because of “negative” social interactions. Concerns for placement in the Asperger Inclusion Program were primarily in regards to engaging with peers in manners that are typical of school students. Assessment Instruments used were Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (ROWPVT), Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT), and Test of Problem Solving (TOPS). A Speech and Language Assessment further reported concerns with Jasper’s pragmatic (social) language skills and behavior while portions of the TOPS were administered to assess associated problem-solving skills. Jasper did well on the questions that were factual and concrete however, he exhibited difficulty with tasks that were figurative and abstract. For example, one situation described two boys who were best friends even though they had very different interests and personalities. The special bond that the boys shared was that they were both recovering from cancer. The question asked how a disease could be the reason for the boy’s friendship. Jasper initially responded with a long, scientific explanation of what cancer does to the body. When the question was restated, and he was prompted with ““Why are the boys friends?” “Jasper’s response ““They both could have died,.”” was more on track. Overall pragmatic language skills are judged to be in the moderate-severe delayed range. Jasper presents as a socially and emotionally complex boy. He struggles severely with peer interactions and as a result is often in conflicts with peers. In addition, his inability to perceive another person’s perspective and his rigid thought patterns increase his difficulties with social interactions. Rating scales, test observations, interviews and a record review suggest that Jasper is challenged by large group settings. He is sensitive to noise and thus tends to engage in leisure activities alone rather than engage in social activities.

Student 6: Alley is a half Caucasian and half Mexican American 19 year-old male who graduated from AsIP in 2012 and is currently a freshman at California State University East Bay in the College Link Program. Alley is the first member of his family to attend college. Alley's receptive and expressive language is in the average to high average range. However, it is important to note that if social/executive function challenges are explored at the surface level and solely using standardized measures, Alley will appear to be functioning much more successfully than he is in daily life. Many of the challenges Alley experiences are much more evident in real time interactions. Diagnostics determine Alley's cognitive ability to fall within the average range. His visual-motor integration skills, as well as visual and verbal memory skills, were also within the average range. Alley exhibits difficulties with attention, learning, withdrawal, unusual behaviors, and anxiety. The Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement and the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test results show that Alley exhibits strength in the area of reading comprehension. Alley has challenges with Spelling and with Math Facts Fluency. Writing is quite challenging for Alley; the content of his writing is stronger, which is emphasized in the WJ III, than his skills with the mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation), which is more heavily scored in the WIAT-II. Alley has the opportunity to travel with his parents and sister and developed an interest in photography. To encourage practice with writing skills during family vacations, it is suggested that Alley blog with narratives of his photographs. This meaningful and exciting structure for combining the joy of family vacations, experiencing new places, with Alley's love for photography and the opportunity to share this with his friends and family members as a blog is an example to developing Constructivist Learning enrichment into academic context that supports student's transition goals. Alley intends to focus on photographic courses at the university level once his core curricular studies for freshman year are underway.

Alley qualified for speech and language services and participated in AsIP group sessions, targeting social communication and social cognition in varying contexts across his day. Alley is supported to engage socially and to learn expected behaviors (especially during “boring” times as Alley often refers to classroom tasks) and to monitor and to self-regulate unexpected behaviors (i.e. feet on desks, picking at scabs etc.). Within a group context, Alley is able to use appropriate conversation starters to initiate interactions with peers. Alley struggles with thinking of topics that someone else might be interested in discussing. Typically, Alley will revert to his own interests and love of cats to discuss with others.

Student 7: Jules is a half Chinese American half Caucasian male age 20, who graduated from AsIP in 2012 and is currently a freshman at Berkeley City College acquiring his AA degree and certification in Multi-Media Arts. The Digital Arts Academy director at Summit reported Jules to be one of the top two performing students in his 25- year career. Jules is a direct-to-the-point person, very frank and sarcastic, who wears his signature camouflage safari hat every day. Language Arts Reading Test results show that reading is an area of relative strength for Jules. Jules scored in the average range for his age compared with his peers on the Woodcock Johnson in both Word Identification; where students are asked to read aloud a list of words, and Passage Comprehension, where students are asked to read a short passage and identify a missing or key words. He also scored in the average range on the corresponding subtests of the WRAT. On Writing Fluency Jules performed in the low average range on this subtest and on Writing Samples Jules scored in the low average range. In contrast to his performance on tests, when asked to write on a topic of interest or an opinionated piece Jules produces compositions of profound insight and depth. Jules currently expresses interest in writing short essays as practice narratives for story-boarding used for video game designs. Behavior Assessment System for

Children (BASC) completed by his mother indicates Jules exhibits fewer problematic behaviors at home with the areas highlighted as concerns including anxiety, withdrawal, leadership, and daily living skills. Jules's responses to the self-report were within normal limits, although the validity of the rating scale is questionable due to the high number of positive responses. Jules's responses to the Student Interview suggest that he generally feels good. There is a considerably different optimism and overall lightness in Jules that has become increasingly notable as Jules matured within the AsIP. Jules continues to consider himself a “prankster” yet the cynical and observably depressed and anger in Jules’s jokes and interactions transformed to eager enthusiasm. This shift became most apparent during his discovery of digital animation talent. This is an example of student elective interests impacting cross- curricular engagements. Jules recently visited the AsIP classroom eager to share with the new freshman the benefits of finding an area to focus your strengths and take advantage of the support in the AsIP. Figures 8 and 9 show Jules’ digital media work.



Figure 8. Figure shows an example of Jules’ digital media work – sample 1.



Figure 9. Shows and example of Jules' digital media work – sample 2.

Student 8: Dante is an African American male age 18 currently in his senior year in the AsIP at Summit transitioning to the California State University East Bay, College Link Program. Dante is an extremely articulate burly young man with the unusual effect of a very politically conservative, opinionated much older republican, although he now identifies as a libertarian. Dante is a large student physically and in personality. He is eager to engage in in-depth conversations typically regarding social structures and political ideologies. Dante is very open to communicate his adversity toward the democratic political party, particularly regretting being born a day past election day, and not legally permitted to vote in favor of Senator McCain, and opposing President Obama. Dante's strong political conservatism creates social conversational conflicts with his peers, and is recently demonstrating a profound transformation in listening to the perspective of others. In the area of social-emotional functioning, his past reports have indicated that Dante has exhibited characteristics associated with autism since his initial

evaluation in 2002. Throughout his educational history, Dante has reportedly been observed to show a marked lack of awareness of the existence of others' feelings or perspectives; preferred the company of adults rather than age-related peers; demonstrated marked impairment in the ability to make and maintain friendships with others; qualitative impairment in understanding of nonverbal cues/communication; and restrictive repertoire of activities and interests (e.g., expansive knowledge of historical topics; marked interest in discussing topics that were atypical of his age (e.g., politics; public policies); persistent preoccupation with his perspective; marked distress over changes in trivial aspects of environment; and markedly restricted range of interests). Dante has been receptive to his program and has made progress towards his IEP goals. Dante has strengths in expressive language skills, as he is a confident and competent speaker during class discussions. Dante is also very goal-driven and is motivated to perform well academically and recently inter-personally.

Psycho-educational assessments indicate Dante initially qualified for Special Education in 2002 under the Nonverbal Learning Disability (NLD) eligibility due to deficits in gross and fine-motor skills, visual-spatial organization, and social skills (including adapting to new situations). He was reevaluated in 2008 and qualified under both the NLD and AUT categories, as it was found that he had historically exhibited a pattern of behaviors associated with individuals with Autism (Asperger Syndrome). Cognitive and processing assessment results were consistent since his initial evaluation. Overall, Dante is functioning in the average range of cognition, with particular strengths in nonverbal reasoning ability and verbal ability. He continuously scored below age-level in spatial ability throughout evaluations. With regards to processing skills, he demonstrated age-level skills in verbal memory ability and auditory processing skills. Conversely, he demonstrated delayed skills in visual-motor integration, visual

processing skills, and short-term visual memory skills. He also continues to demonstrate challenges with nonverbal cues, communication and social interaction skills and continues to require social skills support to help him cope adaptively during difficult situations. These communication and social skills challenges have significantly impacted his educational performance since elementary school. He is also prone to a high level of depression and withdrawal, as well as having some concerns in hyperactivity, learning problems, adaptability, and social skills.

Student 9: Val, age 21, is a Mexican American male who graduated from AsIP 2011 and has taken junior college level classes sporadically. Val expressed an interest in attending college full time as a philosophy major. Currently Val is engaged in an in-depth Martial Arts training focus, he intends to become a Sensei and teach Martial Arts. Assessment results indicate that Val demonstrates developmental deficits in socialization, adaptability skills, and pragmatic skills, which seem to have adversely affected his educational and social performance relative to chronological age and grade expectations. Val qualified for Special Education services under the Autism (AUT) category in 2004, when he was age 11 (5th grade). Psycho-educational assessments indicated functioning in the average range of cognition, with a relative strength in verbal ability. With regards to processing skills, Val exhibited average scores in visual-spatial skills and visual-motor integration skills. However assessments continuously found that his areas of need were in nonverbal reasoning skills, processing speed, pragmatics, and social reasoning skills (comprehension). These cognitive and processing strengths and deficits were consistently found. In the area of social-emotional functioning, Val has had a history of significant difficulties with socialization, communication, and adaptability. Val often socially isolates himself from others and appears anxious. He often walked around by himself and would talk to himself, had

difficulty establishing friendships with peers, and had difficulties expressing himself when he became frustrated with others or when involved in other difficult situations. He continues to struggle with social reciprocity and often communicates being unhappy/ sad. Val was reported transitioning to AsIP as an articulate student who was very knowledgeable about historical events; however, he continued to demonstrate difficulties with joining in classroom group activities, forming positive social interactions with teachers and peers, and following teachers' directions. Teachers also reported that Val demonstrated challenges completing class projects, would argue with teachers, and had significant difficulty adapting to changes in schedules and routines. His processing deficit in nonverbal reasoning skills as well as his challenges with pragmatics and socialization limited ability to adapt to changes in routine, lack of social or emotional reciprocity, and extreme preoccupation with specific topics continue to impede his progress and involvement in the general education program.

Student 10: Taylor is an African American female, age 22, who graduated from the AsIP in 2010 and is currently completing required coursework at Diablo Valley College to transition as a transfer student to California State University East Bay. Taylor is a petite African American young lady with long curls that reach down her back to her waist-line. Taylor has very deliberate small movements and speech patterns, each chosen with care. This study culminates the student participant interviews with Taylor as articulate of the continuing and profound contribution to the researcher's professional development and the development of the AsIP. Taylor was the first graduate of the program to volunteer as a returning mentor for incoming freshman as well as ongoing participants and transitioning graduates to college. Anticipating my position as coordinator of the program Taylor's mom spoke to me on the phone for several hours in the summer 2005 explaining the complexity and challenges Taylor experienced in school. This

began the in-depth relationship with my students and the multi-leveled context of the transformative education as the program coordinator and advocate. Taylor is extremely insightful and articulate and is literally a window into the mind of a young adult with Asperger Syndrome that this researcher has the unique advantage of knowing. Taylor's initial tests result in 2004 report average cognitive, motor, and visual development functioning. DAS test results report Taylor used careful analytical problem solving on Matrices tasks in completing patterns and analogies. On Sequential and Quantitative Reasoning Taylor demonstrated strong mental calculation skills, although on these non-verbal tasks, fatigue and motivation impacted her ability to persevere. Taylor has a well-developed vocabulary demonstrated conversationally and on tests, however when asked to explain further during testing her responses were often an unwillingness to do so. Taylor's visual-motor integration reported in the very low average range.

CHAPTER 5

EMERGENT THEMES

This qualitative study of students with Asperger Syndrome participating in a transition program to post-secondary education and life-goals was guided by initial questions proposed for this investigation (questions 1-4) and additional questions that arose through the process of analysis (questions 5-6):

1. How do students identify and see themselves and others who share their own experiences and situations?
2. What is the students' interpretation of the world/situation in which they find themselves within AsIP/Ethos?
3. How do constructivist learning practices change student performance outcomes that demonstrate the idea of the socially constructed "disabled learning?"
4. How does constructivist learning and transformative education affect the integration of students on the spectrum, particularly those who are mildly affected?
5. How has transformed student identity and learning experience impacted engagement/outcomes in school and life?
6. Where in the realm of education does the student with ASD (specifically with Asperger Syndrome) exist and can be included within a structure of constructivist learning?

Supported by evidence derived from analyses of collected data from interviews, observations, and artifacts with independent reviewers, three major themes embedded within two overarching conceptual domains emerged. The first conceptual domain is the *Social Construction of Learning and Language*, within which is the first emergent theme, *Self-Perception* (how students constructed identities), and the second theme *Connectedness* (with members of AsIP and others). The second conceptual domain is *Radical Individualism as Community Kaleidoscope* within which the third emergent theme is *Transformative Shifts in Awareness* regarding how students' view of themselves and learning experiences altered engagement in school and life. Table 5 provides a summary of conceptual domains and emergent themes corresponding to guiding questions and supporting evidence. Appendix 7 includes a data display with a comprehensive overview of supporting evidence for emergent themes from interview data as constructed through the process of analysis. These findings are described in more detail in the following section while integrated with relevant theory and research on related socio-phenomena. The emergent themes of *Self-Perception*, *Connectedness* and *Transformative Shifts in Awareness* serve to elucidate the socio-complexity in the learning community from an ontological perspective that considers student pathology in relation to constructivist learning pedagogy.

Table 5

Summary of Emergent Themes within Conceptual Domains Corresponding to Guiding Questions and Supporting Evidence

Conceptual Domain 1: Social Construction of Learning and Language			
Guiding Questions			
1.	How do students identify and see themselves and others who share their experiences in the social learning environment?	2.	What is the students' interpretation of the world/ situation in which they find themselves in AsIP/ Ethos?
3.	How do constructivist learning practices change student performance outcomes that demonstrate the idea of the socially constructed "disabled learning?"		
Supporting Evidence			
Emergent Theme 1: Self-Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation Atypical Experiences and Social Variances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inner growth and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intrapersonal Empowerment
Emergent Theme 2: Connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introspective Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social / Personal Identity Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformative Introspection
Conceptual Domain 2: Radical Individualism as Community Kaleidoscope			
Guiding Questions			
4.	How does constructivist learning and transformative education affect the integration of students on the spectrum, particularly those who are mildly affected?	5.	How has transformed student identity and learning experience impacted engagement/ outcomes in school and life?
6.	Where in the realm of education can the student with ASD (specifically with Asperger Syndrome) be included in constructivist learning environment?		
Supporting Evidence			
Emergent Theme 3: Transformative Shifts in Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation through communication Transformative thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discourse with others Re-constructing a healthy identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal triumphs Personal development for social community / school success

Conceptual Domain 1: Social Constructs of Learning and Language

Guided by initial questions, the first overarching conceptual domain to emerge derives from what Dudley-Marling (2004) conveyed in his article, “The Social Construction of Learning Disabilities.” Accordingly, the underpinning technical gaze that dominates learning disabilities theory and practice is the assumption that learning disabilities are a pathology that resides in the heads of individual students. His critique of the ideology of individualism situates individual success and failure in the heads of individuals as a means of introducing an alternative perspective—social constructivism—that locates learning and learning problems in the context of human relations and activity. The primary argument developed here is that one cannot be learning disabled on one’s own. It takes a complex system of interactions performed in just the right way, at the right time; on the stage we call school to make a learning disability. This is reflected in how the participating students have come to identify and see themselves from the context of the socially constructed disabled learning environment and the impact of this perception on performance outcomes.

Emergent Theme 1: Self-perception

Guided by questions 1, 2, and 3, analyses of the data revealed the emergent theme of self-perception. The findings suggest that over the course of their school experience the participants’ self-perception evolved as they constructed identities as learners and individuals. The data revealed a pattern in which the learning disabled construct impacted their self-perception as learners and individuals early in their school experience. In particular, interview data revealed students’ self-perception as influenced by isolation and atypical experiences and social variances. The underlined language is to draw attention the supporting evidence within each emergent

theme as indicated in the table above of the Summary of Emergent Themes within Conceptual Domains Corresponding to Guiding Questions as supportive Evidence. Through participation in the AsIP program, their self-perception transformed as a reflection of inner growth and development and intrapersonal empowerment. The following is a summary of representative supporting evidence of the students' experiences as their self-perception transformed.

After independent editorial review of student interviews by an English professor who was the editor of the study, she offered insight based on the collective responses:

I sense an array of emotional responses about their being identified as having Asperger. Roland seems most well-adjusted. With others, I sense some anger, underlying hostility, and wariness of the general population of students. Some of these self-assessments are really very moving, very honest, and authentic. Others, while less articulate, clearly indicate a struggle toward self-expression, and maybe frustration with that. I see Roland as high functioning and he tends to stand out the most; at the same time, I also see others (Jules, Alley, maybe Dante) who may not be as high functioning offering some very clear insights, though they may struggle a bit with language and articulation of thoughts. Mainly I get a sense of their struggles through the school system (personal communication / Andrzejczyk, PhD CSUEB).

As the Intervention Specialist Bejon stated in Chapter 4 regarding the documentary a former student filmed early in the program, “. . . Every student in the documentary reported an overwhelming feeling of sadness and depression.” Understanding this trend in student participants, as researcher and coordinator, this investigator sought to discover the common

origin of isolation among students by exploring the correlation between expressed student anger and depression and the origin of student identity constructed in early learning experiences. While these experiences may not be able to completely account for diagnosed clinical depression, a common experience revealed a relationship between question 1: *How students perceive identity of themselves and others who share their experience and situation* and levels of student outcome.

