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Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Practices of Transition Professionals to Support Black Students with High Incidence Disabilities

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Table of Contents

List of Tables vii

List of Figures viii

Abstract ix

Introduction 1

Statement of the Problem 2

Disparities of Black High School Students with High Incidence Disabilities in School and Beyond Education Outcomes Issues 3

Employment Outcome Issues 4

Independent Living (Adult Living) Outcome Issues 5

Transition Service Issues 6

Rationale for the Study 7

Critical Race Theory as a Philosophical Lens 8

Significance of the Study 10

Research Questions 11

Definitions 11

Organization of the Study 13

Literature Review 14

Collaboration 15

Organizational Structures 15

Collaborative Dynamics 18

Collaborative Outcomes 20

CRP 21

Identity and Achievement 22

Equity and Excellence 23
Developmental Appropriateness 24
Teaching the Whole Child 25
Teacher–Student Relationships 27
Policy 28
WIOA 29
IDEA 30
ESSA 32
Practices 33
Collaboration Practices 33
CRPs 36
The Conceptual Framework 39
Literature Review Summary 42
Methodology 43
Research Questions 43
Study Design 44
Overview of Focus Groups and Interviews for Qualitative Investigations 46
Sampling 47
Participants 48
Data Collection 52
Focus Group and Interview Protocol 53
Data Coding and Analysis 56
Validity 56
Trustworthiness 57

Ethical Considerations 58
Researcher Positionality 59
Findings 61
Overview 62
Special Education Focus Group and Interviews 62
Transition Specialist Focus Group and Interviews 63
VR Focus Group and Interviews 64
Research Question 1 67
Major Theme 1: Willingness to Learn and Teach 69
Major Theme 2: Recognizing Personal and Systemic Issues Related to Black Students Transition for Education and Employment 80
Research Question 2 83
Major Theme 1: Discipline-Specific Transition Practices, Learning Opportunities and Student Voice 85
Major Theme 2: Relatedness and Relationships Skills 90
Major Theme 3: Supporting the Family 94
Research Question 3 95
Major Theme 1: Equity Versus Equality for Practicing 98
Major Theme 2: Limited Resources and Economic Issues 100
Major Theme 3: Workplace Disorganization 103
Major Theme 4: Education, Training, and Knowledge 107
Discussion 110
Interpretation of the Findings 111
What Does Being Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Look Like? 111

Participants' Experiences and Practices 112
Reasons Why Collaboration and Culturally Responsive Practices are Critical ..114
Implications and Recommendations....117
Special Education Teachers....118
Transition Specialists....120
VR Counselors....121
Study Limitations....124
COVID-19 Global Pandemic Impact....125
Summary and Conclusions 126
References....129
Appendix A Focus Group and Interview Protocols....148
Appendix B Memoing and Debriefing 155
Appendix C Research Subject Information and Consent Form....156
Appendix D Focus Group Note Sheet 158
Vita 164

List of Tables

1. Postsecondary Transition Policies and Service Providers 29
2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants 50
3. Matrix of Research and Focus Group/ Interview Questions 55
4. Pseudonym and Participant Data 65

List of Figures

1. Conceptual Framework.....41
2. Study Design.....45
3. Coding Scheme for RQ 1.....68
4. Coding Scheme for RQ 2.....84
5. Coding Scheme for RQ 3.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Abstract

COLLABORATIVE AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES OF TRANSITION PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS WITH HIGH INCIDENCE DISABILITIES

By Amber Brown Ruiz, MS, CRC

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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Black students with high incidence disabilities have some of the most concerning postsecondary transition outcomes compared to their White and nondisabled peers (Awsumb et al., 2020; Hussar et al., 2020; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission [JLARC], 2020). Different government reports cited the lack of collaborative practices and various transition researchers imply the need for culturally responsive practices when supporting Black students (Federal Partners in Transition [FPT], 2015; Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2012; Thoma et al., 2016). To address these gaps in the literature, this study explored the collaborative and culturally responsive practices of transition professionals to support Black students with high incidence disabilities.

Data was collected using multimethod qualitative focus groups and follow-up interviews to gain deeper insight into how transition professionals support Black students with disabilities and explore collaborative and culturally responsive practices during transition service delivery. There were a total of 18 participants in this study. Six special education teachers, seven transition

specialists, and five vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors. Participants were in focus groups based on their roles, so there were three focus groups in total. In the focus groups, participants were asked to describe collaboration and use of culturally responsive transition practices. Through constant comparative analysis to build a coding scheme, themes were created. The themes that emerged from the data included: (a) willingness to learn and teach; (b) recognizing personal and systemic issues related to Black students' transition for education and employment; (c) discipline-specific promising/research/ evidence-based transition practices; (d) flexible learning opportunities; (e) student voice; (f) equity versus equality for practicing; (g) limited resources and economic issues; (h) workplace disorganization; and (i) education, training, and knowledge.

Findings indicated there is a significant lack of understanding of culturally responsive practices and the application of both culturally responsive practices and collaboration. The implications of the lack of understanding about the role of race in individualizing transition practices for Black students with disabilities reveals racial identity during transition may not be a priority for some participants. The findings highlighted the importance of research, policy, and practice for understanding the intersections of race and disability to fully support Black students with high incidence disabilities.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2015, the Federal Partners in Transition (FPT) workgroup created *The 2020 Federal Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy*, also known as the "2020 Plan," for transition requirements to improve transition outcomes for students and youth with disabilities. The plan was in response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in 2012, which found a lack of collaboration among different service agencies during the transition out of high school for students with disabilities and suggested the lack of collaboration impacted the effectiveness of the transition service delivery (FPT, 2015; GAO, 2012). The FPT (2015) recognized multiple factors influence postsecondary opportunities at a student level, such as *macro systemic realities* related to sociocultural backgrounds and the need to increase and understand collaboration at the transition professionals' level. One suggestion for further inquiry included "research-based and evidence-based practices that are inclusive, accessible, and strength-based to improve individual experiences for youth who have been historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged" (FPT, 2015, p. 11).

The terms *historically underrepresented* and *economically disadvantaged* are often euphemisms referring to race and socioeconomic status, which should be specific for understanding what works for whom; in the case of this study, what works to improve transition outcomes for Black high school students with high incidence disabilities. In general, Black students with disabilities face the lowest school and post-school success, specifically in Virginia, where postschool success is improving for students with disabilities (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission [JLARC], 2020). Adverse transition outcomes historically impact Black students with high incidence disabilities in terms of high school completion (McFarland et al., 2020; Zablocki & Krezmien, 2013), employment (Glynn & Schaller, 2017; Ji et al., 2015; Musu-

Gillette et al., 2017), and independent living related issues such as poverty (Goodman et al., 2017). Thus, many stakeholders advocate for more culturally responsive practices (CRPs) that include effective forms of collaboration with community partners and families (Achola, 2019; Achola & Greene, 2016; Hogansen et al., 2008; Scott et al., in press; Skiba & Losen, 2015). The purpose of this study was to explore culturally responsive forms of collaboration during the transition planning process by transition professionals to prepare Black students with high incidence disabilities for positive postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

Statement of the Problem

Many strategies have targeted racially and ethnically diverse students and their intersecting identities, including culturally relevant and responsive teaching for Black students as the core demographic (Harmon, 2012; Howard & Terry, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Based on the goals and strategies of the FPT (2015) workgroup, culturally responsive teaching, specifically, or CRP (as many of the services provided during practice and not necessarily teaching) and collaboration may be well suited to understand the context of practices to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. Effective collaboration is critical for culturally responsive and competent education models (Aceves & Orosco, 2014). Many service delivery models in education, such as preemployment transition services (Pre-ETS), use collaboration as a means for supporting students with disabilities (SWDs) for postschool success in education, employment, and independent living (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [WIOA], 2014). Thus, collaboration and CRPs are critical for Black students with high incidence disabilities, during the high school to adulthood transition (Awsumb et al., 2020; Brown Ruiz & Scott, 2021; Thoma et al., 2016; Trainor et al., 2016).

Under the WOIA (2014) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), collaboration among educators and transition service providers (e.g., vocational rehabilitation

counselors [VR] and other rehabilitation professionals) to support youth happens as early as the age of 14. However, it is required by the age of 16. According to Rowe et al. (2020), collaboration is a research-based practice and an area of transition that should be studied more closely to understand successful collaborative strategies, even though collaboration is a core element of transition programming (Kohler et al., 2016). In general, successful transition outcomes for SWDs often depend on transition professionals (e.g., special educators, VR counselors, transition specialists, and community rehabilitation providers) and other stakeholders on the transition team, including the student as the key stakeholder. When most SWDs receive proper support and services for their transition, they have better outcomes (Gold et al., 2013; Honeycutt et al., 2017; Luecking et al., 2018; Roux et al., 2020). However, there should be a more in-depth understanding of transition services for students with high incidence disabilities, specifically racial and ethnic groups (Trainor et al., 2016). The following chapter highlights the rationale for investigating collaboration and CRPs among transition professionals to support Black high school students with high incidence disabilities by providing background information on transition disparities, the policies impacting transition, problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions.

