**THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE A SIBLING WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)**

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**Objective:** Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is characterized by impairments in social interactions and communication; restricted, repetitive and stereotyped behaviours; as well as resistance to change (APA, 2013). Having a child diagnosed with a disability is often an unforeseen event, leading to significant effects on the entire family unit (Ünal & Baran, 2011). Previous research has revealed several negative as well as positive effects on the siblings of the individual with ASD. For example, siblings of children with ASD report greater admiration of their siblings and fewer disagreements in their relationships (Kaminsky & Dewey, 2001); however, siblings without ASD often report being "annoyed" by the behaviours associated with ASD or say that they feel partly "treated unfairly" by their parents (Jagla et al., 2016). It is also not uncommon for parents to assume that siblings without ASD are not affected by the diagnosis of their brother or sister (Jagla et al., 2016). The purpose of this study is to better understand the academic experiences of individuals with siblings diagnosed with ASD. Given that most children spend a large part of their days in a school setting and that research has shown that having a sibling with ASD brings a significant impact on each family member, it is important to determine how, and it what way, having a sibling with ASD impacts the school experience

**Methods**: In order to understand the school experiences of siblings, a qualitative method will be used. Following a basic interpretative approach (Merriam, 2002), in-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with siblings who do not have ASD. This approach was seleted in order to examine how individuals interpret their experiences, as well as understand their situation or their world (Chapman & Smith, 2002).

**Results**: Data collection is ongoing, therefore, there are no results at this time, but a thematic analysis will be used to analyze interview transcripts. Although the main objective of the study is to better understand the academic experiences of individuals with siblings diagnosed with ASD, data wil also be analyzed for stressors and positive effects of having a sibling with ASD in relation to school experiences. It is anticipated that having a brother or sister with ASD will have a significant impact on their siblings’ daily school routines. With that said, since research suggest negative as well as positive effects on this population, a thematic analysis may reveal similar findings with respect to the siblings school experiences.

**Discussion/conclusion:** Although data collection has not been completed, this study will give insight into what it is like to live with a sibling diagnosed with ASD and how it may impact an individual’s experiences at school. Through qualitative analysis, the perceptions and opinions of this particular population may be understood, instead of generalized or secondary sources (e.g., parents, Chapman & Smith, 2002). The present study will also inform appropriate and effective services for all members of the family. Siblings of individuals with ASD are becoming increasingly expected to take primary caregiving roles when parents are no longer capable of such care (Seymour et al., 2013), therefore it is imperative to understand how non-ASD siblings interpret their experiences in order to provide adequate support for this population to improve their quality of life.

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