The following representative interview data show how early school experience was an agent for depression and anger, which was associated with students' self-perception of isolation.

Q: Describe your experience in elementary and middle school socially (as a friend), academically (as a student) and personally (inside feelings).

Kyle: Ummm pretty harsh I didn't want to get too far out of control. Middle school was OK. I had to make sure I didn't steer down the wrong direction.

Naomi: Slowly distancing myself from the world.

Aaron: I don't think I can say I had any friends. I probably did OK academically cause it was kinda easy, its elementary school and I don't really remember that part....Middle school on the other, I suffered academically and personally I feel ashamed of that part of my life. Well not too ashamed more like it's one of those things you look back on and ask yourself, oh, why did I do that?

Roland: During those times, I wasn't very social at all. I only had like 5 friends. I was considered awkward, quiet, dirty, and weird. I flunked the third grade because I chose not to do any homework. I didn't earn the best grades in middle school either, because I was really huge on procrastinating. I felt alone. I felt angry at everyone around me. I felt sad. I felt like I didn't belong anywhere, that no matter where I went, I didn't belong. It was unpleasant, that people would treat me differently. They would either try to avoid me, or they would sweet talk to me like I was that cute little shy boy, instead of a mutual friend. It was pretty rough.

Jasper: Well, geez, I got into a lot of fights.

These student statements communicate the setting as context for academic and social learning community. Jürgen Habermas (1981) has helped us to understand that problem solving and learning may be *instrumental*—learning to manipulate or control the environment or other people to enhance efficacy in improving performance; *impressionistic*—learning to enhance one's impression of others, to present oneself; *normative*—learning oriented to common values and a normative sense of entitlement (members of the group are entitled to expect certain behavior); or *communicative*—learning to understand the meaning of what is being communicated. Early in the school experiences for participating students problem solving and learning are identified as challenging and communicated by students themselves as frustration and shameful. Students express a struggle to manage the environment and the impact their impression has on others; students describe struggling to orient to common values and make meaning of what is being communicated for effective learning and problem solving.

While the diagnoses of Asperger Syndrome may explain *why* these students have specific challenges, it does not articulate *how* (within the learning community) student identities are constructed within this struggle. The following representative interview data provide supporting evidence of *social variance* and *atypical experiences*, which also was associated with students' self-perception of isolation.

Taylor: I actually had a lot of social problems related to my lack of empathy. I remember sitting in class adjacent to this boy named Troy, and wanted to be friends with him but he would not talk to me. I used to make up voices if they didn't wanna be my friend, so I made up a voice for Troy and he looked at me like I was crazy. So I would have a voice and talked to him out loud and I know that was weird, and it relates to my experience with Asperger syndrome cause I know my communication with others there was like a chasm between us. . . .So when things went wrong people assumed I was doing things to create it but it was because I had no one to convey my stress to, so I would take it out on others, and then I would seem like the bully. Really it was misunderstanding and miscommunication. My academics were impacted because my grades were failing from B student to F. I was so depressed my mom had to talk to teachers to get my work load in half.

Dante: Elementary no such thing as a social life, academically it was not my shining moment; I got held back in the third grade. It was before I understood what was going on. Well school, it just made me see how much more contempt I have for it on a deep level.

Taylor: The Star-Belly Sneaches. There were these weird looking creatures Sneaches, the ones with the stars get to do these fun things and the ones that don't can't. The main theme of the story is judgment. What happens is the Sneaches with stars make comments about the ones without. I just seemed like I was one of the Sneaches without the stars, and the teachers never really did anything they just had the bullies sign a contract and that was really ineffective.

Roland: I have to say that kids with Asperger Syndrome have it rough. They really do. I know because I was one of them. . . . It's a common symptom to feel embarrassed about having this title to their name. . . . It is hard, but if you're willing to work for them, and so long as you're committed and patient, you can change their lives around and have people grow to love them.

The students' life experiences provided a starting point for transformational learning, which was evident in their changing self-perceptions as they participated in the AsIP program. Interpretations draw on the works of Armstrong (1985) and Mezirow (1991; 1997). Armstrong (1985) explore youth consciousness inner-connected to cognitive process and stages within child development. Armstrong asserted that when recognized and explored, the conscious mind provided opportunity to promote the individual. Armstrong (1985) suggested scientific methodology, theory collaboration, and teaching with the youthful consciousness as a guide to understanding how cognitive process could develop educational practices. The child will effectively conjoin the state of being characterized by sensation, emotion, volition, and thought with their intellectual process and transform the learning. The primary focus is on understanding what it means biologically and psychologically for information to be present in consciousness

that is, on determining the neural and psychological correlates of consciousness. The majority of experimental studies assess consciousness by asking human subjects for a verbal report of experiences (“Merriam-Webster.com”). During in-depth AsIP discussions, student self- inquiry explored verbal rapport of ontological consciousness. Discussions concern meaningful experiences including learning disabled social phenomena guided by sensation, emotion, volition, and thought with their intellectual process and transform perspective.

Mezirow (1997) stated that we do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as the new material fitted comfortably in our existing frames of reference (or world view for the purposes of question 2: *What is the students’ interpretation of the world as they find themselves in AsIP/Ethos?*) Three common themes characterized Mezirow's theory of the mechanism of transformational learning in the classroom. These were experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse. Mezirow considered critical reflection to be the distinguishing characteristic, as the vehicle by which one questions the validity of his world-view. He identified rational discourse as a catalyst for transformation.

Consistent with these views, the various participants explored the depth and meaning of their various world-views, and articulated those ideas to their instructor and classmates. The following conversation opened up, providing supporting evidence that their self-perception had evolved as voiced through inner growth and development and intrapersonal empowerment.

Jules: Well my idea of the world is hummm, well it’s always the popular people that run the world, but slowly the more intellectuals, more computer literate people are taking over. Well my world per se would be a world where more like where computers have more influence. I think it came from years and years of being forced to look up to people

cause they were the popular ones until I got into the computer world where the little people, the rejects run everything.

Q: How did AsIP affect what is meaningful and important to you/ your interests?

Jules: I think it pretty much helped to expand my interest from playing computer games to actually making them. I think Ethos had some influence on that because it gave me some initiative for what I want to do as a career. And I think that Ethos also helped me in pretty much talking and dealing with people that do not relate to me. Mostly by giving me ahhh, by allowing me to pretty much know how people act and pretty much what their interests are. Like for example, last year when I was put in the music department. I really didn't much wanna play guitar but I did pretty much learn about the music community and what they are like.

Q: What would life be like without this program?

Kyle: It would be really difficult for me and I would just collapse on the ground.

Aaron: I guess I would probably be one of those kids on the news that either got shot, did the shooting and what not, or most likely stay inside and just surf the internet, well not surf the internet or just do nothing at all. This would of course be better cause there seems to be a lot of people who need this but they just cannot.

Jules: Well I would probably not be in college right now and would be locked up in my room playing video games. And I would probably have been just like a shut in.

Val: Without the program I would just be another ordinary person without any kind of critical thinking or insight.

Dante: I don't think I would be able to come to an understanding of myself without the program really. Without this understanding I might have been a completely different person and I might have done completely different things and I might not even be here. I mean physically speaking. If I had made that discovery earlier on and I had made a mistake, I might not be here physically to be honest because I have had that thought before and like what if I didn't figure this out I just might have killed myself because I would have seen no point, and right then and there I may have done something possibly. I am just saying we never really know. Education and academic wise Ethos was important but somewhat small, but personal wise it really did a great deal to impact me, and I might not be here to enjoy any benefits of being 18 possibly.

Emergent Theme 2: Connectedness

Also guided by questions 1, 2 and 3, another theme to emerge was connectedness. Specifically, connecting with members of AsIP and others in the students' social learning community was a paradigm for transformation. Interpretations draw on the notion of linguistics as a causal variable of world-view (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Students become cognizant that they are experiencing learning, community, and the world through constructs developed in language. Franz Boaz (1940) considered to be the founder of Modern Anthropology and Descriptive Linguistic Thought, explained when studying linguistics that we consider the

finite concepts conveyed through spoken language. Boaz asserted if we did not have the language, we were incapable of expressing a concept or thought. Sapir's Linguistic Determination (1966) stated that language determined how we viewed and thought about the world; Strong Determinism (1966), the extreme version of the theory, suggested language actually determined thought. Lisa Delpit (1993) considered the *connectedness* between language, cultural awareness, and cognitive process when teaching other people's children and considered language as a cultural construct that impacted the ability to teach and learn concepts. As the following data support, introspective communication, social/personal identity development and transformative introspection were critical for students to access *connectedness* in community, academics and life-long learning:

Taylor: AsIP I guess helped me realize how important social interactions are and how to understand what people are trying to convey to me. My mom and I used to get into arguments around grades and now I am able to communicate to her that what she was doing wasn't effective and making me more stressed. Now we actually get along just fine and hardly argue anymore. Concerning my education it has helped me to communicate what I need to my teachers and so I am a better student. Teachers like me and wanna be my friend and students come up to me and like what I have to say. This is so different for me because I would never have thought people would actually be coming up to me with positive feedback and telling me I am actually articulate. (This testimony is from the same student earlier share about the experience with the boy sitting next to her she wanted to be friends with and would 'make up' his voice/participation conversationally.)

Dante: 2012 was a very transformative year talking a lot about myself more and my history not doing the work and breaking the rules and there is this entire introspection about how I act and what I have done and what I need to change and how I feel in general. Completely changed how I look at the world it wasn't so much in anger; it is like I had determination but I had a lot of anger, now I still have determination but not a lot of anger. A combination of what the program gave me and my own thinking in general. The biggest transformation for me I think was my perception of women. Not like I was misogynistic or anything, more like they weren't there, like they were there not that special like a bag of potato chips they're just there. Now things have completely changed on that front. And thanks to the teachers in the program I don't see them as bags of potato chips, I see them as like water systems are today, like for some reason extremely vital. And to like my mental health. At first when I was going through this introspection it was like at night, I cried a lot; I had thoughts of suicide during that time it was a really seismic change. So yeah like being in the program has been beneficial cause like if I had to find this out like much later when I was already an adult I don't think I would have coped with it as easy as then I was in the program. Still it was a very transformative yet depressing year.

Val: I think I've come to this view because of the teachers of ASIP, I mean instead of "This is how you should think and feel" it was more like, " How do you honestly feel right now? Who are you at your very core?"

A significant amount of research reports social isolation within the Autism community (“autism-society.org”). Rather than focus on the reasons for social isolation, or the complex set of individual circumstances for each participant, findings in this study report best practices as determined by the research for developing community. As stated earlier in the AsIP community environment section, within school context, students relate to headquarters as an extension of living community due to meaningful *connectedness*.

Roland: It affects me because people are what is most meaningful to me. Teaching me how to interact with other people really made me grow to love community as I put these skills I’ve learned into practice.

Dante: Well life before there was always something there something wrong and there were a lot of problems all the time. Then as I got older I realized my interpretation was responsible for how I saw things and handled them and so experienced them. So now I kinda view life as a series of opportunities I am able to afford myself based on how well I can adapt to a certain situation and I have a certain amount of control even if the circumstances in that situation are not necessarily ideal at the time.

Taylor: I think I can identify with Dante a lot. It is interesting because it seems we came from the same environment and psychological stages of life like a sibling I guess; I don’t have any. It is kinda comforting to know there are others in the same social state, like having a group of comrades. It is kinda a crazy history when you think we came so far when there are so many stigmas associated. It is like we are not even the same people

anymore we have progressed so much. For example I remember the time when the career counselor came over, and we were to make vision boards, and Jasper made a picture of a pirate and was hiding under the table and now it is interesting to see how everyone turned out, like now Jasper is in college. I think that in the transition having people around you and staff that is just as quirky as you are; you share an experience and understand what you are trying to communicate even if it is not really appropriate at the time they understand and recognize the alternatives on how to better interact with others when you are affirmed and not judged even if the method of communication we are using may seem unacceptable. To expand a little I think it can be attributed that when people are judges it doesn't make them wanna change; it seems like just another voice and doesn't offer any real improvement. But when you have people around and understand the different perspective it helps to see a different way when others understand our point of view.

Connectedness with learning community enabled students to advocate as responsible for their life-long learning and to articulate specific interests for constructing individualized learning plans. Overall, as students communicate the transformative experience from the early school experience to their current experience, it became clear they had a new sense of performance ability. Students communicate an optimistic outlook in academic goals and participation in developing community networks. Through AsIP community, Ethos developed for students to support collaborative pluralistic higher education constructivist development. Students reported confidence in accomplishing goals and do not identify as *disabled* learners. Students have found individualized structures to create pathways for success. Reflecting on early learning experience

and current, an observable increase in self-esteem replaced depression in their self-perception, which paralleled their experience of increased connectedness.

Conceptual Domain 2: Radical Individualism as Community Kaleidoscope

One of the most frequent grievances expressed by AsIP students is that in education you are not allowed to be an individual. Having autism is an individual autonomous experience in the world. The participants are students with radical individualism, yet they report a strong intention as connected to learning community. One of our most powerful cultural myths is the self-sufficient, “rugged individual,” who overcomes life’s adversities on her or his own through sheer determination, neither needing nor accepting the help of others. Through the lens of rugged individualism, those who need help (those who are unable to confront life’s problems on their own) are often seen as inept (lacking determination or skill) and those who accept help as weak (Dudley-Marling 2004). An in-depth understanding of oneself and relatedness to community and social constructs discussed as *self-perception and connectedness* allowed students to look outside of their formative context of low performance, to re-construct their identity.

Emergent Theme 3: Transformative Shifts in Awareness

Guided by questions 4, 5, and 6, analyses of the data revealed the emergent theme of Transformative Shifts in Awareness. The findings suggest a common pattern whereby the evolution of their shifts in awareness was influenced by a number of factors through participation in the AsIP program including: transformation through communication, transformative thinking, discourse with others, re-constructing a healthy identity, internal triumphs, and personal development for social community/school success.

Student interview data suggests that the participants experienced a transformation through communication, which contributed to *Transformative Shifts in Awareness*.

Interpretations draw on research pertaining to “Transformative Research Design” that gives close consideration to individuals who experience discrimination and oppression, including but not limited to race/ethnicity, disability, immigrant status, political conflicts, sexual orientation, poverty, gender and age (Mertens, 2010).

The following is a report generated using the Hyper Researcher Program after the researcher entered Intervention Specialists statements as narrative text data and coding. The report presents the data as frequency of words used as codes with combined Intervention Specialists responses. The table represents *transformation through communication* by capturing the frequency of coded words used by Intervention Specialists to capture the specific areas reported as significant in supporting student transformation.

Table 6

HyperResearcher Intervention Specialists Coded Data Report.

Code	Total	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Bar Graph
Advocate	4	0	4	2	2.828	
awareness of isolation	4	2	2	2	0	
communication	7	0	7	3.5	4.95	
confidence	1	0	1	0.5	0.707	
difference awareness	2	1	1	1	0	
past anger	2	0	2	1	1.414	
personalized plans	7	0	7	3.5	4.95	
self-awareness	6	1	5	3	2.828	
socio-emotional support	8	0	8	4	5.657	
support	3	1	2	1.5	0.707	
trust	9	0	9	4.5	6.364	

Providing additional supporting evidence for this emergent theme, students also experienced transformative thinking. The data are closely aligned with a set of assumptions and procedures used in Transformative Research Design (Mertens, 2009), as follows:

- Underlying assumptions that rely on ethical stances of inclusion and challenge oppressive social structures.
- An entry process into the community that is designed to build trust and make goals and strategies transparent.
- Dissemination of findings in ways that encourage use of the results to enhance social justice and human rights.

Question: How do you perceive or look at life now?

Roland: I can't keep rejecting who I am. It's who I am, and it's my choice to think of it as a gift, or a curse. I choose to think of it as a gift. Why? I think it's a gift because this was a test for me, a test for me to change my life around and turn me into a walking testimony. I can use this to inspire people by saying, "Hey. I had problems in the past. I was different from everyone else, and I had it rough. You're not the only ones. I learned to accept this and turn myself around. I did it. So can you.

Jasper: I haven't had a chance for so long because it has been years but I guess I would say...like a boss!

Val: I feel like life is very random; you know it takes you places you'd thought you'd never go but life is full of pleasant surprises.

Dante: This may be difficult; at first what was important to me was in the abstract, like political stuff was important to me. Ethos changed that while I still have important stuff to me in the abstract and politics; now I am focused more on me in the program and much more tangible things. Like what I said about intimate relationships that is what Ethos was relaying to me personally, not Dante the politician the writer. It's not really academic the effect the program has had on me; it was personal since understanding the idea that I had like a want a huge want for an intimate a personal relationship has completely changed my thought patterns. While I still have outside bitterness for things like the school but it was my depression of not having that intimate relationship that really affects me. That's what the program was; it was interpersonal that is what I found was extremely important. For revealing the whole thing for my want of an interpersonal relationship and my sadness of not having that and the anger that I have for having to wait for it. So that is why I consider Ethos more interpersonal than academic. Because of AsIP inside of school I think I have done better more performance wise even though I really don't like the busy work. As for, well I think it has more of an impact on my life because of what I said earlier.