Disparities of Black High School Students with High Incidence Disabilities in School and Beyond Education Outcomes Issues

Regarding specific educational transition outcomes for Black students with high incidence disabilities, the most disparaging outcome is school completion. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019), approximately 14% of Black students served under the IDEA have received an alternative certificate which has been presented to students who have not met graduation requirements and has gone by many names (e.g., occupational diplomas, special education diplomas, vocational and technical diploma). Black students with

alternative certificates have been the highest of any racial or ethnic group related to alternative certificate recipients (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2014), alternative certificates have also created low expectations of students, and do not give a "viable pathway to higher education or meaningful employment" (p. 1).

This type of certificate has been controversial because it has not guaranteed the jobs or types of financial aid for college that regular diplomas typically offer (Cortiella et al., 2014). To expand, most skilled and higher-paying jobs have required a regular high school diploma or general educational development (GED) test. In terms of postsecondary education, alternative certificates may not have allowed students to obtain college financial aid unless students enroll in transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities (TPSID). Some TPSIDs also do not guarantee funding to attend (Rozell, 2019). Yamamoto and Black (2015) stated the lack of economic, social, and cultural capital has been a more significant barrier to accessing higher education than student disability. The findings from Yamamoto and Black's study (2015) suggested the increased use of culturally appropriate practices during the transition planning process could bridge the gap in student transition outcomes.

Employment Outcome Issues

As of 2019, Black people with disabilities have had the highest unemployment rate (11.8%; Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2019). Those that have found employment have likely worked in positions that were part time or least likely to have health and employment benefits (Sanford et al., 2011; Thoma et al., 2016). A cycle of unemployment or underemployment can create financial instability and impact independent living (Honey et al., 2011). After a student who was initially served under IDEA has left high school for several years, it could have been possible that they will not be eligible for adult services as students move from an entitlement

system to an eligibility-based system (Oertle et al., 2013). For example, if a person has a learning disability and their intelligence quotient is not below 70, they may not qualify for VR services or supplemental security income that they may have been eligible for as a K–12 student or if VR is under *order of selection*, meaning that providers must serve people with the most significant disabilities. Oertle et al. (2013) recommended transition services should be prompt and have a clear line of communication for transition professionals to make sure students with disabilities that will need future adult disability services to reduce issues with employment.

Independent Living (Adult Living) Outcome Issues

Rowe et al. (2015) defined independent living as "skills necessary for management of one's personal self-care and daily independent living, including the personal management skills needed to interact with others, daily living skills, financial management skills, and the self-management of healthcare/wellness needs" (p. 121). Rowe et al. also suggested that independent living skills may involve more interaction within communities of color/culturally diverse communities as an essential function of independent living. However, Riesen et al. (2014) reported a significant barrier that may impact community interaction is the lack of knowledge of how to access community resources among transition professionals.

The lack of knowledge among transition professionals may have critical implications on students with high incidence disabilities, specifically those who are Black. Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) and learning disabilities have been more likely to have juvenile justice involvement than their peers without disabilities; however, Black students with EBD have been at increased risks for juvenile justice involvement (Mendoza et al., 2020). Involvement with criminal justice and juvenile justice systems has been linked to unemployment and underemployment factors; thus, making housing more difficult and poverty more likely for

Black students with high incidence disabilities who have justice system infractions (Craigie et al., 2020).

According to the National Disability Institute (2019), approximately 37% of Black people over the age of 18 with disabilities live in poverty compared to Black people without disabilities (20%), and the total overall population of people with disabilities living in poverty (27%). The cumulative risk-factors of low high school diploma attainment, financial instability, unemployment/underemployment, and incarceration suggest independent living skills cannot be outside the context of what impacts students' daily lives to be independent. In other words, independent living skills have to address areas such as community integration and improve on professionals' knowledge of community resources, not solely focusing on siloed or generalized skill attainment.

Transition Service Issues

Researchers found transition students who have EBD and related disabilities were less likely than those without EBD and related disabilities to have received any VR services or postsecondary education support (Honeycutt et al., 2017). Many students and families from diverse backgrounds have reported not even knowing about VR services (Landmark et al., 2010; Ju et al., 2018). According to Awsumb et al. (2020), Black SWD and mental health related diagnoses (e.g., EBD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD]) have been least likely to have successful transition service outcomes. In a follow-up qualitative component of the Awsumb et al. (2020) study, transition professionals interviewed felt many unsuccessful cases for Black students with high incidence disabilities were due to the lack of family involvement and lack of specialized resources and services compared to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The researchers recommended creating more supportive transition

experiences for Black SWD and this included having better ways of exchanging knowledge and resources through interagency collaboration.

Rationale for the Study

Although effective collaboration during transition planning has been important, many special education teachers and VR counselors have felt underprepared to implement transition services effectively, and special education teachers have reported they could use more training on collaborating with other agencies (Benitez et al., 2009; Neubert et al., 2018). The lack of knowledge in effective transition planning and collaboration has also been likely to contribute to poor transition outcomes like postsecondary employment and education (Benitez et al., 2009). As a result, collaborative efforts have not been happening as often as it should. Taylor et al. (2016) found low instances of collaboration between VR counselors and teachers; yet, many participants in the study rated various collaboration practices high in importance. The lack of collaboration in service delivery has reduced planned services' ability to be beneficial (GOA, 2012). Black students with high incidence disabilities need effective evidence-based and CRPs that support them to have better postschool outcomes (Landmark et al., 2010; Thoma et al., 2016).

CRPs have been integrated into school and classrooms through various means, including cultural knowledge, competence, and behavioral support to provide meaningful learning opportunities for racially and ethnically diverse students. Artiles et al. (2010) suggested historically underserved groups, such as Black students with high incidence disabilities, have "experienced sustained school failure over time" (p. 280). Many teachers, administrators, and researchers recognize that CRP are needed for students to feel supported, but teachers have not been as culturally responsive as they think (Debnam et al., 2015; Gaias et al. 2019). According to Debnam et al. (2015), many teachers self-reported high rates of culturally responsive teaching

strategies, but when the same groups of teachers were observed, they did not use many strategies in practice. Gaias et al. (2019) addressed similar findings with classroom management practices and suggested more professional development for CRP.

Even in transition, CRP has not often been found to support students. Thoma et al. (2016) suggested there should be more research into transition professionals' CRP to improve transition outcomes for Black SWD. However, as stated before, Black students with high incidence disabilities consistently have had more challenges with successful transition outcomes compared to their peers without disabilities (Goodman et al., 2017; Ji et al., 2015; McFarland et al., 2020; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; Zablocki & Krezmien, 2013), which implies the feasibility of collaboration and CRPs during transition service delivery for Black students with high incidence disabilities has not been thoroughly explored. Given the strong connection between collaboration and CRPs, it is important to explore ways transition professionals are collaborating during transition to meet the needs of Black students with high incidence disabilities. Additionally, federal legislation has promoted the use of collaboration and CRP and provides a basis for the knowledge and skills transition professionals need to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. Exploring culturally responsive collaboration in practice can be a first step for informing better transition programming. Using effective collaboration and CRP could fill a service delivery need leading to better postschool outcomes for Black students with high incidence disabilities (Awsumb et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2018; Haber et al., 2016; Landmark et al., 2010).

Critical Race Theory as a Philosophical Lens

My aim for this research was to explore how collaboration and CRP are used in transition to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. As I examined professionals' relationships to support Black students with high incidence disabilities, I thought about how

Annamma et al. (2013) stated, “it would be nothing short of irresponsible to leave race out of dis/ability related research in special education” (p. 4). Racism and ableism are serious issues in the United States. For example, the delay of equity in IDEA (2016) has shown complacency by the U.S. education system and has been a disservice to racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities, particularly Black students with high incidence disabilities who have been historically overrepresented and misidentified for special education services (Jimenez & Flores, 2019; The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2019).

According to many critical race scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Kohli et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998) educational institutions have been inherently racist. Harsh discipline policies in schools have impacted Black students with high incidence disabilities the most, increasing their discipline rates and eventual school-to-pipeline matriculation (Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015). The types of strategies professionals use can assist with creating more equitable educational experiences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) listed three propositions for critical race theory in education:

(1) race continues to be significant in the United States;

(2) U.S. society is based on property rights rather than human rights; and

(3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity. (p. 42)

Solórzano (1997) and Yosso (2005) expanded Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) proposition into five tenets that can assist with understanding and positioning research, practice, and policy:

1. Race and racism are fundamental aspects of U.S. society.
2. “Challenge to dominant ideology” (Yosso, 2005 p. 117), which means to critique White privilege and notions that define deficit-based perspectives of racially and

ethnically diverse people. These notions also include but are not limited to color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.