Discourse with others was also revealed in the data, further contributing supporting evidence to *Transformative Shifts in Awareness*. The sociological phenomena of discourse, as used here, is dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented, in support of competing interpretations of learning, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view. The students in AsIP learned by analyzing the related experiences to arrive at a common understanding that holds until new evidence or arguments presented themselves in in-depth discussions. Students transformed their frames of reference through critical reflection. In-depth

discussions of interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of world view were considered. Students became critically reflective, as they were involved in communicative learning practices (Mezirow, 1998). A paradigm shift occurred when participating students began to engage in discourse that challenged the social constructs of learning. In-depth discussions created an opening for critical thinking and analysis of diagnosed categorically low performance outcomes as normative or expected.

Related to the role of language in discourse with others, it is noteworthy that students differed with respect to how much and how clearly they shared information and thoughts in their interview sessions. While Roland and Dante were expansive and explicit, consider the vague and minimal articulation of Alley. When asked how he feels about life relative to his experience as a participant in AsIP, Alley answered, "I never really thought about life. I don't know how to describe it. I guess it feels like it is all connected in some way." Alley communicates transformative relatedness with AsIP curriculum, learning community and life-long learning through language in the context of academic institution construct. Considering Alley's general disinterested demeanor and anticipated minimal engagement during interviews, these few words are significant to determine shifts in how learning is occurring. In-depth group discussions guided articulation of a deeper connection to curriculum through language acquisition cognitive development.

Acquisition of language is a subconscious process which individuals are not aware of as it is happening. When new knowledge is acquired, the acquirer generally does not realize that he or she possesses any new knowledge. Both adults and children can subconsciously acquire language, either written or oral. It is similar to the process children undergo when learning their native language. Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in target language, during which the

acquirer is focused on meaning rather than form (Krashen, 2005). As such, this parallels the experiences of the diverse students in the AsIP program.

Taylor: Through conversations and the use of language I have become closer to my fellow students. By just discussing their interests and being flexible enough to talk about what they want to talk about and recognizing their boundaries you get to know them better as people. It can be a bit difficult when everyone is not flexible. When we were deciding what to eat once no one could decide, and I was like, “Why can’t everyone just be flexible and James was like, you’re talking to a group of people with Asperger Syndrome! It has helped me more to recognize what I think is important. For example toward the end of high school, I learned the value of communication with debate and interactions with staff in the program. At home everyone sees things more black and white and the program opened me to other ways to look at things and reading more about life and philosophy, that there are so many different ways to see the world in which we live.

Dante: As for life I have to say in the Ethos program it made the word intimate much more important it moved it up, like it was a word I knew but I didn’t know what its importance is. It really didn’t have importance to me but now it is a word that is very important to me and very important in my vocabulary, the word intimate. So that is the impact Ethos has had on my life.

Re-constructing a healthy identity was also evident in student interview data, which supported the emergent theme of Transformative Shifts in Awareness. The following are representative examples of students' voices.

Taylor: Because of AsIP I recognize I have responsibility for my own education--you know the little things like taking notes and my learning style and what works for me, how to communicate with my teachers and what I need and because of that my grades went straight up and now I am an honor student in my college. In life it has taught me to be careful of my use of language and what I convey to other people. To be aware of others reactions and how I am communicating relates to their reactions and also taught me a little more about me and my own interests.

Val: AsIP changed my life in that they saw me as an individual instead of just another face in the classroom. I feel that every student should be treated in this way instead of using a cookie cutter method of teaching, which is what general education felt like. It's had a huge impact on me in school and outside of school in that I feel that I can freely express myself as an individual and to always be myself instead of conforming to the way others act and think. AsIP affected the quality of my education in that I think in and outside the box so I'm able to understand things better.

Roland: I used to have it mentality that I wanted to do things my way, nobody else's. . . . I used to think that there was no place for me, that I never belonged anywhere but my home. Now, it's differentLet go of the past, but don't ever forget it. Use it to inspire

people. Be open to all suggestions because no matter how smart you are, you can't make it by yourselfThese skills I've learned, I put them into practice, and with that, I've made countless friends inside of school, inside of my church, and now I communicate with my parents a lot better. They no longer baby me and think of me as a vulnerable little puppy that needed to be protected at all times; they now think of me as an independent man who everyone loves and respects. Yes, they respect me.

The following is an example of group session/ discussion that shows that the conscious impact of discourse with others is connected to formulating a healthy identity. Transform the language and transform the learning identity. In this example, students are asked to participate in an abilities awareness activity by identifying specific behaviors associated with *disability*. The title, ADD--Deficits and Strengths is written on the board. In column the A, participants are asked to call out a list of characteristics associated with the ADD. Students typically called out *can't focus, easily distracted, off task, busy-body, annoying* etc. Students are asked to consider social implications of these associated behaviors in the learning environment specifically considering the impact that language may have on student learning. In column B, participants are asked for alternative descriptors avoiding negative implications, specifically potential positive characteristics. Specifically, students are asked, "What are some other ways of thinking about these characteristics?" Typically students shout out *curious, has a lot of different thoughts about stuff, day dreamer, big imagination*, etc. Table 7 includes the list of ADD deficits and strengths that the students generated through group discussion across columns A and B.

Table 7

ADD Deficits and Strengths Generated through Group Discussion

Column A	Column B
Short Attention Span	<i>Varied Interests</i>
Irresponsible	<i>Independent</i>
Distractible	<i>Easily Engaged</i>
Hyperactive	<i>Energetic</i>
Unpredictable	<i>Exciting</i>
Impulsive	<i>Adventurous</i>
Loud	<i>Projects Confidence</i>
Stubborn	<i>Strong Willed</i>
Poor Planner	<i>Spontaneous</i>
Disorganized	<i>Creative Management</i>
Willful	<i>Determined</i>
Bossy	<i>Leader</i>
Argumentative	<i>Communicative</i>
Test Limits	<i>Curious</i>
Manipulative	<i>Insightful</i>
Anxious	<i>Concerned/ Sensitive</i>
Impatient	<i>Eager</i>
Explosive	<i>Passionate</i>
Disobedient	<i>Free Spirited</i>
Defiant	<i>Dramatic</i>
Angry	<i>Complex</i>

Institutions are human inventions designed to fulfill specific social and cultural needs of groups of people (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Language communicates how the world of learning is occurring for the student in the context of academic institution. It is relevant to student engagement and correlates to performance outcomes. Language used during student group in-depth discussions guide self-inquiry and articulate access to meaningful connections with curriculum and life-long learning. Students begin to understand the impact of language within institutional learning constructs, which ultimately help to shape the formation of a healthy identity.

Evidence suggests that participants experienced internal triumphs, which offered additional support for *Transformative Shifts in Awareness* as an emergent theme. Initially,

students expressed animosity feeling ostracized because they were “different” from other students. This was influenced by the cultural context of schooling, saturated with the ideology of individualism, that Learning Disability theory and practice are performed. Certainly, reliance on the scientific, medical, and psychological discourses for making meaning of disability discourages conceptualizations of difference other than as an individual burden (Reid & Valle 2004). Diagnostic placement for students challenged by difference allows education systems to recognize difference without blame, or responsibility. Accepted diagnoses and/or disability assume apparent cause. The AsIP considers learning environment *causal* to student ability and advocacy. In courtrooms, legislatures, workplaces, and playgrounds across the country, Americans routinely assert their rights as individuals. In this conception, it is a given that although one person’s rights should not infringe on another’s, in most circumstances the rights of the group cannot trump the rights of the individual (Moufe, 1996). The following quote is representative of students’ transformative shift in awareness as influenced by *internal triumphs*.

Roland: There’s always a way to relate to someone, no matter what your situation isEvery one of us has an example to share. With those examples you can reach out to kids with Asperger Syndrome and help them see that they are not alone, that they can change themselves, not to change what other people think about them, but for themselves.

Transformative shifts in awareness here pertains to discourse of student success rarely considered in the context of removing conditions from student experience. Parents and schools associate removal of services as deficit of support, neglecting student and circumstances. Typically discourse is driven by requests of additional supports, resources, opportunities, etc. This transformative experience concerns removal of inner-personal obstacles that impeded

access to performance. Transformative shifts in students appear as *removal* of inept perception, functioning and disconnection through understanding the decisive, given the ability to construct alternatives. The study of transformational learning emerged with the work of Jack Mezirow (1981, 1994, 1997). Transformational learning is defined as learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, especially learning experiences which shape the learner and produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift, which affects the learner's subsequent experiences (Clark 1993). Transformational learning (Mezirow 1981) developed the concepts of “meaning perspectives”, one's overall world-view, and “meaning schemes,” smaller components which contained specific knowledge, values, and beliefs about one's experiences. A number of meaning schemes work together to generate one's meaning perspective. Meaning perspectives are acquired passively during childhood and youth, and are the target of the transformation that occurs through experience during adulthood. They operate as perceptual filters that determine how an individual will organize and interpret the meaning of his/her life's experiences (Mezirow 1981).

While working with a graduate student, the investigator asked if she would read student data and construct a table to reflect what she saw as trends in student experiences that demonstrate transformation. Table 8 shows a shift from negative to positive trends that reflect students' internal triumphs.

Table 8

Negative and Positive Trends

Negative Trends	
Superficial	Lack of a deeper theme, connection.
No Effect	Articulated no impact of.
Egocentric	Response is primarily based upon their own interests, doesn't account for well-rounded perspective.
Social Avoidance	Expressing a desire/ scenario in which they are avoiding a group of others.
Destructive	Expressing a desire/scenario in which they express inflicting harm, discomfort or unpleasantness on others.
Inflicted Social Ridicule	Report or desire of ridiculing others.
Victim Social Ridicule	Report of being a victim of social ridicule.
Regret	Expression now one doesn't have a positive opinion of choices made by oneself in the past.
Negative Affect	Reports of negative emotions.
Unclear	Meaning of the statement is not able to be fully interpreted.
Positive Trends	
Community	Discovering a sense of belonging in another group of individuals.
Self-Awareness	Expresses clear awareness of their personality or condition.
Acceptance	Where one concedes to a social reality.
Positive Self-Perception	Reports view of self in a positive manner.
Self-Exploration	Articulates process of change in perception, or new introspective insights.
Desire for Connection	Expressed desire to connect with others at an intimate level.

Evidence of participants' personal development for social community/ school success contributed support for *Transformative Shifts in Awareness* as an emergent theme.

Postmodernists, while acknowledging the agency of individual human beings, nonetheless argue that individual identities are constructed in the context of social relations (Gergen, 1990) and, moreover, that individuals have multiple identities that emerge in the various social and cultural contexts, what Gee (1990) called Discourses, in which they participated. From this perspective the identity of *radical individualism* revealed in the study as a contextual domain in the complex of social interactions at school is itself situated in a broader social, political, and cultural context. In the context of the AsIP program, students became advocates for individual perspective while contributing to the learning and professional community. In-depth group discussions considered how identity in the learning environment is constructed, and is malleable to being reconstructed.

This allowed the student to be responsible for individualism and contribute to designing and developing life-long learning. The following are representative examples of the students' voiced personal development for social community/ school success.

Roland: As I said before, I know what it's like because I used to be like them at a point in time. A lot of people say that there is no cure for Asperger Syndrome. In my case, I was documented to have Asperger Syndrome, but I no longer have qualities of those with that Syndrome. I can either say that I have cured myself from it with tons of help from the AsIP program, or I can say that I have overcome this and became a completely different person. Either way, it is the truth.

Jules: Um well I guess my friends some of them are trying to go into the same field which is game design and like uh we can all work together and get new ideas.

Taylor: I guess just recognizing and acknowledging the consequences of crossing other people's boundaries. If I try to push my agenda, after a while you won't even have a group of people anymore.

Jasper: Now? Then ummm then I didn't really care about what the other person thought as long as they didn't mess with me and get in my way then that's OK. Now I try to see people's point of view to understand what people are going through cause I had a lot to do in my life and I try to understand people and what they are going through.

Reflection

The evidence suggests that participation in the AsIP program influenced students' personal development in social community and school success. The students became aware that the context of school and learning is decisive. The students became clear that the context that they had been relating to was as a *disabled* learner and their behaviors and way of being were correlated to that context. Students decisively began to shift context and take action in participation. Student behavior then correlated in developing individualized education plan/individualized learning plan or individualized action plan. A systems change approach design of traditional academic discipline and teaching moment life experiences influenced students' understanding of complex academic and social constructs. These skills helped to prepare the students for higher education goals by facilitating meaningful social interactions, providing clear expectations, determining an appropriate curriculum accommodation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Implications of the Research

Drawing on the perspective of educational leadership and social justice, this dissertation explored the transformative process for 10 students identified with mild forms of ASD as influenced by their experience participating in AsIP/Ethos, a progressive inclusive high-school/transition program in an urban public school setting. Employing a multiple case-study research design using qualitative methods grounded in the ethnographic tradition of anthropology, this study aimed to elucidate students' experiences. Specifically, the study examined the complex relationship concerning individualized eligibility, diagnoses, and range of expression in core social characteristics, and access to academic delivery. It further explored the process that coordinates transformation in the students while equitably providing a potentially exceptional education in the AsIP/Ethos program. The three major themes emerged and explored in the study are embedded within two overarching conceptual domains. Within the domain of *Social Construction of Learning and Language* the theme of *Self-Perception* revealed how students constructed identities while the theme of *Connectedness* revealed how students developed a sense of community and belonging with members of AsIP and others. Within the domain of *Radical Individualism as Community Kaleidoscope*, the theme of *Transformative Shifts in Awareness* reflected how students' views of themselves and learning experiences altered engagement in school and life.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined paradigms as systemic sets of beliefs that helped us to make sense of the world. This can be demonstrated with respect to beliefs concerning students on the Autism Spectrum (specifically students with Asperger Syndrome) diagnostic evaluation to

determine psychological and academic challenges. Certainly, reliance on the scientific, medical, and psychological discourses for making meaning of disability discourages conceptualizations of difference other than as an individual burden (Reid & Valle, 2004). Participants in this study had no expectations for advanced degrees in early academic evaluation. Radically unexpected, each participant's transition demonstrates accomplishments in advanced academic and personal life-long learning. An alternative concept of learning construct, within the discourse of individualism, considers that learning and learning problems dwell in activities and practices situated in relations rather than in the heads of individual students (Gergen, 1990). This next section considers recommendations and policy implications drawn from the AsIP/Ethos study for the larger learning community practices and policy. The original questions that guided the investigation are used to inform conclusions from the findings and are *non-sequentially* integrated into the section with the aim to merge the findings with conclusion.

This qualitative study of students with Asperger Syndrome participating in a transition program to post-secondary education and life-goals was guided by initial questions proposed for this investigation (questions 1-4) and additional questions that arose through the process of analysis (questions 5-6):

1. How do students identify and see themselves and others who share their own experiences and situations?
2. What is the students' interpretation of the world/situation in which they find themselves within AsIP/Ethos?
3. How do constructivist learning practices change student performance outcomes that demonstrate the idea of the socially constructed "disabled learning?"

4. How does constructivist learning and transformative education affect the integration of students on the spectrum, particularly those who are mildly affected?
5. How has transformed student identity and learning experience impacted engagement/outcomes in school and life?
6. Where in the realm of education does the student with ASD (specifically with Asperger Syndrome) exist and can be included within a structure of constructivist learning?

Schools as Organizations

The outcomes of this investigation have implications concerning understanding school as an organization within the larger context of society. The Greek word *organon* as defined by Merriam-Webster is a tool used to carry out a task, meet goals and objectives. Schools are systems used to meet goals and objectives within society. Schools are not traditionally thought of in terms of organizations; however, schools function as organizations by design. Organizational theorists suggest that to improve school productivity, we can research and examine how organizations function within power dynamics, how decisions are made and enforced, and incentives. The two areas this section considers regarding schools as organizations are:

- The conflict of teaching according to traditional instructional practices vs. making adjustments according to the needs and readiness of the individual students.
- Restrictions on school community based structures and activities to enhance curricular design and implementation.

Bureaucracy within Organizations

How does constructivist learning and transformative education affect the integration of students on the spectrum, particularly those who are mildly affected?

This research question is addressed as this section considers the two above areas in the context of school as an organization. When considering schools as an organization, bureaucracy is correlated to function. Chubb and Moe (1990) reported bureaucratic limitations on public school led to poor student performance. Smith and Meier (1994) reported bureaucracy was increased as public schools implemented programs to address low student performance. This is important phenomena regarding AsIP and for the larger complex of decentralization at school site control, concerning progressive implementation of developing special programs. With specific regard to AsIP, consider the earlier concern regarding appropriate diagnosis and the growing number of students with Autism and related disorders currently educated in public school systems. This concern is substantiating conversation regarding provisional supports offered within unified districts. Inner-city schools consistently produce low performing students despite policy implementing specialized supports (Smith & Meier, 1995). Bilingual and special education services require smaller class sizes, specialized teachers, larger staff, committees, and programs that call for more administration and bureaucracy to manage school functions due to more challenging issues.