3. Social justice in education to empower people to respond to racial injustices and other forms of oppression.
4. Knowledge from racially and ethnically diverse people is a legitimate source for understanding racial tension.
5. Race and racism must be understood in a transdisciplinary manner across fields (Yosso, 2005).

In education, the propositions and tenets listed have transformed into practices, which have typically been referred to as culturally relevant or culturally responsive (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical race theory in this study can assist with understanding the power and biases transition professionals may hold when working with Black students with high incidence disabilities. Also, the use of critical race theory for transition outcomes (e.g., employment, education, independent living) of Black students with high incidence disabilities helped critique systemic issues such as power dynamics in addition to economic and social capital. In addition to critical race theory as a philosophical lens for this study, collaborative theory was also used to develop a conceptual framework and is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Significance of the Study

I investigated culturally responsive collaboration strategies among transition professionals. This study used qualitative data to explore transition professionals' roles in providing services, their collaborative practices, CRPs, and barriers to those practices. Most studies have focused on either collaboration alone during transition (Taylor et al., 2016) or CRPs alone and largely for students at the elementary and middle school ages (Aronson & Laughter,

2016; Bottiani et al., 2018; Debnam et al., 2015; Gaias et al., 2019). However, culturally responsive collaboration may have a significant influence on transition outcomes for Black students with high incidence disabilities. The use of culturally responsive collaboration practices for Black students with high incidence disabilities during transition have not been thoroughly explored. Thus, using qualitative focus groups, the purpose of this study was to understand what it meant to have culturally responsive collaboration practices used by transition professionals to support Black high school students with high incidence disabilities.

Research Questions

1. How do transition professionals, specifically special educators, transition specialist/ coordinators, and vocational rehabilitation counselors, describe their experiences and the practices they have used for successful transition cases of Black high school students with high incidence disabilities?
2. How do transition professionals describe culturally responsive collaboration and what does that mean to them?
3. What do transition professionals identify as barriers to their implementation of culturally responsive collaboration?

Definitions

Collaboration: In theory, collaboration is defined as autonomous group problem solving using shared rules, norms, structures, and knowledge to achieve a common goal (Gray, 1989; Wood & Gray, 1991). In practice, GAO defines collaboration under WIOA (2014) as (a) defining outcomes and accountability, (b) bridging organizational cultures, (c) establishing and sustaining leadership, (d) clarifying roles and responsibilities, and (e) including relevant participants.

Culturally relevant: Culturally relevant was developed as a pedagogy that has been transformed into various practices that reflect Ladson-Billings (1994) definition which stated “a pedagogy

that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 16–17).

Culturally responsive: Culturally responsive furthers the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy through caring, communication, curriculum design, and instructional practices (Gay, 2018).

High incidence disabilities: Students with high incidence disabilities are included in disability categories with the highest prevalence rates in U.S. school systems. These categories include learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)/other health impairment (OHI), Autism spectrum disorders (ASD), mild intellectual disabilities (MID), and speech and language disorders (SLD; Gage, 2012). Black students are overrepresented in LD, emotional and behavioral disorders, and ADHD/OHI categories (Gage, 2012; Sabornie et al., 2016; Trainor et al., 2016). Thus, this study referred to Black high incidence disabilities as those with LD, emotional and behavioral disorders, and ADHD/OHI.

Historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged: The FPT (2015) defined historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged to include youth who may be culturally and linguistically diverse, as well as LGBT youth. These youth are also considered vulnerable and "prone to outcomes that have negative consequences for their future development as responsible, self-sufficient adults" (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2014, p. 1).

Preemployment transition services (Pre-ETS): A set of services provided to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for adult services under VR agencies. The services include (a) job exploration counseling, (b) work-based learning experiences, (c) counseling for postsecondary education, (d) workplace readiness training, (e) instruction in self-advocacy (WIOA, 2014).

Students with disabilities (SWDs): An individual with a disability who is served under educational institutions that receive services through IDEA or Section 504 or enrolled in a postsecondary or recognized education program (WIOA, 2014).

Youth with disabilities: An individual with a disability between the age of 14–24 and may or may not be receiving educational services (WIOA, 2014). The term youth with disabilities is broader compared to SWD.

Organization of the Study

There are five chapters to this dissertation which are: (a) introduction to the study, (b) a comprehensive literature review, (c) methodology, (d) results, and (e) discussion. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the problem, the philosophical lens, and the purpose of this study. In this study, the central problem I explored was transition professionals' collaborative and culturally responsive practices when supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities. In Chapter 2, I delve into the central problem by using critical race theory as a philosophical lens for the literature review. Also in Chapter 2, relevant literature defining collaboration and culturally responsive practices are synthesized and framed within the context of transition services to develop a conceptual framework. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology for this study, including the participants, design, data collection procedures, and researcher positionality. Chapter 4 has the findings and results of the study descriptive of each research question, and Chapter 5 includes the discussion and implications of the results.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the critical need to focus on Black high school students with high incidence disabilities and specific supports for them by using collaboration and culturally responsive practices (CRPs) during transition. In Chapter 2, I impart a comprehensive literature review of collaborative practices and CRPs. Researchers have demonstrated collaboration and CRPs are embraced across educational systems but have often lacked effective application (Debnam et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2016). Collaboration and CRPs have also been discussed in education literature differently, and CRPs have not been thoroughly studied in the transition literature as an evidence-based or research-based practice (Rowe et al., 2020). Even though many transition scholars have called for the use of CRPs to support Black students with high incidence disabilities (Awsumb, 2017; Awsumb et al., 2020; Thoma et al., 2016).

However, CRPs have been mainly researched at the elementary and middle school levels, or in studies that used high school data did not collect disaggregated data on students with disabilities (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Bottiani et al., 2018; Byrd, 2016). Thus, in this chapter, I examine literature in the areas of collaboration and CRP by (a) defining each concept and key characteristics, (b) practices typically used, (c) current knowledge among transition professionals and potential barriers, and (d) implications of postsecondary transition for Black students with high incidence disabilities to develop a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework used theoretical underpinnings of collaborative theory (Emerson et al., 2011; Wood & Gray, 1991) and critical race theory for education (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005). Both theories also have vital implications for policies related to collaboration and culturally responsive transition practices.

Collaboration

Collaboration has been used in many fields of practice, and the key element has been relationships built toward reaching a common goal. Yosso (2005) emphasized "educators most often assume that schools work and that students, parents, and community need to change to conform to this already effective and equitable system" (p. 119), which should not be the case when working with students from diverse backgrounds. Thus, researchers, educational systems, education-related service providers, such as vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors and transition specialists, must reconceptualize what an equitable system looks like by understanding how to collaborate and provide their services.

Gray (1985) suggested collaborative problem solving with various stakeholders is needed for almost any organization to move forward. Gray (1989) formally defined collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (p. 5). Building on Gray's original work, Wood and Gray (1991) formed a collaboration theory which described organizational management and skills of teams. Emerson et al. (2011) created a collaborative theoretical framework, based on Wood and Gray, and built a knowledge base of collaboration by examining (a) organizational structures (system context), (b) collaboration dynamics, and (c) collaborative outcomes, which assist in the understanding of pros and cons of current educational collaboration styles, specifically in relation to special education and transition.

Organizational Structures

Emerson et al. (2011) discussed organizational structures or system context as the host in which operating protocols inform norms. Collaboration in education has looked differently for various service delivery models. Friend and Cook (2013) identified three types of collaboration

under which educational models may work that are multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary. Multidisciplinary methods in service delivery models has included professionals who have worked independently and minimally. Interdisciplinary teams have used discipline-specific goals while they have integrated more collaborative practices, which have been typically seen in the K–12 system; they have conducted individualistic reports. Transdisciplinary teams have worked in a holistic approach like early intervention (EI) provider models to create services that have been in the interest of the child and family (Shelden & Rush, 2011).

Multidisciplinary

The multidisciplinary team approach has been seen in many areas such as health and business models, but some schools have also used this approach. There have been systems that each area has used to create plans, but the different disciplines or professionals have not interacted with each other to provide comprehensive services for the person or client they support. The professionals have been independent and create different plans of support or services (Collin, 2009; McCormick & Goldman, 1979). Multidisciplinary teams are not integrative and support power hierarchies because resources and knowledge about the person supported are privileged to one professional (Oborn & Dawson, 2010). The risks of privileged knowledge have added to the systematic use of capital and has not typically benefited people who have been marginalized (Trainor, 2010). Therefore, the multidisciplinary approach to collaboration may not be beneficial for Black students with high incidence disabilities.