The outcomes of this study point to the need to lower bureaucratic involvement at site level since cultural knowledge and solutions of the community are more intimately understood and managed when decentralized. Transformative education is an example of constructivist learning design rooted in discourse, minimizing complex curricular reform implementation and bureaucracy. The Data Center Research (2010) explained that sustainable solutions to social, economic, and environmental inequities emerge from community knowledge and collective experiences; they are not isolated to statistical information and policy experts. Communities have knowledge experts with authentic experiences viable enough to support student success that has

historically been excluded from curriculum development and school design. Reports (that inform curriculum development and reform) written in statistical jargon cost money, produce inaccessible information to the community, and perpetuate bureaucracy (Data Center, 2010). Data Center's *How to Build Legitimacy Behind Your Voice* (2010) considered how the legitimacy of experts has impacted community and how to gather and disseminate information based on the audience because what was considered legitimate could vary by audience. The specific program design of the AsIP illustrates that moving academic community decisions from the national to the state or district level is less significant; however, the individual school community *does* make a difference, through progressive program development at site level to address community needs (Walberg, Paik, Komukai, & Freeman 2000).

School Leadership

How do students identify and see themselves and others who share their own experiences and situations?

Another area to consider based on the outcomes of this study is the legitimacy of school leadership, which becomes more significant when considering the sociopolitical and sociocultural concerns at the school site (Anderson, 1996; Giroux, 1992; McLaren, 2003). Historically, centrally appointed school leaders are not by profession trained in sociology, nor are they professionally trained to be responsible for *how* they manage school design as a direct impact on *how* the community responds to issues of inequities. School leaders view the sociological and sociopolitical issues within community through the lens of personal history, beliefs, and professional experience. If these are in conflict with school community ideologies, school leaders may create “legitimizing myths” regarding social constructs (Anderson 1996). These myths may perpetuate inequities rather than resolve conflicts between leader perspectives

and organizational ideologies (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, Wahlstrom 2004), reported in an article written for the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement. Currently 88% of principals in the United States are White (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). Diversity within the administrative pool would benefit all populations of students to include diverse learners for countless lower-performing students on campus across the US. Ryan (2003) reported administrators did not recognize racism to be a factor in lower performing schools. Evans (2007) recognized that the significant impact of leadership, along with personal and professional identity, influenced sociopolitical and sociocultural conditions at the school site and determined if status quo was challenged or maintained.

To examine how leaders manage school site sociopolitical and sociocultural dynamics, consider the difference between micro and macro theories of sociology. Micro theory examines inner-personal individual dynamics within the community; macro theory examines broader society and public relations. The findings of this study suggest focus for school site leadership practices on micro learning community to build school designs intended, then, to impact broader society and public relations, concerned with educational leadership for social justice.

Potential Strategies

Ferris (1992) identified essential areas for decision control at site level to be budget, curriculum, and personnel. Sizer (1992) stated that the structural concept of decentralization was drawn from the work of Williamson (1975), Chandler (1977), and Williamson and Ouchi (1981), who have described the decentralized structure as the multidivisional or M-form structure. Within this analytical framework, the U-form (unitary or functional organization) is inherently centralized, while the M-form (multidivisional) is decentralized. The critical feature of the M-form is that each subunit is sufficiently (but not completely) self-contained so that it can be

assessed with respect to performance (Williamson, 1975). Because each subunit can be accurately evaluated, each can be granted decision authority.

- *Budget:* Poverty is strongly correlated with race and ethnicity (Mishel, Bernstein & Allegretto, p. 316, from data supplied by the US Bureau of the Census). For the purpose of this study, federal reform efforts that address poverty conditions associated with low-income students who have traditionally struggled in American public schools include marginalized populations of atypically developing students. One of the distinctive features of the Edmonton approach (“The Pride of Edmonton”) is a funding mechanism that assigns a weight to each student based on such characteristics as the family's income level, whether the student is a native English speaker, is gifted and talented, or diagnosed as learning disabled. Under this Weighted Student Formula (WSF) for instance, the maximum weighted student receives nearly five times the money per year as the minimum weighted student, and each takes the money to the public school of his or her choice (Ouchi & Segal 2003, pp. 87-90; Petko 2005). This funding approach provides that money intended by the state or province to help students of various need levels is actually attached to those students. WSE is now beginning to achieve recognition as a practical way to redress past inequities in funding the public education of students who are low income, and either gifted or challenged (Miles et al., 2003; Roza & Hill 2004).
- *Curriculum:* Constructivist epistemology’s central tenet is that the individual learner constructs knowledge of the world by interacting with it. Knuth and Cunningham (1993) proposed several critical principles in designing constructivist learning. Specific beneficial outcomes of academic practices focused on cognition as well as content

effectively demonstrate methodology to develop innovative curriculum designs.

Cognitive based and effective curricular designs require student level research at site base assessments (Koh & Robertson, 2003).

- *Personnel:* Cooper and Jordan (2003) suggested that the recruitment of African American male teachers along with CSR design implementation would be necessary to meet the unique needs of African American male students. Decentralization allocates each school with a budget based on financial needs to provide individual students with appropriate and necessary leadership for socioeconomic demands on school culture to construct a meaningful and sustainable school design. Transformational learning practices are a more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning (Mezirow, 1981).

Conditions that Need to Exist

What is the students' interpretation of the world/situation in which they find themselves within AsIP/Ethos?

Meritocratic Selection theoretically provides opportunity to address social injustices through academic opportunity; however, complicated social structures create challenges in the development of equity- based criteria. Institutionalized infrastructure determines educational policy and how we perceive legitimacy within academic structures impact access to opportunity not determined by meritocratic selection. Despite alleged efforts, the social constructs outweigh the intention (Hughes, 1994). Cognitive and social constructs during early development predispose academic access and select ability. Collaboration with larger learning community

based organizations correlate community cultural competency; and include innovative fiscal support for struggling districts.

The doctoral research required a two quarter long research residency at a district office for an in-depth understanding of administrative functions on the macro level. This researcher focused on Constructivist Learning, then petitioned and was granted permission to experience residency with the KQED Education and Media Learning Department focused on KQED resources and community academic access. The residency aspired to put into practice district collaboration with Education and Media Learning resources for continued development of existing KQED constructivist learning standard based practices. The residency intended to develop counter story media pieces to share with the broad learning community praxes to support students on the spectrum. Berry in *Teaching 2030* (2011) state teachers must be prepared to find and adapt new technologies to engage the digital generation, work across traditional subject areas using project learning, and need to collaborate with community-based organizations and work in schools that provide all kinds of other services for students and their families. Dr. Gary Small, a neuroscientist and professor at UCLA (Learning and the Brain Conference 2011), stated that young people were born into technology and used continually. Their brains are wired to use it elegantly. In the very foreseeable future, teachers will be able to upload their own videos to the Khan Academy, but also be able to create their own knowledge maps or repositories of content for their classes using videos within or outside of the Khan Academy in order to customize their own curricula (Berseghian KQED: Mind/Shift 2011).

Jules: Well my idea of the world is hummm, well it's always the popular people that run the world, but slowly the more intellectuals, more computer literate people are taking

over. Well my world per sey would be where computers have more influence . . . years and years of being forced to look up to people cause they were the popular ones until I got into the computer world where the little people, the rejects run everything.

The KQED Education and Media Learning Department three primary functions are to:

- Produce Educational Content
- Distribute Educational Content Materials and Resources
- Train Teachers to Produce Educational Content

Resources are continually uploaded as online materials made accessible for educators at a digital library of classroom ready digital resources categorized by grade level and topic area. I had the opportunity to observe and record as field notes, a focus group of social science teachers discussing the design, format, informational topic areas and various ideas toward the development of new digital resources that would best support effective teaching practices. The extensive research and development exemplify cross- organizational collaboration guiding quality of educational content produced as the interactive media platform. KQED Education and Media Learning Team Summit Strategic Plan for the 2012-2013 fiscal years focused on educators and their millennial audience (20-30 years). The field researcher noted the following discussions concerning the speed in which media are changing education is relevant as younger educators continually access media in their lives and professional practices. KQED media learning resources are currently less integrated into school cultures of disadvantaged communities typically under served by technology, which the Media Learning team recognized as a social justice issue. Collaborating with other media agencies for funding resources and grants supporting media learning and 21st Century skills, the team is exploring cross-

organizational collaboration to address the educational deficit. The Sustainability Model (Garcia, 2010) demonstrated that for any effective school reform to have an impact it must be rooted in the learning community in a triangulation of:

- Commitment (on behalf of teachers and students)
- Congruence (to the culture of the district or specific schools for specific teachers by fusing the 3Rs and 4Cs critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation)
- Coherence (to other initiatives and programs already in effect at the sites)

The KQED residency asserts that this model as applied to the reform originally implemented by President Johnson with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Public Broadcasting Act considers an important context for empirical research that justifies the benefit for teaching practices to focus structurally upon cognition as well as content of material. Fisch (1999) stated that *capacity theory* or the *capacity model* explains that a student can effectively learn when a lesson is presented according to his/her capacity to remember and understand subject matters.

This recent theory explored how non-conventional educational tools such as television and media learning could help students to gain knowledge. There are three significant elements in affecting students' capacity to learn /process, according to capacity theory: 1. processing of narrative, 2. processing of educational content, and 3. "distance" or degree to which the educational content is integrated into the narrative (Shalom Fisch, 1999). The following section considers the student interpretation of the world within 21st century networks.

Current District Initiatives

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the NoVo Foundation have invited the researcher's district to join an intensive Collaborating

Districts Initiative. The initiative supports large school districts in building capacity for high-quality, evidence-based programming to promote social and emotional learning in preschool through 12th grade. CASEL works collaboratively with selected school districts to achieve the goal of making social and emotional learning an essential part of every child's education. The district was one of only five districts from across the nation selected to join the Collaborating Districts Initiative ("Thriving Students: Home").

Good teaching has always been what the Common Core is asking: inviting students to think and understand complex concepts. The Social Emotional Learning standards are going to invite teachers to think deeply about what the students are learning, and about whether they are really teaching for understanding, and how they can do that better, because that is where real power in learning is. This is a big initiative and it is going to require a major reorientation in how many people think about instruction and student learning. There is no doubt about that. I do not think we should pretend otherwise (Charlotte Danielson, "On Teaching and the Common Core" 2013 presentation).

As a now participatory practitioner on the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Institute standards design team, this dissertation will guide pedagogical discourse to maximize transformative learning embedded in the intentions of the initiative among school leaders and policy makers. The emergent themes of *Self-Perception, Connectedness and Transformative Shifts in Awareness* serve to elucidate the socio-complexity in the learning community from an ontological perspective that considers student pathology in relation to current practices. These emergent themes within the *Conceptual Domain: Social Constructs of Learning and Language* inform the correlation between SEL and student performance outcomes that the initiative aims to

improve. Concerning recommendations and implications, the research informs developing SEL standards drawn from findings.

Limitations of Research

How do constructivist learning practices change student performance outcomes that demonstrate the idea of the socially constructed “disabled learning?”

The research considers the challenges in addressing school culture and dynamics to effectively implement Transformative Education practices. Not all teachers or all learners are predisposed to engage in transformative learning and many learning situations do not lend themselves to these kinds of experiences. When transformational learning is part of a course of study, one role of the teacher is to establish an environment characterized by trust and care, and to facilitate sensitive relationships among the participants (Taylor, 1998). Grounded in the philosophy of reciprocal learning the structure of the AsIP community at Summit is committed to community, as one student said, “You’re just like us except you can fake it.”

Boyd and Myers (1998) stated educators develop and practice two characteristics. First is seasoned guidance: the ability to serve as an experienced mentor reflecting on his/her own journey, with the intent to assist others with their transformation processes. Second, they valued compassionate criticism, assisting students to question their own reality in ways that would promote transformation of their world view. Cranton (1994) emphasized the importance of the teacher as a role model who is willing to demonstrate his own willingness to learn and change. Taylor (1998) saw the role of the teacher to help students connect the rational and affective aspects of their experience in the process of critical reflection.

There are two significant limitations to the research. The first is the unique characteristics of learning domains across sites and community are challenging to predict implementing

innovative programs and reforms. As stated, not all learning communities are predisposed to engage in transformative learning, specifically with students with ASD. The existing conditions of the AsIP are atypical, and the complexities which construct learning environments are deeply considered. The second limitation considers the complexity in implementing innovative and experimental programs in learning communities where resources are scarce. In chapter 3 it is noted that statistics show a vast difference between student performances in the affluent hills versus students in the low- income flatlands. While the need for radical innovative programs is paramount, there are multiple concerns within the community to consider. Understanding the impact of socio-economic/ political disparities is essential to investigating effective and sustainable programs. The limitation of the study asks the question, is AsIP at Summit generalizable across school site domain to justify as priority funding in communities with multiple concerns? The populations of students with ASD are increasing, the limitations of the study consider if the small AsIP program model (usually between 7-15 students) can be generalized and effective on a larger scale, or if the success of the program is primarily due to the intimate relations formed in a small program structure?

Future Direction

Despite the limitations of the study as a researcher, my next steps are to continue to develop the AsIP program embedded in the Transformative Education principles. While the participants in this study are formally diagnosed, the research reveals Transformative Education can be accessed by all students. The experience these student interviews conveyed during this study exemplifies the closing quote,

“There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the ‘practice of freedom,’ the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Shaul, drawing on Paulo Freire 1999).

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY EAST BAY
HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH PROTOCOL**

Use of this template (outline) is suggested when submitting a research protocol to the IRB. Your responses should be in terms which may be understood by a non-specialist.

Please complete **all** sections of this template. If any section is not applicable, list the heading and simply indicate "N/A".

I. PROJECT TITLE: ETHOS:

An Applied Study of Transformation Concerning Students With Autism, High Functioning Autism, Asperger Syndrome and Related Disorders Transitioning to College/University and Post High School Goals

II. DATE OF SUBMISSION:

October 22, 2012

III. STARTING AND ENDING DATES OF PROJECT: SEPTEMBER 2012-FEBRUARY 2013

IV. INVESTIGATORS AND STAFFING

Primary Investigator: Courteny Moore-Gumora

Department: Educational Leadership and Social Justice

Phone number: 510-379-8713

Email address: courtenygumora@gmail.com

If P.I. is a student, then complete next line:

Advisor's name: Dr. Pamela Wolfberg

Please list all personnel (including P.I.) who will assist in conducting research in the table below:

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL	QUALIFICATIONS	RESPONSIBILITIES
Pamela Wolfberg Ph.D.	Professor San Francisco State University/Autism Spectrum Program/Autism Institute on Peer Socialization & Play	Dissertation Chair
Jack Davis Ph.D.	Chair, EPSY California State University, East Bay/ Private Practice	
Katie Brown Ph.D.	California State University, East Bay Accessibility Services Director	

V. FUNDING SOURCES

No funding.

VI. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Skyline High School Oakland CA: Principal Troy Johnston

Asperger Full Inclusion Program: Program Manager Dennis Nelson

California State University East Bay College Link Program: Susan Ingram

University of California Berkeley Asperger Program: Kevin Shields
San Francisco State University Autism Spectrum Program

VII. HYPOTHESIS

[Briefly state the problem, background, importance of the research, and goals of the proposed project.]

Background and Importance of Research

Students on the autism spectrum face significant challenges in socialization, communication and flexible thinking that impact their school experience (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). With the increasing number of students identified with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), the need for public schools to address appropriate and ethical diagnoses, services and effective delivery of curriculum is not only an educational concern but also a social justice concern. Consistent with other underserved populations, individuals with ASD are a growing population that is dramatically underrepresented within the realm of educational research, practice, advocacy and policy.

Goals of the Proposed Project

This investigation aims to explore the transformative process for students with Autism/ High Functioning Autism (HFA) and Asperger Syndrome (AS) as influenced by their participation in Ethos, an inclusive high-school/transition program in a public school setting. Specifically, the Ethos program is rooted in cultural anthropology (Boas, Sapir, Vygotsky) and social constructive learning (Knuth and Cunningham 1993) with a focus on creating an inclusive community that supports inquiry driven discussions and experiences to enhance interpersonal relationships, effective communication and higher level cognition that contribute to academic and lifelong learning (Ryan 2007).

VIII. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

[Include a brief description of the project design including the setting in which the research will be conducted and procedures.]

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design using qualitative methods rooted in the ethnographic tradition and some quantitative measures.

Participants

Primary participants include 10 students with HFA/AS who have been enrolled in the ETHOS program at Skyline High School Secondary participants.

Researcher Role

The researcher is coordinator of the ETHOS program and is currently working with participants in this study.

Setting

All data will be collected within the context of Skyline High School.

Data Sources:

1. Interview with primary participants (students in ETHOS program).
2. Naturalistic observation of primary participants in ETHOS program.
3. Artifacts collected from primary participants including: e.g., student records, academic work, reflection logs, and artwork.

Data Collection Procedures:

All data will be collected by the researcher in the context of Skyline High School

1. Interviews:
 - Primary participant interviews will be for 30 minutes (see attached Interview Protocol).
 - All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

2. Naturalistic Observation:

- One hour observations will be conducted for each primary participant within the ETHOS program.
- All observations will be transcribed as field notes.

3. Artifacts

- All artifacts will be collected by the researcher.
- Artifacts will be logged for purposes of analysis.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis will use data from interviews collected in research study to provide explanations, understanding and interpretation of the phenomena, people and situation of the Ethos program. The aim of analyzing this qualitative data is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content to try to identify and understand:

1. Student's interpretation of the world/situation in which they find themselves within Ethos.
2. How they come to have that point of view of their situation or environment in which they find themselves.
3. How they relate to others within their world.
4. How they cope within their world.
5. Their own view of their history and the history of others who share their own experiences and situations.
6. How they identify and see themselves and others who share their own experiences and situations.

IX. HUMAN SUBJECTS INVOLVEMENT

[Please complete all sections of the Human Subjects Instructions. If section is not applicable, indicate "N/A".]

A. DESCRIPTION

[Provide a detailed description of the proposed involvement of human subjects in the work. Specifically, state: The procedures the participants will take part in, in a step-by-step chronological manner.

Where the research will take place.

How long the research will take for the participant (for each meeting and total).]

1. Recruitment

- 10 students with HFA/AS who have been enrolled in the ETHOS program will be recruited for this study by the researcher. Recruitment strategies will include meeting directly with each student to invite their participation following a recruitment script (see attached).

2. Interviews

- 10 students with HFA/AS will participate in 30 minute interviews with the researcher in a private room on Skyline campus interviews will be for 30 minutes (see attached Interview Protocol).
- All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

3. Naturalistic Observation

- One hour observations will be conducted for each primary participant within the ETHOS program.
- All observations will be transcribed as field notes.

4. Artifacts

- All artifacts will be collected by the researcher.
- Artifacts will be logged for purposes of analysis.

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

[Describe the subject population in terms of sex, race, ethnicity, age, etc., including the number of participants. Describe your access to the population that will allow recruitment of the necessary number of participants. State any inclusion/exclusion criteria used to select participants. Explain the rationale for the involvement of vulnerable populations (e.g., children, the cognitively impaired, or prisoners).]

Population will include students participating in the Asperger Inclusion Program at Skyline High School in Oakland CA, as well as recent graduates of the program currently enrolled in College and University to explore and document the transitional process from high school to higher education student performance results as participants within the program. The students being interviewed consists of 8 male students of 3 African American, 21 Asian, 1 Asian/Caucasian mixed race, 1 Caucasian, 1 Mexican within the age range of 17-22 yrs.; and 2 female African American students within the age range of 19- 21 yrs.

C. RESEARCH MATERIAL

[Explain how information will be obtained from the subjects (e.g., interviews, surveys, observations, reviewing participants' work, using pre and post test results as data). Attach any surveys, interview questions, or the like.]

Information will be obtained from the subjects through interviews, observations and artifacts (Exploring how multiple assessments are used in traditional grading progress reports/report cards toward general education requirements for a high school diploma? Exploring how general education teachers work collaboratively with ETHOS Program Coordinator to determine effective individualized assessment practices.)

D. RECRUITMENT PLAN

[Describe plans for the recruitment of subjects. If you plan to involve special cases of subjects, such as children, the cognitively impaired, prisoners or others who are likely to be vulnerable, describe any special recruitment procedures for these populations. Attach any recruiting materials.]

The population of students are diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and are/or were receiving special education services from Oakland Unified School District. Graduate participants that are 18 yrs. and older will sign an agreement participation letter.

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

[Describe any direct or guaranteed benefit (e.g., cash payment, gift card, course credit, free treatment). If payments will be made, how will payment be received- cash or check, mailed or handed out? Will payments affect confidentiality? Note that excessive payments may be considered coercive. If students will receive extra credit or course credit, state the alternative method(s) of earning the credit that must be made available to those who do not wish to participate.]

NA

F. POTENTIAL RISKS

[Describe potential risks whether physical, psychological, social, legal, or other and assess their likelihood and seriousness. Example risks include physical injury, allergies to materials used in study, loss of privacy, and emotional discomfort (anxiety, stress, depression).]

NA

G. RISK REDUCTION

[Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing each potential risk listed above. For example, risk of loss of privacy may be reduced by storing all research material in a locked cabinet, by using codes rather than participant names on surveys, by conducting an anonymous study or other methods. If risk of emotional discomfort is high, provide the subjects with a list of referrals for counseling and attach to the informed consent document.]

All data including student Individualized Education Plans are confidential and stored in a locked cabinet. The participation agreement will indicate if student would like to be referred to anonymously in the data/study written when finalized by checking a box indicating to please do not use my real name in the final written research document.

H. CONFIDENTIALITY

[Describe how the confidentiality of research data will be protected (e.g., physical controls on the data; access controls to the data; coding of data; legal controls, such as a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality; statistical methods; or reporting methods).]

All data including student Individualized Education Plans are confidential and stored in a locked cabinet. The participation agreement will indicate if student would like to be referred to anonymously in the data/study written when finalized by checking a box indicating to please do not use my real name in the final written research document.

I. RISK/BENEFIT

[Discuss why the risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits to subjects and in relation to the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result.]

The research is emerging because the population of concern requires focused supports upon on both the high school and college campuses and is a growing population in higher academic and professional communities regarding transitional development from high school to higher education and higher education into career development.

J. CONSENT ISSUES

1. CONSENT PROCESS

[Indicate who will be asked to provide consent/assent, who will obtain consent/assent, what language (e.g., English, Spanish) will be used by those obtaining consent/assent, where and when will consent/assent be obtained, what steps will be taken to minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence, and how much time will subjects be afforded to make a decision to participate. If a translator will be used, identify whether the translator will be a family member of the participant. Attach consent form(s).]

Consent for participation in the research will consist of a formal email sent to all participants/students and their parents explain that the ETHOS program will be collecting data for research and they the subjects are the data collection which will be written as an Ed.D. dissertation documenting of the structure, function and impact of our program upon transitioning students with Asperger Syndrome from high school to higher education.

2. SPECIAL CONSENT PROVISIONS

[If some or all subjects will be cognitively impaired, or have language/hearing difficulties, describe how capacity for consent will be determined. If you anticipate the need to obtain informed consent from legally authorized representatives (LARs), please describe how you will identify an appropriate representative and ensure that their consent is obtained.]

All students/participants are age appropriate cognitively functioning.

3. [If request is being made to WAIVE SOME OR ALL ELEMENTS OF INFORMED CONSENT FROM SUBJECTS OR PERMISSION FROM PARENTS, explain why: (1) the research involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects,

(2) the waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects, (3) the research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; AND (4) whether or not subjects will be debriefed after their participation.

NA

4. *[If request is being made to **WAIVE DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT**, provide a justification for waiver based on one of the following two elements AND include a description of the information that will be provided to participants: (1) the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Subject will be asked whether they want documentation linking them with the research, and each subject's wishes will govern; or (2) the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.]*

NA

5. *[If applicable, explain the **ASSENT PROCESS** for children or decisionally impaired subjects. Attach assent form.]*

NA

6. *[If request is being made to **WAIVE THE REQUIREMENT TO OBTAIN ASSENT** from children age 6 or higher, or decisionally impaired subjects, explain why: (1) why some or all of the individuals age 6 or higher will not be capable of providing assent based on their developmental status or impact of illness; (2) the research holds out a prospect of direct benefit not available outside of the research; AND/OR (3) [a] the research involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects, [b] the waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects, [c] the research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; AND [d] whether or not subjects will be debriefed after their participation.]*

NA

X. OTHER

[If there are issues which the board should consider which do not fall into any category above, please describe them here.]

NA

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE FIELD NOTES

The following is my September 29, 2009 Reflection/ Action Log entry as the coordinator of the Asperger Inclusion Program at Skyline High School:

Diagnosis, Assessment and Prevalence in *Educating Children with Autism* addresses the profound importance of continual reflection in the academic process expanding knowledge and understanding of diverse learners on the spectrum. Assessments funnels focus toward the continual development of a student- centered practice.

Autism spectrum disorders impact the educational environment in an involved complex of challenges ranging from academic cognitive processing which may result in intensive support, to supporting students challenged by social cognition, the complexities are how each of these domains impact the other.

The process of determining the students' academic ability through assessment is a complex system of tools that are influenced by many variables, that becomes a fluid almost intangible experience that educators are called to task to turn into an individualistic outcome for each student's unique manifestations.

The diagnostic process used to identify autism spectrum disorders successfully manages to begin the processes of prevalence, which as an educator is the primary focus because as students' academic progress and skill broaden and become more efficient, I am frequently engaged by students and their parents what their 'diagnostic status' is, and if they 'still have Asperger Syndrome?' This is of extreme interest as an educator, because as autism challenges become manageable, determined through assessments based in academic and diagnostic criteria, the diagnosis has a disappearance.

APPENDIX C

DATA ANALYSIS TOOL

Categories of Responses: Created by research assistant to track student demeanor/interaction during interviews.

Quantitative improvement (Quan I): Reports of an increase in frequency of some component of the question asked.

Qualitative improvements (Qual I): Reports of improvement in the type or kind of some component the question asked.

Long (L): Very detailed

Short (S): A response which fewer less words in total.

Vague (V): Basic language, brief response, seems to answer question in most basic way without really including much introspection.

Evasive (E): Doesn't seem to answer the question asked.

Uncertain (U): Contains language such as "not sure" or "I don't know."

Interview Questions with Categorical Responses and Emergent Themes Determined By Researcher			
1. What is your interpretation of the world/situation in which you/they find them within AsIP?		Categorical Responses	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	I think to me it was keeping a sharp contrast on what was going on. And mostly I had plenty of time left for my leisure. I think the world is moving on recovering a little after those earth quakes and thunder storms.	V	Connections with life goals.
Naomi	I was thinking that being in the program made things easy for me and that the world may be too hard.	S	Support coping.
Aaron	All I have to say is that ever since I got to this program things happen better because well now I am able to make friends and know how people feel, cause before I didn't know that and before I was just.... I just didn't care and now I got friends and now I know when to stop doing things that might piss off people and know what's right and wrong more better cause I didn't know that before I had trouble doing that too.	Qual I Quan I	Connecting with people positively. Past anger.
Roland	Well, if this is about kids with Asperger Syndrome, I would have to say that they tend to find themselves cut off from the world, in their own world. It's easy to say that it is a common symptom to not care about what others think. That is my answer to this question.	Qual I	Awareness of isolation.
Jasper	Not much just had a narrow view of a lot of people.	S	Awareness of isolation.
Alley	Basically it was just a simple place with different people different personalities and different abilities.	V	Difference awareness.
Jules	Well my idea of the world is hummm, well it's always the	S	Isolation merging

	popular people that run the world, but slowly the more intellectuals, more computer literate people are taking over. Well my world per sey would be a world where more like where computers have more influence.		with connections to others.
Val	That everyone is trying to reach their own potential	S	Self-awareness.
Dante	Kind of a depressing experience, I find myself with some anxiety, depression and contempt. My situation to the world is depressing it seems like a depression kind of existence because I know it's depressing it's not like before where I didn't know it was depression but now I know through introspection form last year in high school it would definitely be what I would consider depression. During my junior year the program helped me get through introspection, I discovered it here in the program and I managed to get through it. High school was just the catalyst. The program I have mixed feelings about it now. It's good but it's also like you have really bad tasting medicine but it really helps you in the long run. That's why I have mixed feelings. Very helpful and very terrible. 2012 was a very transformative years talking a lot about myself more and my history not doing the work and breaking the rules and there is this entire introspection about how I act and what I have done and what I need to change and how I feel in general. Completely changed how I look at the world it wasn't so much in anger, it is like I had determination but I had a lot of anger, now I still have determination but not a lot of anger. A combination of what the program gave me and my own thinking in general. The biggest transformation for me I think was my perception of women. Not like I was misogynistic or anything, more like they weren't there, like they were there not that special like a bag of potato chips their just there. Now things have completely changed on that front. And thanks to the teachers in the program I don't see them as bags of potato chips I see them as like water systems are today, like for some reason extremely vital. And to like my mental health. At first when I was going through this intra section it was like at night, I cried a lot, I had thoughts of suicide during that time it was a really seismic change. So yeah like being in the program has been beneficial cause like if I had find this out like much later when I was already an adult I don't think I would have coped with it as easy as then I was in the program. Still it was a very transformative yet depressing year.	L Qual I	Introspection. Depression. Introspection. Self-discovery. Courage addressing hard issues, merging Self-Awareness. Transformative. Introspection. Shift in perception from anger to determination. Transformation. Shift in perception. Seismic change. Transformation.
Taylor	I communicate with the people in the program about what is important to them and why. I have found that we have certain things in common like video games.	S	Communication. Connectedness.

2. How did you come to have that point of view?		Categorical Responses	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	I think for me I just sat down and listened and then just rolled it on out.	V	Listen.
Naomi	I got too much help. I don't know how to put it I guess I would say life is hard.	S	Help.
Aaron	Well I guess it's probably being around other people that are like me that have similar problems and I guess we all learn the same things so it helps. Cause it kinda helps to know that you are not the only one and if you're not alone then it's like ok I guess. Well, I have more friends I still have the same ones, I know who to kinda avoid cause there are some people I ummm associated with before I joined this program, or during my early days in this program that ahhh weren't very good people and when I did hang out with them or socialize with them then things turned out badly and now with my new knowledge I just ahh avoid those kinda people and things have really worked out for the better. Well of course I have more friends and I am able to do this interview, before if you asked me these types of questions I probably wouldn't answer cause certain other things would have interfered with me answering these questions. Well, they're all family issues let's just say that, let's just say that, I learn to listen, well not to listen too much when those things are, how do you put it...over the top? Now I am able to, well for the most part I know umm who helps me and who can and who cannot help me, I'll just say that. I guess I have gotten to know myself better and I know what works for me and what doesn't.	Qual I Quan I	Connectedness. Self-awareness. Past anger. Relatedness. Connections with others. Past anger. Family concerns. Help/ Support. Self- awareness.
Roland	I come to have this point of view because I, myself, was in the exact same situation. I know what it's like to feel that way mainly because I really did use to feel this way.	S	Self-awareness. Relatedness.
Jasper	Umm a lot to do with my own life how I didn't have much of all and had to struggle keep everyone fed; there wasn't a lot all food around. I was pretty much just contained within my family.	S	Family concerns.
Alley	Not really sure about that just from the different experiences that I had.	S	Awareness of differences.
Jules	I think it came from years and years of being forced to look up to people cause they were the popular ones until I got into the computer world where the little people, the rejects run everything.	Qual I S	Isolation. Merging connections. Continued anger.
Val	I think I've come to this view because of the teachers of ASIP, I mean instead of " this is how you should think and feel" it was more like " how do you honestly feel right now? Who are you at your very core?"	S	Self-Awareness. .
Dante	So the first time I was in this conversation I was at home, I	Qual I	Past thoughts of

	<p>was sleeping and my mind was still thinking about it so I was not fully asleep, then after I figured it out I had like an epiphany then that's when I started to cry and I had thoughts of suicide from loneliness since it changed my entire perspective of women or like of women in general and they became very vital to my mental health. That's how I came to this situation, cause I like said to myself if I never got married or if I never had a girlfriend then like what would be the point of still living cause I would still be lonely for the rest of my life. But then I had more talks with like the team in order for me to like, well not really come out of that stage but more like stabilization. I still had school and I still have my life ahead of me. I think I still have depression but it is not like from a doctor. There is only one girl that I know of that really likes me and she lives really far away so we talk on Skype and on the internet because she is so far away, so I still question myself if I really love her. So my whole perspective I think is personally how females are a keystone in my personality that I don't fully understand myself.</p>	Quan I	<p>suicide, loneliness.</p> <p>Transformative.</p> <p>Self-awareness.</p> <p>Loneliness.</p> <p>Past depression</p> <p>Shift in perspective.</p>
Taylor	<p>Through conversations and the use of language I have become closer to my fellow students. By just discussing their interests and being flexible enough to talk about what they want to talk about and recognizing their boundaries you get to know them better as people. It can be a bit difficult when everyone is not flexible. When we were deciding what to eat once no one could decide, and I was like "Why can't everyone just be flexible and James was like, you're talking to a group of people with Asperger syndrome!"</p>	Qual I	<p>Communication.</p> <p>Relatedness.</p> <p>Awareness of others.</p> <p>Self-awareness.</p>

3. How do you relate to others within their world?		Categorical Responses	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	I let it lose and have fun with it.	S	Fun.
Naomi	I just say hello and then I don't know I just ask them about some stuff in their life I guess.	S	Communication.
Aaron	I guess fine but to be honest there are some people out there where their world is not compatible with mine.	S	Self-awareness.
Roland	There's always a way to relate to someone, no matter what your situation is. At one point in time, everyone has felt alone, cut off from everyone else, and at least felt nothing, like they just didn't care. Every one of us has an example to share. With those examples you can reach out to kids with Asperger Syndrome and help them see that they are not alone, that they can change themselves, not to change what other people think about them, but for themselves.	Qual I	<p>Relatedness.</p> <p>Connections with others.</p> <p>Self-awareness, courage.</p>

Jasper	Now? Then ummm then I didn't really care about what the other person thought as long as they didn't mess with me and get in my way then that's ok. Now I try to see people's point of view to understand what people are going through cause I had a lot to do in my life and I try to understand people and what they are going through.	S Qual I	Past anger. Relatedness. Connections.
Alley	Umm, I don't really know. I can relate to other people, I just find ways we are similar.	S	Relatedness.
Jules	Usually I tell them stories about my experiences at Skyline and the outside world like when I would go on trips or something as simple as going to shops there is always something interesting going on or has potential to becoming something interesting.	S	Communication. Relatedness.
Val	I don't, it simply is, it's there you know?	S	Relatedness.
Dante	Well it is still quite difficult, when it comes to students, that are the general student body, I don't relate quite well. With most, some but it depends on the situation and the setting. Like debate class I can get along with students because we are all in an intellectual pursuit. ROTC is a physical pursuit so I don't connect with anyone there. Most of the people I relate to are much older than me and already in established careers. It stems from my childhood. I didn't really hang out with my peers. Mom says I didn't really play with any other kids. Its intellectual pursuits anything out of that it deteriorates.	Qual I	Difficulty with relatedness. Commonalities.
Taylor	Umm, one way is I have learned to kinda just be comfortable with their interest and infer things about them through their interests and asking questions about them because if I keep pushing what I wanna talk about they get more defensive and they won't wanna talk to me. It's difficult for me cause I hate light conversation. I try to push my agenda, especially if it is a tough conversation it really makes me wanna push it even more.	Qual I	Commonalities. Authentic communication.