Interdisciplinary

Interdisciplinary teams are similar to multidisciplinary teams, but one key difference is formal communication (McCormick & Goldman, 1979). Interdisciplinary teams often have meetings to create individual plans for each professional's specific discipline. However, these

meetings allow for a common source of knowledge about the person receiving support. Interdisciplinary collaboration has been considered to have cognitive and social aspects shared among team members. The cognitive aspects have been the methods and beliefs for understanding knowledge and resources, while the social aspect has been the communication to increase knowledge and understanding about the person being supported (Collin, 2009).

However, these two aspects can become limited if there has been a data barrier about the person being supported (i.e., different systems with different languages for different professionals; McCormick & Goldman, 1979). Most transition teams may be considered interdisciplinary now that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, 2014) and regulatory organizations such as the Federal Partners in Transition (FPT, 2015) workgroup highly recommend and mandate collaboration of transition teams. Although the language, systems, time/workload, different professional role requirements of transition professionals often present a barrier for interdisciplinary work to be impactful (Magee, 2019; Oertle & Trach, 2007; Taylor et al., 2016). A more comprehensive approach maybe more likely to reduce barriers transition professionals may face.

Transdisciplinary

A transdisciplinary model tries to address the limitations of interdisciplinary teams by having a wraparound team that uses a common language and service plan that helps support the goal of a comprehensive individualized treatment program (Hart, 1977; McCormick & Goldman, 1979; Sheldon & Rush, 2013). The team makes joint decisions and has common goals across disciplines to assist with service delivery. Based on this model, the outcomes for service delivery become more than just person-centered, it becomes a dynamic system change for most people receiving services. For example, in EI services, dynamic system change could include changing and advocating for policy changes and federal support programs. Koyanagi and Alfano (2013)

stated “exemplary transition support practices require a policy framework that allows for developmentally appropriate and integrated service delivery that is guided by individual preferences and situations” (p. 3). Thus, the interactions and practices (i.e., collaborative dynamics) of team members are important for the long-term success in changing policy. Organizational structure is key in the conceptual framework as the starting point, as it may inform the collaborative dynamics of a transition team.

Collaborative Dynamics

Emerson et al. (2011) defined collaborative dynamics as principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action which work together to produce collaborative actions. Principled engagement describes the quality of the interactive process. Shared motivation refers to interpersonal skills and social capital held by the group. The capacity for joint action recognizes the need for interdependence through institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and resources (Emerson et al., 2011).

Tuckman (1965) conceptualized the behaviors of collaboration in stages of interactive process (i.e., principled engagement) typically discussed in education. These interactions are key to the group dynamic. The stages are (a) forming, (b) storming, (c) norming, and (d) performing. The Forming stage is the beginning of the group’s understanding of each other. The Storming stage happens when there is group conflict. The norming stage is when the group is in a stable or cohesive state. The performing stage is the optimal state of functioning and everyone in the group works together to complete job duties. These stages are nonlinear and iterative (Tuckman, 1965). In the context of postsecondary transition, Trach (2012) measured collaboration in transition with the degree of collaboration for transition (DCT). The DCT evaluates six areas of practice which are planning, assessment, implementation, evaluation, placement, and follow-up. Trach (2012) used a 1–6-point Likert scale and defined these specific degrees as:

1. Coexistence: Limited interactions at all.
2. Networking: Minimal interactions and all decisions are solely based on each provider and their agency.
3. Cooperation: Share information but still make decisions in isolation.
4. Coordination: Share information and resources through formal meetings, and makes major decisions together.
5. Coalition: More frequent communication, sharing of information and resources and makes some decisions together.
6. Collaboration: One system to make all decisions together.

The interpersonal skills and social capital in education can assist with teams' dynamics. Interpersonal skills in education to build relationships can be framed under seven principles of partnership offered by Turnbull et al. (2011). The seven principles can impact the relationships of professionals, families, students, and other stakeholders. The principles include communication, professional competence, respect, commitment, equality, advocacy, and, the most important principle, trust. Turnbull et al. (2011) proposed trust has been the "keystone or principle that holds all the others into place" (p. 137). Although trust has been critically important, some researchers would push back on equality to be replaced with equity because of the lack of equity in education for Black students with disabilities which has been argued to perpetuate disproportionality (Daniels, 1998; Harry & Klingner, 2014; Skiba et al., 2008). In special education and during transition, the services are supposed to build social capital for students to have better outcomes (Trainor, 2008), not limit students, which has been why understanding the collaborative dynamics of transition teams would provide better insight into the mindset of professionals and reveal identified barriers to collaboration noted in other transition literature.

Trainor (2008, 2010) studied the use of both social and cultural capital for diverse students with disabilities during transition. The 2008 article was a conceptual article about the need for social and cultural capital, which suggests both are needed to break barriers of privileged knowledge; for example, financial assistance with college applications, the implications of graduating high school with a certificate, or understanding SSI benefits after school and how those may change. Trainor (2008) also proposed the "use of capital are mediated by social interaction" (p. 151). Thus, the relationships between the team members is important to even gather lesser-known information or social and cultural capital, which is made apparent in the 2010 study. Trainor (2010) found parents of color were often prevented from advocating for their children because they did not have the "capital" or language for teachers to assist them in finding ways to support their children. Parents in the interviews discussed their frustrations and many suggested there should be better home and school collaboration. So, to bridge the gap between collaborative partnerships professionals must be willing to share knowledge and resources among all stakeholders and understand the rich cultural capital families bring into transition meetings or to the transition plan.

Collaborative Outcomes

The framework offered by Emerson et al. (2011) refers to the outcomes as results from the collaborative dynamic. In transition service delivery, the collaborative outcomes of transition professionals have been student focused outcomes of successful placements in education or employment and independent living skills (Rowe et al., 2020). Emerson et al. (2011) suggested, "when accountability for collaborative outcomes is deemed important, these impacts are likely to be more explicit and measurable" (p. 18). Some critical race scholars have also shared the notion of accountability in antiracist work (Boykin et al., 2020; Diem & Welton, 2020), the accountability for identifying racism and working against racist systems has been important

toward the work of creating a more equitable education system within educational teams. The historical and contemporary issues Black students with high incidence disabilities face must be also understood as a byproduct of transition teams who will need to make sure they are accountable for their collaborative outcomes (e.g., student outcomes for postsecondary education, employment, independent living). Therefore, transition teams must have the knowledge, belief, and skillsets to create equitable opportunities for Black students with high incidence disabilities, suggesting a greater need for CRPs.

CRP

The definitions around CRP originated from many distinct terms and ideas of equity, social justice, and discourse (e.g., multicultural education, culturally relevant, culturally congruent, cultural knowledge, culturally appropriate, culturally sustaining) about bettering practices to support students of color through the lens of critical race theory (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Harmon, 2012; Irvine & Armento, 2001). More specifically, culturally responsive teaching or CRPs have created better educational environments for racially and ethnically diverse students by addressing systemic and institutional racism, biases, and introducing culturally competent skills for educational professionals (Gay, 2018). The literature around CRPs has focused deeply on the education of African American/Black students because of perpetual disservice of the United States educational system since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954; Harmon, 2012).

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) identified components or principles to use CRP. The components were: (a) identity and achievement, (b) equity and excellence, (c) developmental appropriateness, (d) teaching the whole child, and (e) teacher–student relationships. Specifically, researchers have found teachers who have used culturally relevant or culturally competent practices have offered students more meaningful opportunities for learning and motivation

(Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2002). Also, the practice has been seen to have created classroom climates that are respectful and inclusive, because students value and appreciate the cultures of their peers (Aldana et al., 2012; Byrd, 2016). Thus, the framework by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) has been a comprehensive way to translate research findings into practice.

Identity and Achievement

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) defined concepts under identity and achievement as identity development, cultural heritage, multiple perspectives, affirmation of diversity, and public validation of home-community cultures. The conceptualization of identity and achievement has been largely focused on the social and cultural capitals of both students and professionals, specifically teachers within the context of this framework. Students should feel seen and heard as active participants in their learning process and career planning. Achievement has been the added value of identity recognition because no matter the size of the achievement students can feel seen when they are recognized and feel validated. The concept of colorblindness has suggested all children have the same needs, at the same learning level, and are provided all the same resources, which has not been the case for any group of students. Some studies have suggested professionals' use of colorblindness in special education has been a harmful practice and diverse identities should be valued for better long-term outcomes, specifically in school achievement (Annamma et al., 2016).