4. How do you cope within your world?		Categorical Responses	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	I cope pretty well in my own world. My strategies are to ensure that I keep a very good profile on the entire planet by making sure I have all the time I need.	S	Self-awareness, support.
Naomi	How do I cope with stress/ I don't know I cry and whine and I avoid work at time and then just go all the way through it. When I am happy I don't know I am just happy sometimes I like to share it with other people.	S	Difficulty with stress.
Aaron	Umm I guess I'm doing fine cause, I guess I'm just doing fine cause I know what I already know and I guess I made it his far.	S	Confidence, self-awareness.
Roland	As I said before, I know what it's like because I used to be like them at a point in time. A lot of people say that there is no	Qual I	Self-awareness.

	cure for Asperger Syndrome. In my case, I was documented to have Asperger Syndrome, but I no longer have qualities of those with that Syndrome. I can either say that I have cured myself from it with tons of help from the ASIP program, or I can say that I have overcome this and became a completely different person. Either way, it is the truth.	Quan I	
Jasper	I usually step away but try to just calm down if I need to but I do take what I say into consideration what I am going to say before I walk away.	S	Communication.
Alley	Just go about my business.	S	Isolation.
Jules	Usually I tell myself, you know the people that make fun of me now will become my pawns in the future.	S	Anger, animosity.
Val	The way I cope is by finding my center in life, there's an old Chinese saying that goes like this " don't go too far to the right don't go too far to the left, stay centered" and that's basically how I do things.	S	Self-awareness.
Dante	Everything is kept in a professional plateau being friends with them or just being friendly. Before the program I didn't really have a good social sense. But so far being a more professional person I try not to think about myself but of the other person that I learned in the program... I learned to keep my mouth shut more ha ha ha....	S	Self-awareness.
Taylor	I guess just recognizing and acknowledging the consequences of crossing other people's boundaries. If I try to push my agenda after a while you won't even have a group of people anymore.	S	Self-awareness. Awareness of others.

	5. How do you view the history of others who share your experiences and situations?	Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	I think they are doing pretty well and that they are keeping themselves ready for whatever challenges are waiting for them.	S	Courage.
Naomi	I just ignore them whenever they feel stress. I feel indifferent toward them. Sometimes I feel connected to them but I just don't think too much about it. I don't think too much about them I just usually think about my own problems and that is about it.	S	Isolation, connections.
Aaron	Well all I have to say is that most of us have what people call a bad past and now it's like I guess we're doing decently, some of us and others have taken a turn for the worst I guess. I guess we're all just people, people that are diagnosed with something but it's like everyone has problems so again just people. Some of the people are people that I don't like but whatever.	Qual I	Past anger. Self-awareness.

Roland	I have to say that kids with Asperger Syndrome have it rough. They really do. I know because I was one of them. The reason being is because other students, they don't understand what it's like to have Asperger Syndrome. They're not used to people who are different. So they mistreat them. It's a common symptom to feel embarrassed about having this title to their name. It's a common symptom to not care what other people think. It's a common symptom to be very stubborn. It is hard, but if you're willing to work for them, and so long as you're committed and patient, you can change their lives around and have people grow to love them. So long as they have cooperation with you, they can overcome it.	Qual Quan I	Isolation. Past anger. Courage. Transformation.
Jasper	I view them with the same value of mind, I try to tell them to move on from their past because it hat is not what they are trying to work toward.	S	Past anger.
Alley	That is something I don't really do. Actually I am not really sure if I think about others that have similar experiences as me or not.	U	Isolation.
Jules	I guess I view it as sort of a, well I guess it is no different than if you were to ask someone that grew up with the internet in the early stages in the late 80's early 90's or around now, really just the same.	S	Relatedness.
Val	I feel where a person's coming from especially if we share a history you know, it makes me wanna give them advice or help them out.	S	Relatedness.
Dante	Seems like Asperger Syndrome is very different from person to person so I don't really relate well, but it is a very small minority. The people that have Asperger syndrome I don't really totally relate to. I hang out with people that are in this program because we have that sort of inner connection, we kinda like the same things. Exactly, well I just got better at finding out things we have in common.	Qual I	Self-awareness. Relatedness. Connections.
Taylor	I think I can identify with Dante a lot. It is interesting because it seems we came from the same environment and psychological stages of life like a sibling I guess, I don't have any. It is kinda comforting to know there are others in the same social state, like having a group of comrades. It is kinda a crazy history when you think we came so far when there are so many stigmas associated. It is like we are not even the same people anymore we have progressed so much. For example I remember the time when the career counselor came over and we were to make vision boards and Jasper made a picture of a pirate and was hiding under the table and now it is interesting to see how everyone turned out, like now Jasper is in college. I think that in the transition having people around you and staff that is just as quirky as you are you share an experience and understand what you are trying to communicate even if it is not really appropriate at the time they understand and recognize the alternatives on how to better interact with others when you	Quan I Qual I	Relatedness. Connections. Transformation. Self-awareness. Transformation. Connections. Communication. Awareness of others.

	are affirmed and not judged even if the method of communication we are using may seem unacceptable. To expand a little I think it can be attributed that when people are judges it doesn't make them wanna change it seems like just another voice and doesn't offer any real improvement. But when you have people around and understand the different perspective it helps to see a different way when others understand our point of view.		Relatedness. Shift in perception.
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6. How would you describe yourself and how do you feel about this description?		Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	I would describe myself an easy going and moveable learning what to do.	S	Self-Awareness.
Naomi	Over worker lazy childish pessimistic, I would rather be plain I don't like to get too much attention because well I am not an open person. I stay closed, I don't know because I am scared I guess. I think I am scared of embarrassment. I think I care about what other people think and that they will make fun of me. I think that feeling is just normal to me I have always felt like that little by little.	V	Self-Critical. Isolation.
Aaron	Oh I'm just a decent person trying to live their life, pretty much just open to the next thing that happens to me hopefully not too bad.	S	Self-Acceptance.
Roland	Well, I would describe myself as a sanguine person. I am very outgoing, compassionate, and I love being around people. I love to socialize, and I love interact and I love just getting to know people. I can't deny that the description is true. I'm not going to be offended about what it says to me if it speaks the truth. I can't keep rejecting who I am. It's who I am, and it's my choice to think of it as a gift, or a curse. I choose to think of it as a gift. Why? I think it's a gift because this was a test for me, a test for me to change my life around and turn me into a walking testimony. I can use this to inspire people by saying, "Hey. I had problems in the past. I was different from everyone else, and I had it rough. You're not the only ones. I learned to accept this and turn myself around. I did it. So can you."	Qual I	Self-Awareness Self-Acceptance. Triumph
Jasper	Then, full of anger.	S	Past Anger.
Alley	That's hard to do. I guess as a person who tries to keep his cool and always willing to support his friends. I feel this description suits me.	V	
Jules	I describe myself as kind of rebellious on the social hierarchy, like I am pretty much I am the person that would if I could crash any social party that would identify as the upper class, like for example a prom party, sweet 16. If I ever had the opportunity I would do everything in my power to ruin it. Especially if it is someone I didn't like. At first I was a little unhappy with this until	Qual I	Rebellious.

	I opened up the internet I found I was not the only one that thought about it so it made me better. I identify myself with more of the online community and less with the Oakland community. For others it's not really that easy to find someone that like me but it is not impossible. Like every now and then I will find someone those shares my interests and we usually talk about it.		Isolated Triumph.
Val	I would describe myself as a Martial arts athlete , and I feel proud about this it takes a lot of hard work and dedication to do what I'm doing	S	Pride.
Dante	Very depressed and bitter, to be frankly honest. I don't know how to describe others but if I had to say something about them I would say they seem like they are trying too hard to fit like the general ed kids and too fit in. These are my personal thoughts, all just trying to fit in. I have it more severe than them, it's like they have some form of it but really it feels like if you are of a group and you are rejected for no reason as what happens to me, it seems the others trying to fit in with the student body seem more content with themselves while they are trying to fit in with the general student body. They seem to feel more comfortable about themselves but my whole feeling is bitter and hostile and it bothers me while the people that are rejecting having Asperger syndrome seem to be happier for it.	U Qual I	Depressed. Isolated Self-Acceptance.
Taylor	Ummm, I am not really an emotional person that I have just kinda understood that different signs of emotions are used to connect with others. When I think of myself I think of a person that has built walls. Someone who's I just kinda analytical but at the same time kinda curious. Someone who is curious about the social structure and how it relates to our psyche and how that relates to how we experience things and other people since it determines so much of our lives and why we do what we do.	Qual I	Self - Awareness. Curious.

7. How do you perceive (look at) life now?		Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	I think I look at it as a different perspective. It's a different path seeing as now I am marching to adulthood. I will be the same age another young girl that aired in an anime cartoon in the 2000's that fights the forces of darkness to protect our planet from discussion.	S	Courageous.
Naomi	Hard. College is really hard.	S	Triumph.
Aaron	Life is just life you live it. It is just a series of experiences and it's just a garden you dig it. Yeah, it's like a garden you dig it.	S	Self-Acceptance.
Roland	Life is hard. It's easy to complain about how hard it is and how everything isn't going your way. Well I have a challenge for that. Go to a third world country. Come back and tell me that you think you had it bad, but really you are one lucky person to live in a country like America. Life is something to enjoy. We shouldn't waste our time complaining, focusing on the past, and	Qual I	Triumph. Appreciation.

	crying about how everything isn't handed to you on a silver platter. Each and every one of us has a purpose in life, and each and every one of us can change the world in our own way. Don't think that you can't. You can!		
Jasper	I haven't had a chance for so long because it has been years but I guess I would say...like a boss	S	Triumph.
Alley	I never really thought about life. I don't know how to describe it. It feels lit it is all connected in some way.	V	Self-Awareness
Jules	Well I think that in like 10yrs technology will have a much greater influence on society and if you look at people like Occupy protest are making decisions and having much more influence on society.	S	Triumph.
Val	I feel like life is very random you know it takes you places you'd thought you'd never go but life is full of pleasant surprises.	S	Triumph.
Dante	I still find it a bit depressing like the cards were stacked against me. If I tried to be a nice person to the ladies and tried to ask them out it is not gonna happen cause all the nice girls are already dating someone and the one girl that does like me well she is all the way on the other side of the country. It like I have to wait, well that's just not fare. Like you give me all IO wanted but I still have to wait for it. I have friends but I want the intimate one on one. It's like intimacy from my mental perspective for some reason is like very very important. To become a deeper level a more connected level a more understanding level. You can have friends but your friends don't totally understand you. But if you have an intimate relationship you can truly understand someone.	Qual I	Depressing. Self-Awareness.
Taylor	Well life before there was always something there something wrong and there were a lot of problems all the time. Then as I got older I realized my interpretation was responsible for how I saw things and handles them and so experienced them. So now I kinda view life as a series of opportunities I am able to afford myself based on how well I can adapt to a certain situation and I have a certain amount of control even if the circumstances in that situation are not necessarily ideal at the time.	Qual I	Self-Awareness Transformative.

	8. If you had a time machine and you could go back to before you began AsIP what would be the key thing you'd want advice yourself about?	Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	Never never never give up. But I am not as omnificent as John Delancey in Star Trek.	S V	Self-Awareness.
Naomi	There are many times I would like to go back in time because I am not good in making decisions. I am a follower not a leader I don't know what I would tell myself. Study hard I don't know, don't buy food from the cafeteria I don't know? And do not eat before going to PE.	S	Self-Awareness.
Aaron	Well I don't know I guess like actually work hard and listen but	S	Self-

	to be honest I don't think I would listen to myself I was just that type of person.		Awareness.
Roland	If I could go back in time, I would tell myself to shower every day, if I have a problem with genes, at least try them on because they look cool, and to not be afraid to talk to people. I would advise myself to be friendly, and that way, I could get all the girls.	S	Self-Awareness.
Jasper	Well I don't want to choose anything cause everything in my life I know has worked out so I wouldn't want to change anything. I wouldn't want to go back in time because it never works. The only thing I would say is "What's up?"	S	Self-Acceptance.
Alley	Hmm I don't really know I think just try to keep my cool I think.	S	Self-Acceptance.
Jules	Actually I probably would not change anything to be honest because my experiences in the past much influenced who I became and if I change anything now it would have an effect. Just keep doing what you're doing it will all fall in place eventually.	S	Self-Acceptance.
Val	The only advice I would've given myself is to relax and to achieve a Zen like mind, that's something I definitely needed as a kid.	S	Self-Awareness.
Dante	I would tell myself to learn some integrity, learn some integrity and take responsibility for everything you've done then you will understand yourself, that's what I would tell myself.	S	Self-Awareness. Transformative.
Taylor	I would advise myself to consider the advice of others and that it is not all bad just because I don't find it satisfactory in that situation. I remember that I used to say that I don't really need anyone's help a lot and that is indicative of someone not willing to listen and that made me not develop as fast, and I realize that was my fault cause if I had just attempted to give it a trial run in that situation. I remember in middle school I don't like my hair so I would put a lot of oil and water and people would make fun of me and I was being harassed and I told the teacher and they said don't put so much stuff in your hair. Now I realize I could have put less oil cause all of that wasn't necessary. Now I guess being in college made me recognize that those kids have an interpretation and doesn't have to run your whole experience in middle school it's just a few kids.	Qual I	Self-Awareness.

	9. If you were telling a story about a main character (that is you) in elementary and middle school what would be the theme of your story?	Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	Marching through the very fabric of time. Like the doctor in Dr. Who, he prefers to be called the Doctor. He had had eleven different actors playing the doctor in different times of his life. He can regenerate up to twelve times. The final regeneration transformation transformed him into Matt Smith, the eleventh doctor. The twelfth is unknown but in later series he might	V	Abstract.

	regenerate. I can relate to this.		
Naomi	Be brave.	S	Self-Awareness.
Aaron	Probably like a Curious George type of thing except it wouldn't be good things it would be bad things cause bad things happened to me back in those days. And it would make little kids learn lessons not to do mad crap.	S	Self-Awareness.
Roland	The theme of my story would be this: Don't worry about what other people think about you. Consider, what other people think about you.	S	Awareness of Others.
Jasper	Books and learning. Waffles. I experienced lofty half-baked full of holes and pretty mellow. No syrup, bland waffles.	S	Abstract.
Alley	Just my life that would be the theme. Slice of life that would be the theme.	S	Abstract.
Jules	I guess trying to remember, ohhh, basically the theme for elementary school would be bully always went cause parent uses the race card, and as for middle school probably be I don't know how to describe myself in middle school cause it is probably like a proto-type for what I became in high school. Well in high school I was basically as I explained earlier was somehow the guy that always mocked the popular kids and somehow got away with it. And in middle school I was somewhat the same way but seeing what works and what doesn't work. Taking what doesn't work and abandoning it and taking what works and improving it over time. Pretty much the stepping stone for what will become high school.	Qual I	Self-Awareness.
Val	The theme of my story would be about a kid going through so much unfair bullshit in school from both students and teachers for no particular reason to the point where the kid just snapped and trained in the most dangerous martial arts invented by man.	S	Anger.
Dante	It would be a dystopia, like 1984 a long running hallways. I would be a very intelligent person and everyone would be rejecting me and I am running through the hallways the teachers and students would be after me. It would be like the theme would be me trying to survive in a world that does not accept the concept of individualism.	S	Abstract.
Taylor	The Star-Belly Sneaches. There were these weird looking creatures Sneaches, the ones with the stars get to do these fun things and the ones that don't cant. The main theme of the story is judgment. What happens is the Sneaches with stars make comments about the ones without. I just seemed like I was one of the Sneaches without the stars, and the teachers never really did anything they just had the bullies sign a contract and that was really ineffective.	S	Abstract. Anger.