In the area of transition, identity and achievement are critical to understanding the future direction students may take as they plan out their careers. While individualized plans have been implemented for students with disabilities many diverse families feel like their concerns were not heard by transition professionals (Zionts et al., 2003). More specifically, Black parents with children with behavior related disorders have felt that they have been disrespected,

misunderstood, and viewed negatively by school professionals (Zionts et al., 2003). One participant in Zionts et al. (2003) study specifically stated, “Teachers and principals should not do things to hurt my child’s self-esteem or to make parents feel worthless” (p. 45). These sentiments have also been felt by Black women with LD, cerebral palsy, and mental health related diagnoses when they were interviewed for a retroactive study about their transition planning with many women feeling powerless and undervalued (Cannon, 2019). Along with these negative feelings, transition coordinators in the Cannon (2019) study also reinforced conforming to Whiteness, indicating the transition coordinators in this study were not individualizing to their students’ needs nor were they supporting the identity of Black women in the study. By reinforcing Whiteness and not embracing identity, transition professionals are reducing the concept of equity.

Equity and Excellence

The core components of equity and excellence are dispositions, incorporation of multicultural curriculum content, equal access, and high expectations. All four components of equity and excellence have relied on resources to be used to give all students an advantage of a better education. White students have seen themselves in educational material more often than other racial groups, which has given White students more of an opportunity to see themselves more positively (Banks et al., 2001; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). In a study about opportunities to learn U.S. history, Black students were significantly underserved in the U.S. history curriculum and performed the lowest out of any racial group (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015). The authors of the opportunities to learn study suggested racial and ethnic groups excluded from the curriculum were less likely to perform academically the same as students who are White and have high socioeconomic statuses (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015). Thus, equity in school requires both professionals and students to analyze and critique systemic and

institutional racism that impact educational and economic disparities among marginalized students.

By using cultural capital to support different dispositions of students, both professionals and students can gain critical consciousness of addressing issues of social justice and racial inequality (Diemer et al., 2016; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Professionals are to encourage students to identify problems in their communities and to seek ways to address them. Professionals should also recognize societal oppression and encourage students to notice how social issues are evident in everyday life, a practice of critical consciousness (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). As a result, some students may have better clarity of their futures.

Diemer and Blustein (2006) explored critical consciousness with students and their career development. The researchers found students with greater levels of critical consciousness were more aware of their vocational identity and their career goals. Implications of these findings suggested a critical awareness of issues can assist students with engaging in career goals they are motivated to pursue, which can be hypothesized to be relevant to Black students with high incidence disabilities (Brown Ruiz & Scott, in press).

Developmental Appropriateness

Learning styles, teaching styles, and cultural variation in psychological needs (e.g., motivation, morale, engagement, collaboration) are the key components of developmental appropriateness under the CRP framework (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The three components of developmental appropriateness refer to the development of innovative teaching methods and assessments. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) specifically stated “When teachers respond to developmental appropriateness, they, in effect, cultivate students who want to learn instead of the students who will just engage in rote memorization and regurgitation” (p. 76).

In special education, developmental appropriateness has been a practice that is common in creating educational plans for students. However, these practices have not been culturally appropriate for some students with disabilities; specifically, the disproportionate identification of Black students in special education. Many researchers have implied educational assessments need to be reformed due to the lack of cultural sensitivity (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Skiba et al., 2006, 2016; Sullivan, 2011). The consequences of disproportionate identification of Black students in special education can result in issues of further discrimination than just that of race, it could also lead to deficit-based thinking of ability (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018).

For example, Black students with learning and behavioral disabilities have been more likely than White students with learning and behavioral disabilities to repeat grade levels (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Warren et al., 2014). In the long-term, grade retention has often been a predictor of dropout rates (Doren et al., 2014; Osher et al., 2003; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Sullivan & Sadeh, 2016). As previously stated, dropout has had major implications on postsecondary transition of students with disabilities, and even more so for Black students with high incidence disabilities.

Teaching the Whole Child

The most notable implication of research on issues of school mobility and school climate has been the concept of teaching the whole child. Under the CRP framework, components of teaching the whole child have included skill development in a cultural context, home-school-community collaboration, learning outcomes, supportive learning community, and empowerment. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) emphasized the need for culturally responsive social and emotional support. In general, social-emotional support can be a mediator in the classroom when learning becomes difficult for students with disabilities (SWD), specifically students with learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders (Sakız, 2017). When

learning is perceived as difficult, it can lead to a process of negative thinking and possible externalized behavior. Studies like Sakiz (2017) suggested when these issues have been addressed with social-emotional support programs and understanding of school climate SWD, in general, have better academic achievement (e.g., GPA and school attendance; Sakız, 2017). When social-emotional support has not been available SWD were more likely to have a lower GPA and attendance (Sakız, 2017). This could suggest when a student is more confident in their achievements it could lead to other positive actions. Although, academic achievement should not be a standalone for positive actions.

Thus, culturally responsive social-emotional learning has been needed and has meant including home-school-community collaboration to address learning needs. Simmons (2019) asserted many professionals, specifically teachers, use social-emotional learning absent of larger sociopolitical context and do not consider how students' lives are affected by issues that happen in the home, school, and community. The strategies Simmons offered include (a) providing students opportunities to reflect on identity and equity to build self-awareness, (b) enhance relationship skills through debate, (c) develop responsible decision-making skills through community-based projects, (d) use current topics to foster social awareness, and (e) explore different expectations for self-management.

Black students with high incidence disabilities have a variety of difficulties in academic, social, and emotional behavioral areas. Therefore, culturally responsive social-emotional support seems beneficial because of known benefits of social-emotional learning for students with high incidence disabilities, in general. Addressing holistic well-being of Black students with high incidence disabilities is important to lower the negative outcomes in academic achievement and school mobility (Osher et al., 2003). It is also important that teachers are role models and assist with social-emotional learning; thus, strong teacher–student relationships are needed.

Teacher–Student Relationships

The teacher–student relationships can be an important first step toward making more relevant academic and social-emotional learning. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) focused on caring, relationships, interaction, and classroom atmosphere as components of teacher–student relationships section of the framework. Positive teacher–student relationships are shown to have a significant association with social-functioning, behavior issues, and academic achievement (Roorda et al., 2011). Specifically, a meta-analysis of 99 studies by Roorda et al. (2011) found teacher–student relationships were more important for students who struggled academically, had learning disabilities, and were from disadvantaged backgrounds (Roorda et al., 2011). Creating positive teacher–student relationships has helped teachers have a locus of control in their own environment, and it has also assisted in understanding the needs of diverse students.

To build positive teacher–student relationships, Gay (2018) discussed the aspects of culturally responsive caring, and suggested caring relationships are characterized by patience, persistence, facilitation, validation, and empowerment of students. Many teachers that have had strong caring relationships with their students, have focused on the quality of their relationships and well-being of their students before instructional practices. Caring teachers have also made strong connections to the social and moral responsibilities of their students and for themselves (Ayers, 2004; Gay, 2018).

Specifically, for students with high incidence disabilities, Murray and Pianta (2007) examined how teacher–student relationships impacted students with high incidence disabilities. In this study, the authors found four factors contribute to teacher–student relationships with students with high incidence disabilities, which are (a) organizational structures and resources; (b) classroom structure and practices; (c) teacher beliefs, behaviors, and actions; and (d) individual skills for developing prosocial relationships. Interestingly, teacher beliefs, behaviors,

and actions were the most important and considered a foundational component of teacher–student relationships. Therefore, the role of implicit and explicit bias has a strong impact on teacher–student relationships. The discussion of organizational structures links back to collaboration, which could indicate further investigation of the role transition organizational structures and beliefs may have on understanding collaboration and CRPs during transition.

Policy

Policies related to the adverse postschool outcomes of Black students with disabilities has highlighted the need for collaboration and CRP. Two main policy legislations have influenced the postsecondary transition process for SWDs, which are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) and the WIOA (2014), which amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (see Table 1). Both the IDEA and WIOA are policies that apply to SWD and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) applies to all students. In terms of collaboration, the policy requirements under both IDEA and WIOA focus on a coordinated set of activities, but it is unclear what has happened in practice when policy reports (FPT, 2015; GAO, 2012) and research have both noted the increased need for collaboration (Taylor et al., 2016). Also, CRPs are recommended under ESSA (2015) but have not been centered on CRP, which suggest CRPs are optional to education service delivery. The fact that the policies have not centered on CRPs has implications on the use of CRPs in practice, which is discussed after the policy section.

Table 1

Postsecondary Transition Policies and Service Providers

Transition service providers	IDEA	WIOA	Role
Educators (special education teachers/ case managers)	IEPs revisions required at age 16 to include a transition plan	N/A	In-school responsibilities to student under IDEA and instruction of course of study. Creates IEPs.
VR counselors	N/A	Pre-ETS available to youth with disabilities at age 14 but vary from state to state based on eligibility	Builds career readiness capacity and provides postsecondary support services and referrals. Creates IPEs.
Transition specialist	Provides assistance for coordination under CEC guidelines	Provides state or district specific assistance with coordinating adult services	Coordinates services and communicate with LEAs and VR counselors. Supports both IEP and IPE goals until high school completion.