	10. Describe your experience in elementary and middle school socially (as a friend), academically (as a student) and personally (inside feelings).	Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	Ummm pretty harsh I didn't want to get too far out of control. Middle school was ok. I had to make sure I didn't steer down the wrong direction. My inside feeling were all good. I did dress up	S	Abstract.

	as Anakin and that was cool that one time. He was pretty interesting in the prequels aside from some serious family issues.		
Naomi	Slowly distancing myself from the world.	S	Depression.
Aaron	Elementary school was kinda easy, and I don't think I can say I had any friends. I probably did ok academically cause it was kinda easy, its elementary school and I don't really remember that part... Middle school on the other hand I guess socialized with the wrong people suffered academically and personally I feel ashamed of that part of my life. Well not to ashamed more like it's one of those things you look back on and ask yourself, oh, why did I do that?	Qual I	Self-Awareness.
Roland	During those times, I wasn't very social at all. I only had like 5 friends. I was considered awkward, quiet, dirty, and weird. I flunked the third grade because I chose not to do any homework. I didn't earn the best grades in middle school either, because I was really huge on procrastinating. I felt alone. I felt angry at everyone around me. I felt sad. I felt like I didn't belong anywhere, that no matter where I went, I didn't belong. It was unpleasant, that people would treat me differently. They would either try to avoid me, or they would sweet talk to me like I was that cute little shy boy, instead of a mutual friend. It was pretty rough.	Qual I	Depression.
Jasper	Don't remember much at all, middle I was not very social. Didn't really do much just tried to drift through get good grades and get out. I did pretty darn great in both. Calm in elementary and full of anger in middle school. Well, geez, I got into a lot of fights, family environment ran out of food, sister had children, mom was dating. My at home life started to really impact me. Books and learning. Waffles. I experienced lofty half-baked full of holes and pretty mellow. No syrup, bland waffles.	Qual I	Family Concerns.
Alley	I had a few friends but they were good friends, Jules, Arthur and Collin. I was an ok student I did struggle a few times. In elementary I sometimes felt unsure about myself in middle school I was a little more open.	S	Self-Awareness.
Jules	I don't remember much of elementary school besides 5 th grade and I had the worst teacher ever and beyond that is all that I can remember. Socially and academically in elementary school I went to different schools. When I transferred into special ed I started making more friends and the friends I made in middle school I am still in contact with today. Also on the academic bit I had more fun in middle school mostly because some of the stuff in middle school I already knew and I loved laughing at the people that pretty much put it outta their heads like in science class we were learning sex education and I already knew and so I just laughed at all of the people that were discussed by the material.	Qual I	Anger.
Val	Well in school I didn't really have that many friends every now	Qual I	Anger.

	and then I'd get 1 or 2 good friends but it was rare, for the most part everyone was an asshole that wouldn't give me half a chance, I felt I did fine academically but certain subjects I really needed help in which I did get help, as for my feelings I don't really feel anything other than regret for not starting in martial arts sooner.		
Dante	Elementary no such thing as a social life, academically it was not my shining moment; I got held back in the third grade. It was before I understood what was going on. Middle school was a bit better because I had other students in the AsIP. Academically it was the same not really great. Well school, it just made me see how much more contempt I have for it on a deep level. High school is busy work and it is insulting it is not meant for achievers, despite honors classes. Ethos has brought this to my attention because it was through all of my experience in the program and well your class it's much more broad range in the thinking more independent creative and out of the box thinking where in general ed class it's the same narrow path of thinking that I really really don't like it. As for life I have to say in the ethos program it made the word intimate much more important it moved it up, like it was a word I knew but I didn't know what its importance is. I really didn't have importance to me but now it is a word that is very important to me and very important in my vocabulary, the word intimate. So that is the impact ETHOS has had on my life.	Qual I	Self-Awareness. Transformative.
Taylor	I actually had a lot of social problems related to my lack of empathy. I remember sitting in Ms. Nocol's class adjacent to this boy named Tristen, and wanted to be friends with him but he would not talk to me. I use to make up voices if they didn't wanna be my friend, so I made up a voice for Tristen and he looked at me like I was crazy. So I would have a voice and talked to him out loud and I know that was weird and it relates to my experience with Asperger syndrome cause I know my communication with others there was like a chasm between us. And another time a girl was crying and I told her I didn't really care and it wasn't my problem. So when things went wrong people assumed I was doing things to create it but it was because I had no one to convey my stress to so I would take it out on others and then I would seem like the bully. Really it was misunderstanding and miscommunication. My academics were impacted because my grades were failing from B student to F. I was so depressed my mom had to talk to teachers to get my work load in half. That was about the same time I was diagnosed. Because of AsIP I recognize I have responsibility for my own education you know the little things like taking notes and my learning style and what works for me, how to communicated with my teachers and what I need and because of that my grades went straight up and now I am an honor student	Qual I	Depression. Transformative.

	in my school. In life it has taught me to be careful of my use of language and what I convey to other people. To be aware of others reactions and how I am communicated relates to their reactions and also taught me a little more about me and my own interests.		
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11. How did AsIP effect what is meaningful and important to you/ your interests?		Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	The participation was pretty interesting. I remain pretty sane. It helped me out to make sure I had a lot of time on my hand to keep myself moving on.	V	Abstract.
Naomi	It helped me to easily gain knowledge through assistance. Sometimes I feel connected but sometimes I am so worried about work I just focus on it.	S	Self-Awareness.
Aaron	Um well I guess cause of my friends some of them are trying to go into the same field which is game design and like uh we can all work together and get new ideas.	S	Connectedness.
Roland	It affects me because people are what it's most meaningful to me. People are what it's most important to me. Teaching me how to interact with other people really made me grow to love community as I put these skills I've learned into practice.	S	Connectedness.
Jasper	Umm, playing video games really helped me to cope with the family environment and that was meaningful to me. Connecting with other people in the program was fun and it was an outlet.	S	Connectedness.
Alley	Not sure how it helped. It helped somewhat. It showed me how to look out for my friends. It did make me want to follow my interests a bit more.	S	Self-Awareness.
Jules	I think it pretty much help to expand my interest from playing computer games to actually making them. I think ethos had some influence on that because it gave me some initiative for what I want to do as a career. And I think that ethos also helped me in pretty much talking and dealing with people that do not relate to me. Mostly by giving me ahhh, by allowing me to pretty much know how people act and pretty much what their interests are. Like for example, last year when I was put in the music department I really didn't much wanna play guitar but I did pretty much learn about the music community and what they are like.	Qual I	Self-Awareness. Transformative.
Val	When it comes to my interests , ASIP helps in that I use and approach everything with critical thinking and because of that I've been able to progress this far.	S	Transformative.
Dante	This may be difficult; at first what was important to me was in the abstract, like political stuff was important to me. ETHOS changed that while I still have important stuff to me in the abstract and politics, now I am focused more on me in the	Qual I	Self-Awareness.

	<p>program and much more tangible things. Like what I said about intimate relationships that is what ETHOS was relaying to me personally, not Dante the politician the writer. It's not really academic the effect the program has had on me, it was personal since understanding the idea that I had like a want a huge want for an intimate a personal relationship has completely changed my thought patterns. While I still have outside bitterness for things like the school but it was my depression of not having that intimate relationship that really affects me. That's what the program was, it was interpersonal that is what I found was extremely important. For revealing the whole thing for my want of an interpersonal relationship and my sadness of not having that and the anger that I have for having to wait for it. So that is what I consider ETHOS more interpersonal than academic. Because of AsIP inside of school I think I have done better more performance wise even though I really don't like the busy work. As for, well I think it has more of an impact on my life because of what I said earlier.</p>		<p>Transformative.</p> <p>Transformative.</p>
Taylor	<p>It has helped me more to recognize what I think is important. For example toward the end of high school I learned the value of communication with debate and interactions with staff in the program. At home everyone sees things more black and white and the program opened me to other ways to look at things and reading more about life and philosophy, that there are so many different ways to see the world in which we live.</p>	Qual I	Transformative,

12. How has the program been beneficial to your life inside and outside of school?		Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	<p>Benefits me pretty well. It does help me understand the concepts of the program. Let's me see how well the program works. And a bit in my life by helping me see how others do well in the world. It had a good impact on my education to see how beneficial it can become.</p>	S	Awareness of Others.
Naomi	<p>I don't think it did it made it too easy but in reality it is hard. I am going to college alone so I guess I am doing that now.</p>	S	Self-Awareness.
Aaron	<p>Well school wise I guess it's a place to help me, there are some parts that need to be changed but and in life it's like I should be able to make friends. I used to think that friends were kinda a bad thing cause I was told they did nothing but mooch off you and what not. But now it's like I can make friends and get to know people instead of standing there silently. Well inside of school I used to suffer academically but I got a lot of help with that and like friends I made got a lot of friends and outside the program too. I guess parts of it has been improved because were the parts I was suffering in, other parts they stayed the same because they were good enough before.</p>	Qual I	Transformative.

	would probably be to help me to pay attention more in class especially subjects that I do not like English and creative writing. I can now not fall asleep and pretend I am working. I don't think it really changed my perspective that much, maybe it gave me more reasons to give back a little bit I don't really relate to Oakland that much but actually in the Asperger program there were more people in the online community that I really was able to relate to.		
Val	AsIP changed my life in that they saw me as an individual instead of just another face in the classroom I feel that every student should be treated in this way instead of using a cookie cutter method of teaching which is what general education felt like. It's had a huge impact on me in school and outside of school in that I feel that I can freely express myself as an individual and to always be myself instead of conforming to the way others act and think. AsIP affected the quality of my education in that I think in and outside the box so I'm able to understand things better.	Qual I	Transformative.
Dante	Inside of school I think I have done better more performance wise even though I really don't like the busy work. As for, well I think it has more of an impact on my life because of what I said earlier.	S	Transformative
Taylor	AsIP I guess it helped me realize how important social interactions are and how to understand what people are trying to convey to me. My mom and I used to get into arguments around grades and now I am able to communicate to her that what she was doing wasn't effective and making me more stress. Now we actually get along just fine now and hardly argue anymore. Concerning my education it has helped me to communicate what I need to my teachers and so I am a better student. Teachers like me and wanna be my friend and students come up to me and like what I have to say. This is so different for me because I would never have thought people would actually be coming up to me with positive feedback and telling me I am actually articulate.	Qual I	Awareness of Others Transformative.

13. What would life be like without this program?		Categorical Response	Researcher Emergent Themes
Kyle	It would be really difficult for me and I would just collapse on the ground	S	Abstract.
Naomi	Hard. Stressful.	S	Depression.
Aaron	I guess I would probably be one of those kids on the news that either got shot, did the shooting and what not , or most likely stay inside and just surf the internet, well not surf the internet or just do nothing at all. This would of course be better for other cause there seems to be a lot of people who need this but they just cannot.	S	Transformative.

Roland	To be honest, I really don't know. But, I guess I can say that, I probably would not have changed. I would still be that awkward, quiet, dirty, weird person. I probably wouldn't even make it through High School.	S	Transformative.
Jasper	Hmmmmm very different, that's all I can say. I don't know life is like a sandwich,; it is in layers. You take away the bread the lettuce the all of the different ingredients and it would be a different sandwich. It would not be as good because you would be taking the bread off butter.	S	Transformative.
Alley	It would be a little more difficult. And also I would not have met my friends.	S	Transformative.
Jules	Well I would probably not be in college right now and would be locked up in my room playing video games. And I would probably would have been just like a shut in.	S	Transformative.
Val	Without the program I would just be another ordinary person without any kind of critical thinking or insight.	S	Transformative.
Dante	I don't think I would be able to come to an understanding of myself without the program really. Without this understanding I might have been a completely different person and I might have done completely different things and I might not even be here. I mean physically speaking. If I had made that discovery earlier on and I had made a mistake, I might not be here physically to be honest because I have had that thought before and like what if I didn't figure this out I just might have killed myself because I would have seen not point, and right then and there I may have done something possibly. I am just saying we never really know. Education and academic wise ETHOS was important but somewhat small, but personal wise it really did a great deal to impact me and I might not be here to enjoy any benefits of being 18 possibly.	Qual I	Transformative.
Taylor	Well, I wouldn't be majoring in philosophy probably would not be in the debate team. I would be in college but it would be horrible. My relationship with my mom would be terrible and my relationship with my family would be a mess. It would be drastically differently.	S	Transformative.

APPENDIX D

Data Display (Matrices) Used for Data Analysis of *Emergent Themes* combined the Like-Language across the three Emergent Themes determined by Researcher, Independent Reviewer I and Independent Reviewer II (italic and bold font used to easily visually isolate and identify like themes).

Emergent Themes

STUDENT INTERVIEW DATA QUESTIONS	Researcher EMERGENT THEMES	Independent Reviewer I EMERGENT THEMES	Independent Reviewer II EMERGENT THEMES	COMBINED EMERGENT THEMES COMMON-LANGUAGE
1. What is your interpretation of the world/ situation in which you find yourself within AsIP?	Connecting to life goals Support, coping Self-awareness (4x) <i>Isolation/</i> merging Introspection (3x) Depression (2x) Self-discovery Shift in perception Anger to determination Communication Transformation (2x) Courage Transformation (2x)	Personal Perception New world order <i>We are different</i> Mixed---bittersweet truth Navigating two worlds Communicate!	<i>Cut-off in own world</i> Responsiveness to others (5x) Relationships/or lack thereof of with others (3x) Qualitative (2x) Quantitative Depression, anger anxiety, suicide Use of past experiences to inform responses to others Personal level	<i>Isolation/</i> Introspective Communication
2. How did you come to have that point of view?	Listening Help, <i>support</i> (3x) Merging connection (2x) Self-awareness (11x) Relatedness (3x) Connections Family concerns (2x) Past anger (4x) Isolation (3) Shift in perspective Communication Transformation Awareness of differences	Coming out of their world— listening/recognizing the “other” <i>External world is hard for them</i> I am a person! I matter! Learning to live in our world Increase in empathy to the “other” “inside world” coming out to our world Awareness of being different Validation as a person...I matter! <i>Wow! Again, learning to function in our World...awareness and</i>	Understanding question and context <i>Support</i> Personal Level (3x) Qualitative (5x) Quantitative (3x) Responsiveness to others (5x) (appropriateness) Family issues (2x) Larger social community Use of past experiences to inform (4x) Larger picture of survival Depression, anger anxiety Future Use of humor	<i>Introspective</i> Communication

		<i>recognizing feelings and developing empathy</i> Communication! (same findings as mine—comm. Is key to them!!)		
3. How do you relate to others within their world?	<i>Fun</i> Communication (2x) Connections (2x) Relatedness (7x) Self-awareness (2x) Past anger Courage Difficulty with relatedness	<i>Awareness</i> <i>I am ok...I am normal...there is no normal</i> Empathy growth—communication growth Awareness—I am different...but it is ok... Key to being Aspy--- learning to navigate two worlds	<i>Use of humor</i> Responsiveness to others (6x) Relationships/or lack thereof of with others (4x) (ability to articulate) Using past to inform view Quantitative Qualitative	<i>Language and Communication</i>
4. How do you cope within your/their world?	Self-awareness (3x) Support <i>Confidence</i> Stress , anxiety Communication Isolation Animosity Transformation	<i>Survival</i> in our world Strategize for our world Strategize Strategize Oh! Awareness of two worlds	Personal Level (5x) World view? <i>Stress</i> , Depression Anger Happy Denial/ othering Using past to inform view Response to others (2x) Personal and community perspective Personal and broader view Qualitative (5x) Quantitative	<i>Inner Growth and Development</i>
5. How do you view their own history and the history of others who share your own experiences and situations?	Courage (2x) Isolation (3x) Connections (9x) Past anger (2x) Self-awareness (3x) <i>Transformation</i> (3x) Communication Shift in perception	Grounded Used to? Inner world only <i>Connection to our inner world—progressed into our world?</i> Code switching!! Communication—power of!!	Responsiveness to others (3x) Relationship or lack thereof with others Personal level <i>Using past to inform view</i> (3x) Personal Level (2x) Denial/ othering of those with Asperger? Overcoming obstacles Qualitative (5x) Quantitative (3x) Emerging responsiveness Social community level Doesn't identify Similar to Roland (othering?) "Identification" with fellow students not "students with syndrome" (2x) <i>Shift in thinking</i> <i>Overcoming obstacles</i>	<i>Transformation Through Communication</i>
6. How would you describe yourself and how	<i>Self-awareness</i> (4x) Self-acceptance (3x) Triumph (2x)	Growth in navigating the outer world Note—all responses	Personal level (2x) Qualitative (5x) Responsiveness to others	<i>Personal Development for Social Community / School Success</i>

do you feel about this description?	Depressed Past anger Isolation (4x) Rebellious Pride Curiosity	were like any other teenager....I don't know now to code this questions and I am not sure it revealed much data for your findings?	(4x) How others respond to her Overcoming obstacles Social Community Level Quantitative Pride (2x) Using past Personal and social online community level (2x) Depressed, bitter <i>Personal level and school community level</i> Relationship to others or lack	
7. How do you perceive (look at) life now?	<i>Courage</i> Triumph (5x) Self-acceptance Self-awareness (3x) <i>Depression</i> Appreciation Transformation	Growth Normal response Metaphor Cool response.... <i>strength thru struggle</i> ...thinks like me! Outer to inner worlds? Complains a lot...tell him life is not fair...who said it was? Coding—desire to connect unusual for AsIP?	<i>Optimism</i> (7x) Saving the world from destruction Needs assistance Overcoming obstacles Qualitative (2x) <i>Depressed,</i> Obsessed with a relationship with a female, fixated Hope for better social/relationships	<i>Internal Triumphs</i> Transforming Relationships
8. If you had a time machine and you could go back to before you began ETHOS what would be the key thing you'd want advice yourself about?	<i>Self-awareness</i> (7x) Self-acceptance (3x) Transformation	Navigate our world... dress for success or the value of this thinking Self-control <i>Wisdom</i> <i>Inner world wisdom</i> Value of the outer world	Quantitative (7x) Qualitative (3x) <i>Introspection/</i> Using the past to grow Bullying	Transformative <i>Introspection</i>
9. If you were telling a story about a main character (that is you) in elementary and middle school what would be the theme of your story?	Self-awareness (3x) <i>Awareness of others</i> Past anger (2x)	Wisdom <i>Learning to navigate two worlds</i> Wow! Strength thru struggle (4x) I use this for teaching...yes...strength thru struggle	Optimism Qualitative Using the past Responsiveness to others Outside of the box <i>Social level</i> Anger Bullying	Social /Personal Identity Development
10. Describe your experience in elementary and middle school socially (as a friend), academically (as a student) and	Depression (3x) <i>Family concerns</i> Transformation (2x) Self-awareness (3x)	Not nav. two worlds Strength thru struggle—they are all <i>survivors of their difference</i> Awareness of lack of empathy and differences are noteworthy. THIS IS THE	Out of the box Using the past Relationship to other or lack thereof (2x) Anger Social circle (3x) <i>Connection</i> (2x) <i>Making friends</i>	Atypical Experiences and Social Variance

personally (inside feelings)?		BEST STORY SO FAR! REALLY CHRONICLES WHAT IS GOING ON WITH THESE FOLKS AND HOW TO STRATEGIZE TWO WORLDS!!	Bitter, anger, vengeful Qualitative Quantitative Responsiveness to others (3x)	
11. How does ETHOS effect what is meaningful and important to you/ your interests?	Self-awareness (4x) Connectedness (3x) <i>Transformation</i> (5x)	<i>"Knowledge thru assistance"</i> Collaboration!! Growth! Collaboration—connecting Critical thinking (these are all soft skills/21st c skills!) Value of communication skills—critical thinking, etc!	Qualitative (10x)	Transformative Thinking
12. How has the program been beneficial to your life inside and outside of school?	Awareness of others (2x) Self-awareness (2x) Self-acceptance <i>Transformation</i> (7x)	<i>Power of collaboration and communication!</i> (2x)	Qualitative (8x) Quantitative (7x) <i>Impact on larger family community</i> <i>Larger school community</i>	Intra-Personal Empowerment
13. What would life be like without this program?	<i>Depression</i> Transformation (8x)	Value (9x)	Qualitative (8x) Quantitative (7x) <i>Using past to inform</i> Depression, suicide Prevention of self-harm	<i>Re-Constructing</i> Healthy Identity

Next Emergent Themes pulled by Reviewer I and II were shown to Reviewer III and IV.