Note: IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Act; WIOA = Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; VR = vocational rehabilitation; IEPs = individualized education plans; CEC = Council of Exceptional Children; Pre-ETS = Preemployment Transition Services; IPE = individualized plans for employment; LEAs = Local Education Agency. Transition specialist is not formally recognized in IDEA or WIOA policies, and the title and duties vary from state-to-state. Adapted from "Rehabilitation Professionals' Expectations for Transition and Interagency Collaboration," by K. M. Oertle et al., 2013.

WIOA

In the latest legislation, WIOA (2014) outlined the areas of services that should be provided during transition, which are Pre-ETS: (a) job exploration counseling, (b) work-based learning experiences, (c) counseling for postsecondary education, (d) workplace readiness training, and (e) instruction in self-advocacy. To meet the goals of WIOA, LEAs (school-based

services) and VR agencies/rehabilitation counselors (adult services) have coordinated planning with each other to provide a seamless transition for students into adulthood. VR counselors are employees of VR agencies and can also have a variety of titles and affiliations (e.g., career counselor, employment specialist, job developer). More specifically, VR agencies provide "community-based work experiences and on-the-job training services to students and youth with disabilities on a case-by-case basis under the VR program" (U.S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 17). The cooperation and coordination regulations by WIOA specifically target VR agencies. WIOA also provides information about collaborating with other adult agencies and specifically the Statewide Independent Living Council and Centers for Independent Living, which are more explicitly designed for people with significant disabilities (National Council on Independent Living, 2012; Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, 2017). It is important to recognize formal supports and national advocacy groups for people with significant disabilities have been critical for supporting people with significant disabilities but are not specially designed for students with high incidence disabilities.

IDEA

Under IDEA (2004), the transition services provided must be reflected on the individualized education plan (IEP). According to the transition guide by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (2020):

> Each student with a disability must address transition services requirements beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and must be updated annually thereafter. The IEP must include:

1. appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and
2. the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the student with a disability in reaching those goals. (p.1)

Collaboration in IDEA (2004) suggests there should be agreements made between VR agencies through states' formal interagency agreements. In these agreements, roles of each team member, discussion about resources, and shared responsibilities are articulated. The personnel that serve under IDEA are from the State Education Agency (SEA) or Local Education Agency (LEA). SEA/LEA professionals or educators are transition service providers that work within SEA/LEAs or are contracted by SEA/LEAs. These providers can have a variety of titles such as special education teacher, general education teacher, transition specialist, career coach, or "qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities; knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the LEA" (U.S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 10).

It is also important to note in 2016, the Obama administration added a regulation called Equity in IDEA (2016) to address disproportionality in special education and focus on discipline issues that have highly impacted SWD, Black, and Indigenous children (Equity in IDEA, 2016). The regulation highlighted the need for states to ensure practices and procedures that align with standard identification of SWDs. The regulations of identification practices were highlighted in a report from the GAO (2013), where they found many states had nonstandardized methods of identifying SWDs, which implies concerns for misidentification, over-identification, and under-

identification. In the Equity in IDEA (2016) executive summary brief, it also linked the identification issue with disciplinary concerns, specifically stating:

> regulations clarify that States must address significant disproportionality in the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, using the same statutory remedies required to address significant disproportionality in the identification and placement of children with disabilities. (p. 2)

The Equity in IDEA (2016) regulation is significant for Black students with high incidence disabilities during transition because the regulation highlighted the need to correct the adverse impacts of disciplinary actions, such as dropouts.

ESSA

ESSA (2015) also highlighted the need for more equitable practices for all students, in a slightly different manner. ESSA (2015) is the law that replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). The Department of Education (2018) asserted ESSA addresses areas in education that were struggling before its passage. The department stated on their website:

> today, high school graduation rates are at all-time highs. Dropout rates are at historic lows. And more students are going to college than ever before. These achievements provide a firm foundation for further work to expand educational opportunity and improve student outcomes under ESSA.

Yet, many Black students with high incidence disabilities have not had the same success. ESSA (2015) also addressed five indicators of school improvement and accountability which are (a) suspension rates, (b) school climate, (c) chronic absenteeism, (d) extended-year graduation rate, and (e) access to a college and career-ready curriculum. Some states have implemented CRPs as creative support for their school climate measure (Kostyo et al., 2018; Schettino et al., 2019). These programs were created to reduce the harsh discipline practices that have disproportionately

impacted Black students with disabilities (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Kostyo et al., 2018). As of 2019, 33 states have included CRPs into their state ESSA plans (Schettino et al., 2019).

Practices

Effective collaboration and CRPs should happen at every stage during transition planning to create better stakeholder engagement and outcomes for students. Francis et al. (2018) created a conceptual diagram that illustrates the types of collaborative engagement of each transition stakeholder. In the diagram the four key stakeholders are students in the center, families, educators, and service providers (Francis et al., 2018). Students are central to the collaborative practice during transition because the planning and process should be student focused and student-led (Francis et al., 2018; Kohler et al., 2016; Rowe et al., 2015). The intersection of families, educators, and service providers is informed by family engagement practices (Francis et al., 2018). The intersection of educators and service providers is what defines interagency collaboration.

Collaboration Practices

In practice, collaboration has been identified as a high leverage practice by some educational researchers (McLeskey, 2017), but a promising or research-based practice by transition professionals (National Technical Assistance Center on Transition [NTACT], 2019; Rowe et al., 2020). Consequently, there have been no clearly defined evidence-based collaboration practices. Based on the literature about transition practices, NTACT (2019) listed 13 practices as some ways of collaborating during Pre-ETS. A few of these practices and essential characteristics included developing formal agreement, defining clear roles and responsibilities, resource mapping and finding gaps in service delivery, and provide cross-discipline professional development opportunities among the many practices listed.

However, as noted by the FPT (2015), transition professionals are not using collaboration in the most productive way. Taylor et al. (2016) conducted a study to understand transition professionals' collaboration, which was a survey study, and the researchers also found barriers to collaboration. The top barriers include: (a) time for relationship building, (b) support from administrators, (c) training, and (d) funding. Similarly, Magee (2019) found 18 barriers that were more specific to the transition professionals' job duties and roles. These barriers include:

> scheduling difficulties, lack of agenda, lack of leadership, poor team focus, lack of resource-sharing, lack of common values, lack of collaborator availability, poor follow-through on tasks, lack of accountability, lack of knowledge of own or other agencies' services, lack of training in collaboration, turn-over of collaborative partners, lack of work time, poor communication among partners, lack of agency support, and lack of alignment with agencies' goals. (p. 88)

Both Taylor et al. (2016) and Magee (2019) noted many barriers related to the organizational dynamic of collaborating, which has been seen to impact comprehensive service delivery (GAO, 2012). To address the lack of collaboration, researchers have focused on partnerships and relationships as interventions, but not transition practices in conjunction with collaboration.

Rowe et al. (2020) and NTACT (2019) both identified a transition collaboration study which is communicating interagency relationships and collaborative linkages for exceptional students (CIRCLES). Povenmire-Kirk et al. (2015) and colleagues examined the use of collaborative practices in the context of transition professionals (e.g., educators, service providers) and their follow-up measured the impact of collaboration for students served (Flowers et al., 2018) with CIRCLES. The CIRCLES intervention targeted increasing professional relationships to create better outcomes for students with disabilities. The authors proposed three levels of teams. The first was the community level team, which included professionals that do

not work directly with students and are mostly agencies that oversee the roles of the school level team. The second was the school level team, which were direct service providers from the community level team. Lastly, the IEP team were the educators and related service providers that write the goals of the transition IEP by combining the services from the community level team and school level team into one document.

The model has provided transition professionals better ways to deliver team responsibilities and meeting times, creating better avenues for communication and coordination of services. Through qualitative interviews, participants reported having enhanced relationships and feeling better about meeting the needs of students and their families. Also, in a follow-up study in 2018, the same research team found students who were in the CIRCLES school districts had higher levels or self-determination and great IEP participation (Flowers et al., 2018). However, the challenges of implementing CIRCLES included follow-ups and practicality, which were more technical issues like transportation and time management of meetings (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015).

Based on other studies, incorporating interagency collaboration has been a fundamental need for students with high incidence disabilities to have successful transition outcomes in employment, education, and independent living (Balcazar et al., 2012; Bullis et al., 2002; Christensen et al., 2015; Croke & Thompson, 2011; Malloy et al., 2018; Nochajski & Schweitzer, 2014). However, a study by Awsumb et al. (2020) suggested the necessity for better interagency collaboration for students with high incidence disabilities and those who are Black. In the Aswumb et al. (2020) study, which had a large Black and Latinx population, the authors found significant differences between Latinx students who used transition services and Black students who used transition services. They also found students with mental health related disabilities such as emotional and behavioral disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder were more likely to have unsuccessful case closures compared to students with more significant disabilities. Also, in a review of studies by Francis et al. (2018) and an unpublished systematic review of collaboration literature (2020), only one study, Balcazar et al. 2012, specifically focused on minoritized students (i.e., Black and Hispanic). Thus, more studies should be more specific in addressing how to collaborate to support Black students with high incidence disabilities as this may look different than other racially and ethnically diverse groups and using strategies of CRP have been beneficial to Black students, in general.

CRPs

The empirical evidence supporting CRPs has suggested it is a promising practice and Ladson-Billings (1995) described these practices as "just good teaching" (p. 1). However, like collaboration, CRPs have been empirically understudied and not inclusive due to some studies not collecting student outcome data (Bottiani et al., 2018). Bottiani et al. (2018) also suggested the concept of empirically studying CRPs has been novel so researchers should further pursue the understanding of CRPs.

In the special education literature, there have been only four emerging evidence-based CRPs. Aceves and Orosco (2014) listed those practices as collaborative teaching, responsive feedback, modeling, and instructional scaffolding. Collaborative teaching requires positive interdependence and interpersonal skills, which have been seen to improve engagement and motivation (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Lundeen & Lundeen, 1993; Solis et al., 2012). Collaborative teaching in this context is slightly different than overall collaboration as a practice because not all stages of the transition process involve teaching. Responsive feedback has been part encouragement and part supportive correction to better students' understanding of instructional materials (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Routman, 2014; Wiggins, 2012). Modeling has been explicit observation of behaviors by students. Instructional scaffolding has allowed students

to think more critically about instruction but allows the teacher to support students as needed. While these strategies have been specific measurable practices, the authors have also acknowledged the roles of social and cultural capital, identity, and social justice. Along with the collaborative practices, the four emerging practices have various links to transition outcomes that are important to the conceptual framework and the development of an interview protocol for this study.

Collaborative Teaching and Scaffolding

Collaborative teaching and scaffolding are key practices that transition teams should be using to support their students, because Pre-ETS require some form of teaching to support the service requirement of instruction on self-advocacy, particularly, but can be used for other services such as workplace readiness training. An example of collaborative teaching and scaffolding was seen in the Balcazar et al. (2012) study, which examined the use of the College Connection Program for minority students (mostly Black and Latinx). The services within the program included outreach and training, postsecondary support, job development, and on-the-job support. The collaboration efforts included the interventionist, teacher, or specialist partnerships that deliver the intervention together. The researchers also provided social support networking opportunities for students to develop their social skills. They also used a case manager at every step in the transition process to assist with goals and used both postsecondary support and on-the-job support as a scaffolding method. The findings indicated 82% of students in the intervention enrolled in postsecondary education and 74% secured employment. Intervention programs such as these have been interesting, because compared to business-as-usual studies like Awsumb et al. (2020), students in the Balcazar et al. (2012) study had better outcomes. The study by Balcazar et al. (2012) further iterated the need for exploring collaborative practices and

CRPs in a natural setting, because the only aspect of the study that was slightly different from what is in policy and typical practice was the interventionalist.

Responsive Feedback

The next practice listed by Aceves and Orosco (2014) is responsive feedback. Cartledge and Kourea (2008) created a transition model that included responsive feedback only as a component. The authors stated, "When CLD students make mistakes, teachers need to correct their errors immediately, frequently, explicitly, and directly" (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008, p. 359). They also suggested this information can be displayed visually for the feedback to be motivating and a reminder. Responsive feedback as a strategy has mostly been seen in the classrooms and in traditional graded work (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Routman, 2014; Wiggins, 2012). However, other direct uses for responsive feedback outside of schools and classrooms should be researched more closely in areas of on-the-job-instruction or training. Research by Cartledge and Kourea (2008) was one of the only studies in transition found to have responsive feedback listed as a component of the study. This suggested there should be additional research around this topic to fully understand the nature of responsive feedback as a practice, because some researchers have discussed it may have a great impact on motivation and other emotions (Rowe, 2011; Zacharias, 2007).

Modeling

The last practice listed by Aceves and Orosco (2014) is modeling. Leake et al. (2011) explored the use of role modeling for culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities during transition. While this study did not explore the explicit definition of modeling by Aceves and Orosco (2014), it was a variation of the definition. In the Leake et al. (2011) study, role models and mentors were used to model behaviors and support career learning and emphasize personalized attention for students. However, these behaviors were not explicit like

Aceves and Orosco's (2014) definition. Most study participants had learning disabilities (38%) and attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (17%) and were mostly Black. Results from the study included consistent themes of support and motivation in key areas of transition and career goals. Leake et al. (2011) concluded more studies should explore how mentoring is used during transition and advocate for greater use of mentoring. At the transition stage, mentoring may be more developmentally appropriate than the definition of modeling by Aceves and Orosco (2014), which could be further explored through this study.

The Conceptual Framework

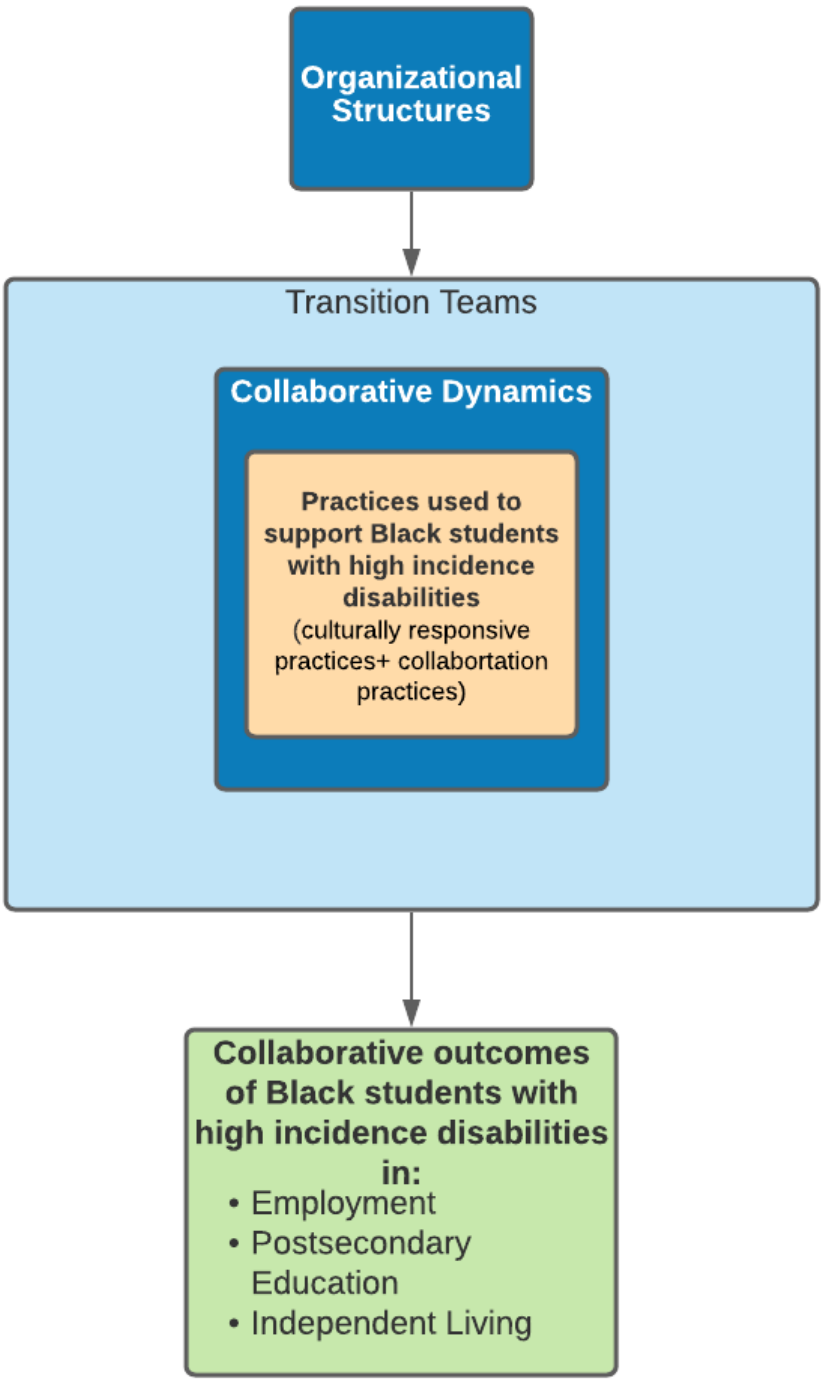
The need for collaboration to deliver culturally responsive transition practices is evident through the literature review discussed, as collaboration, trusting relationships, resources, and knowledge (i.e., social and cultural capital) are salient themes among the literature. There are many unknowns to the delivery of transition services for Black students with high incidence disabilities (Awsumb et al., 2020). The first is how transition professionals in non-research-based interventions (e.g., business as usual) have collaborated to meet the needs of Black students with high incidence disabilities, because collaborative models that target their needs seem to produce better outcomes than those that do not. The second is whether transition professionals use forms of CRPs during transition, because CRPs have been hypothesized to be an effective measure to include Black families and students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). However, it seems much literature has focused on classrooms and younger children (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Bottiani et al., 2018). For example, the emerging practice of modeling may not be developmentally appropriate for transition students but having role models and mentors may be a better way to develop model behaviors and even gain social and cultural capital. Lastly, how have transition professionals been including Black students with high incidence disabilities in the transition process? As noted, trust and teacher–student relationships are important to improving student

outcomes and their motivation, but implicit bias of not fully including or listening to students' needs could taint relationships and fail to bridge the gap of school and adult service needs.