Reviewer III and IV were asked to read across through all three Emergent Themes of Researcher, Reviewer I and Reviewer II, and Identify the Common Emergent Themes. The researcher then made a table from the data presented in Appendix E.

APPENDIX E

Data Display (Matrices) Used for Data Analysis of Emergent Themes

Emergent Themes WITH Identified Common Emergent Themes.

STUDENT INTERVIEW DATA QUESTIONS	Researcher EMERGENT THEMES	Independent Reviewer I EMERGENT THEMES	Independent Reviewer II EMERGENT THEMES	Independent Reviewer III IDENTIFIED COMMON EMERGENT THEMES	Independent Reviewer IV IDENTIFIED COMMON EMERGENT THEMES
1. What is your interpretation of the world/ situation in which you find yourself within ASIP?	Connecting to life goals Support, coping Self-awareness (4x) Isolation/merging Introspection (3x) Depression (2x) Self-discovery Shift in perception Anger to determination Communication Transformation (2x) Courage Transformation (2x)	Personal Perception New world order We are different Mixed---bittersweet truth Navigating two worlds Communicate!	Cut-off in own world Responsiveness to others (5x) Relationships/or lack thereof of with others (3x) Qualitative (2x) Quantitative Depression, anger anxiety, suicide Use of past experiences to inform responses to others Personal level Qualitative	Peripeteia [sudden turn of events or an unexpected reversal]	Perceptions of Inter/ Intrapersonal relationships
2. How did you come to have that point of view?	Listening Help, support (2x) Merging connection (2x) Self-awareness (11x) Relatedness (3x) Connections Family concerns (2x) Past anger (4x) Help, support Isolation (3) Shift in perspective Communication Transformation Awareness of differences	Coming out of their world—listening/recognizing the “other” External world is hard for them I am a person! I matter! Learning to live in our world Increase in empathy to the “other” “inside world” coming out to our world Awareness of being different Validation as a person...I matter! Wow! Again,	Understanding question and context Support Personal Level (3x) Qualitative (5x) Quantitative (3x) Responsiveness to others (5x) (appropriateness) Family issues (2x) Larger social community Use of past experiences to inform (4x) Larger picture of survival Depression, anger anxiety Future	Finding Community	Levels of communication/ connectedness

		learning to function in our World...awareness and recognizing feelings and developing empathy Communication! (same findings as mine—comm. is key to them!!)	Use of humor		
3. How do you relate to others within their world?	Fun Communication (2x) Connections (2x) Relatedness (7x) Self-awareness (2x) Past anger Courage Difficulty with relatedness	Awareness I am ok...I am normal...there is no normal Empathy growth—communication growth Awareness—I am different...but it is ok.... Key to being Aspy learning to navigate two worlds	Use of humor Responsiveness to others (6x) Relationships/or lack there of with others (4x) (ability to articulate) Using past to inform view Quantitative Qualitative	Learning Dialogue. The challenges of conversation.	Learning from the past
4. How do you cope within your/their world?	Self-awareness (3x) Support Confidence Stress, anxiety Communication Isolation Animosity Transformation	Survival in our world Strategize for our world Strategize Strategize Oh! Awareness of two worlds	Personal Level (5x) World view? Stress, Depression Anger, Happy Denial/ othering Using past to inform view Response to others (2x) Personal and community perspective Personal and broader view Qualitative (5x) Quantitative	Choosing Self-control	Self-awareness
5. How do you view their own history and the history of others who share your own experiences and situations?	Courage (2x) Isolation (3x) Connections (9x) Past anger (2x) Self-awareness (3x) Transformation (3x) Communication Shift in perception	Grounded Used to? Inner world only Connection to our inner world—progressed into our world? Code switching!! Communication—power of!!	Responsiveness to others (2x) Relationship or lack thereof with others Personal level Using past to inform view (3x) Personal Level (2x) Denial/ othering of those with Asperger? Overcoming obstacles Responsiveness to	Worlds within Worlds	Overcoming Asperger

			<p>others Qualitative (5x) Quantitative (3x) Emerging responsiveness Social community level Doesn't identify Similar to Roland (othering?) "Identification" with fellow students not "students with syndrome" (2x) Shift in thinking Overcoming obstacles</p>		
6. How would you describe yourself and how do you feel about this description?	<p>Self-awareness (4x) Self-acceptance (3x) Triumph (2x) Depressed Past anger Isolation (4x) Rebellious Pride Curiosity</p>	<p>Growth in navigating the outer world Note—all responses were like any other teenager....I don't know now to code this questions and I am not sure it revealed much data for your findings?</p>	<p>Personal level (2x) Qualitative (5x) Responsiveness to others (4x) How others respond to her Overcoming obstacles Social Community Level Quantitative Pride (2x) Using past Personal and social online community level (2x) Depressed, bitter Personal level and school community level Relationship to others or lack</p>	Finding their way	Emotional downside of Asperger (anger, depression, anxiety)
7. How do you perceive (look at) life now?	<p>Courage Triumph (5x) Self-acceptance Self-awareness (3x) Depression Appreciation Transformation</p>	<p>Growth Normal response Metaphor Cool response.... strength thru struggle...thinks like me! Outer to inner worlds? Complains a lot...tell him life is not fair...who said it was? Coding—desire to connect unusual for Aspy?</p>	<p>Optimism (7x) Saving the world from destruction Needs assistance Overcoming obstacles Qualitative (2x) Depressed, Obsessed with a relationship with a female, fixated Hope for better social/relationships</p>	Building Confidence	Optimistic; desiring more deeper relationships
8. If you had	Self-awareness	Navigate our	Quantitative (7x)	Guiding oneself	Self-awareness

a time machine and you could go back to before you began ETHOS what would be the key thing you'd want advice yourself about?	(7x) Self-acceptance (3x) Transformation	world...dress for success or the value of this thinking Self-control Wisdom Inner world wisdom Value of the outer world	Qualitative (3x) Introspection/ Using the past to grow Bullying	through hindsight	
9. If you were telling a story about a main character (that is you) in elementary and middle school what would be the theme of your story?	Self-awareness (3x) Awareness of others Past anger (2x)	Strength thru struggle Strength thru struggle Wisdom Strength thru struggle...learning to navigate two worlds Wow! Strength thru struggle I use this for teaching...yes...strength thru struggle	Optimism Qualitative Using the past Responsiveness to others Outside of the box Social level Anger Bullying	Heroes overcoming obstacles	Use of past experiences to develop self-awareness/optimism for future
10. Describe your experience in elementary and middle school socially (as a friend), academically (as a student) and personally (inside feelings)?	Depression (3x) Family concerns Transformation (2x) Self-awareness (3x)	Not nav. two worlds Strength thru struggle—they are all survivors of their difference.... Awareness of lack of empathy and differences are noteworthy. THIS IS THE BEST STORY SO FAR! REALLY CHRONICLES WHAT IS GOING ON WITH THESE FOLKS AND HOW TO STRATEGIZE TWO WORLDS!!	Out of the box Using the past Responsiveness to others Relationship to other or lack thereof (2x) Anger Social circle (3x) Connection (2x) Making friends Bitter, anger, vengeful Qualitative Quantitative Responsiveness to others (2x)	Building Identity Making Connections (or trying to...)	Use of past experiences to develop self-awareness
11. How does ETHOS effect what is meaningful and important to you/ your interests?	Self-awareness (4x) Connectedness (3x) Transformation (5x)	"Knowledge thru assistance" Collaboration!! Growth! Collaboration—connecting Critical thinking (these are all soft skills/21 st c skills!)	Qualitative (10x)	Building Perspective by consulting others	Building Community

		Value of comm. skills—critical thinking, etc!			
12. How has the program been beneficial to your life inside and outside of school?	Awareness of others (2x) Self-awareness (2x) Self-acceptance Transformation (7x)	Power of collaboration and communication! Power of collaboration/com munication	Qualitative (8x) Quantitative (7x) Impact on larger family community Larger school community	Validation and Joy derived from Membership Achievements Group Evolution	Collaboration/ Communication with larger community
13. What would life be like without this program?	Depression Transformation (8x)	Value (9x)	Qualitative (8x) Quantitative (7x) Using past to inform Depression, suicide Prevention of self-harm	Emptiness More uncertainty Less safety Less serenity	Emotional downside (anger, depression)

Researcher then used the Identified Common Emergent Themes pulled by Reviewer III and IV and from the Researcher as Evidence of the Common Emergent Themes Like-Language using the same format in Appendix D – italic and bold font to easily visually isolate and identify like themes to be used later in the data analysis section for description of themes in the research report as findings presented in Appendix F.

APPENDIX F

Data Display (Matrices) Used for Data Analysis of Emergent Themes.

Evidence of Like-Language Common Emergent Themes to be used for Research Report.

Independent Reviewer III IDENTIFIED COMMON EMERGENT THEMES	Independent Reviewer IV IDENTIFIED COMMON EMERGENT THEMES	<i>Researcher</i> COMBINED IDENTIFIED COMMON EMERGENT THEMES
Peripeteia usually used in literary criticism, when it is applied to a person, it refers to <i>profound changes that redefine as transformation of a person's character</i>	Perceptions of Inter/intrapersonal relationships	<i>Isolation/</i> Introspective Communication <u>Self-Perception</u> (how students constructed identities).
<i>Finding</i> Community	<i>Levels of communication/ connectedness</i>	<i>Introspective Communication</i> <u>Connectedness</u> (with members of AsIP and others). <u>Self-Perception</u> (how students constructed identities).
<i>Learning Dialogue.</i> The challenges of conversation.	<i>Learning from the past</i>	<i>Language and Communication</i> <u>Self-Perception</u> (how students constructed identities). <u>Connectedness</u> (with members of AsIP and others).
Choosing <i>Self-control</i>	<i>Self-awareness</i>	<i>Inner Growth and Development</i> <u>Self-Perception</u> (how students constructed identities).
<i>Worlds within</i> Worlds	<i>Overcoming Asperger</i>	<i>Transformation Through Communication</i> <u>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</u> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).
<i>Finding their way</i>	<i>Emotional downside of Asperger (anger, depression, anxiety)</i>	<i>Personal Development for Social Community / School Success</i> <u>Connectedness</u> (with members of AsIP and others).
Building <i>Confidence</i>	<i>Optimistic; desiring deeper relationships</i>	<i>Internal Triumphs Transforming Relationships</i> <u>Connectedness</u> (with members of AsIP and others).

		<i>Self-Perception</i> (how students constructed identities).
<i>Guiding oneself through hindsight</i>	Self-awareness	Transformative Introspection <i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).
Heroes overcoming obstacles	Use of past experiences to develop self-awareness/optimism for future	Social /Personal Identity Development <i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).
<i>Building Identity</i> Making Connections (or trying to...)	Use of past experiences to develop self-awareness	Atypical Experiences and Social Variance <i>Connectedness</i> (with members of AsIP and others).
<i>Building Perspective by consulting others</i>	Building Community	Transformative Thinking <i>Connectedness</i> (with members of AsIP and others). <i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).
<i>Validation and Joy derived from Membership</i> Achievements <i>Group Evolution</i>	Collaboration/Communication with larger community	Intra-Personal Empowerment <i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).
Emptiness More uncertainty Less safety <i>Less serenity</i>	Emotional downside (anger, depression)	Re-Constructing Healthy Identity <i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).

APPENDIX G

Data Display (Matrices) Used for Data Analysis of Emergent Themes/ Summary of Emergent Themes to be used in research report in the context of the research questions guiding the investigation of the study which produced the Emergent Themes discussed in the data findings. The Emergent Themes are categorized in Conceptual Domains explained in chapter 5.

Summary of Emergent Themes

Conceptual Domain 1: <i>Social Construction of Learning and Language</i>					
How do students identify and see themselves and others who share their experiences in the social learning environment? (Question 1)		What is the student interpretation of the world/ situation in which they find themselves in AsIP/ Ethos? (Question 2)		How do constructivist learning practices change student performance outcomes that demonstrate the idea of the socially constructed “disabled learning?” (Question 3)	
Emergent Theme	Supporting Evidence	Emergent Theme	Supporting Evidence	Emergent Theme	Supporting Evidence
<i>Self-Perception</i> (how students constructed identities). <i>Connectedness</i> (with members of AsIP and others).	<i>Isolation/</i> Introspective Communication Atypical Experiences and Social Variance	<i>Self-Perception</i> (how students constructed identities). <i>Connectedness</i> (with members of AsIP and others).	Inner Growth and Development Social /Personal Identity Development	<i>Self-Perception</i> (how students constructed identities). <i>Connectedness</i> (with members of AsIP and others).	Intra-Personal Empowerment Transformative Introspection
Conceptual Domain 2: <i>Radical Individualism as Community Kaleidoscope</i>					
How has emerged student identity and learning experience impact engagement/ outcomes in school and life? (Emerged Question from Data)		Where in the realm of education can the student with ASD (specifically with Asperger Syndrome) be included in constructivist learning environment? (Emerged Question from Data)		How does constructivist learning and transformative education, affect the integration of students on the spectrum, particularly those who are mildly affected? (Question 4)	
Emergent Theme	Supporting Evidence	Emergent Theme	Supporting Evidence	Emergent Theme	Supporting Evidence
<i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).	Re-Constructing Healthy Identity Language and Communication	<i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).	Internal Triumphs Transforming Relationships Personal Development for Social Community / School Success	<i>Transformative Shifts in Awareness</i> (regarding how students view of themselves and learning experience altered engagement in school and life).	Transformative Thinking Transformation Through Communication

APPENDIX H

Next the researcher asked Reviewer I and Reviewer II to review responses from each Intervention Specialists when asked to capture their experience and philosophy as a team member in the Asperger Inclusion Program as collaborators in the triangulation of the data. Specific and intentional measures were taken to prevent colleagues data analysis cross contamination by electronically sending each a personal table with only Intervention Specialists statements and one column to record their Emergent Themes.

Emergent Themes of Intervention Specialists.

Building Trust Open Communication Collaboration	Intervention Specialist background: Intervention Specialist sense of purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for students, • help students understand themselves better, • foster student self confidence • empower students to overcome social deficits • Provide social supports for students Importance of building trusting relationships with students Importance of developing self-advocacy Help students develop anger management strategies Action to ameliorate students' feelings of social isolation Giving students a voice Communication/voice through making film
Inclusion. Helping to provide balance for moving forward. Nurturing Nutrition Growth	Background Intervention Specialist sense of purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foster an environment of validation, • awareness of self and others, • creativity and compassion, and humor for all. • Empower students to be independent learners Provide support then gradually have students assume responsibility Communication/voice through learning about preparing food Importance of building trusting relationships with students
Fun Joy Levity Exploration Building positive relationships.	Importance of building strong trusting relationships with students Importance of developing self-awareness (students unable to describe symptoms) Students' feelings of sadness, depression, isolation Engage students in a fun, enjoyable activity Action to ameliorate students' feelings of social isolation, sadness