Therefore, this study considers how the central phenomenon of culturally responsive collaboration has been used during transition to meet the needs of Black students with high incidence disabilities. The conceptual framework combines both collaboration theory and critical race theory in education for the key components in the diagram (see Figure 1) while the actual practices listed in the last section are used to develop more specific questions during the interview (e.g., collaborative teaching, responsive feedback, modeling, and instructional scaffolding), while also examining transition professionals' use of language around identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child/student, and relationships. The DCT (Trach, 2012) is also used to assist with question development categories (e.g., planning, assessment, implementation, evaluation, placement, and follow-up) but not used because the actual scale still needs further development of statistical reliability (i.e., internal consistency; Trach, 2012).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Literature Review Summary

Chapter 2 defined both collaboration and CRPs in detail with the most relevant literature for each topic. Collaboration is a practice often used by education teams to reach a common goal and is understood by examining (a) organizational structures (system context), (b) collaboration dynamics, and (c) collaborative outcomes (Emerson et al., 2011; Friend & Cook, 2013). However, in the transition literature collaborative practice lacks in application and details. The use of collaboration could be in part due to no evidence-based collaboration practices, only research-based (Rowe et al., 2020). There were also significant barriers for collaboration during transition, which is largely due to organizational dynamics, such as time for relationship building (Magee, 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). Collaboration is also understudied even though it is a mandated policy requirement. The lack of strong collaborative practices in combination with the lack of CRPs may have implications for the support and outcomes of Black students with high incidence disabilities. In theory, when professionals use CRPs, they should work to attain (a) identity and achievement, (b) equity and excellence, (c) developmental appropriateness, (d) teaching the whole child, and (e) teacher–student relationships for their students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The CRPs that seem to be the emerging practices of special education include the use of collaborative teaching, responsive feedback, modeling, and instructional scaffolding (Aceves & Orosco, 2014); however, these practices have also been understudied in the area of transition for Black students with high incidence disabilities. Thus, there are concerning practice gaps for Black students with high incidence disabilities that may impact their postschool outcomes (Awsumb, 2017; Awsumb et al., 2020).

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of transition professionals in supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities. Two specific experiences I explored are collaboration and culturally responsive practices (CRPs) as forms of support for Black students with high incidence disabilities. As a method of exploring transition professionals' experiences in using collaboration and CRPs, research was conducted using qualitative focus groups to understand the *essence* of the transition professionals' experiences using critical race theory of education as a philosophical lens. Critical race theory of education encourages the use of the exchange of stories through this lens, and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) even suggested it could help reveal the lack of consciousness of individuals who may internalize oppression and stereotypes. Previous research and policy reports have emphasized the need for better collaboration to produce better outcomes for students with adverse transition experiences, which specifically are Black students with high incidence disabilities in this study (Awsumb et al., 2020; Federal Partners in Transition, 2015). However, I propose the field of transition needs to also know the essence of these practices to understand the issues of collaboration and the need for a better understanding of CRPs during transition.

Research Questions

1. How do transition professionals describe culturally responsive collaboration and what does that mean to them?
2. How do transition professionals, specifically special educators, transition specialists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors, describe their experiences and the practices they have used for successful transition cases of Black students with high incidence disabilities?

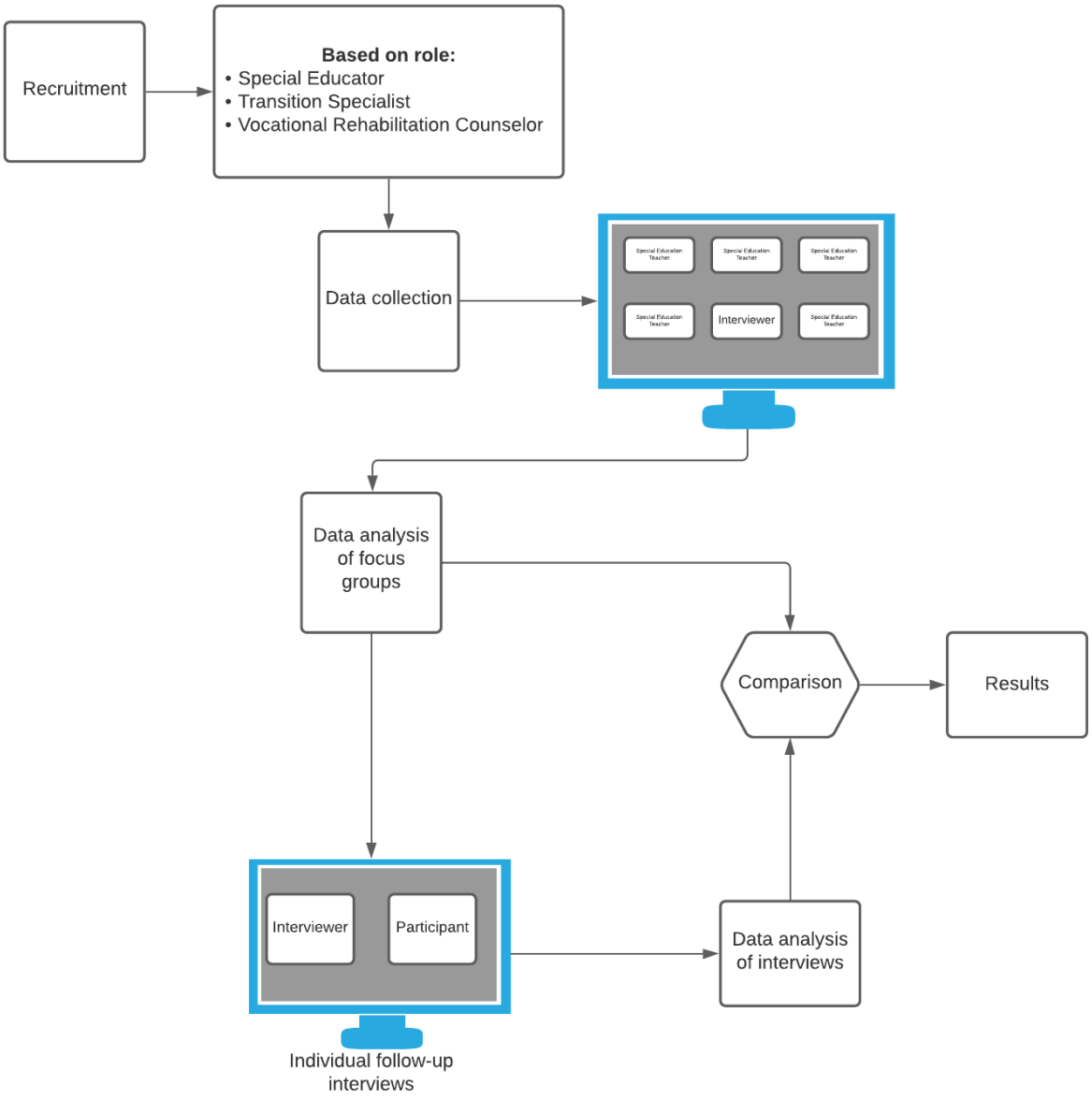
3. What do transition professionals identify as barriers to their implementation of culturally responsive collaboration?

Study Design

This study was a multimethod study, which incorporated qualitative focus groups, follow-up interviews, and a constant comparison analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Miles et al., 2018) to answer the research questions. Focus groups and follow-up interviews provided a nuanced way of exploring the area of transition experiences of these professionals in their various roles. The focus groups were used first to create broad themes and follow-up interviews refined those themes. There were two phases for this study, in the first phase three focus groups were conducted based on participants role (i.e., special education teachers, transition specialists, and vocational rehabilitation [VR] counselors). In the second phase of the study, follow-up interviews were conducted to understand the areas of improvement or barriers the participants may face in their practice (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Study Design



The group process allowed me, as a researcher, to gather interaction data that could facilitate the conversations and give rich data about evaluating programs, practices, and policies (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Ryan et al., 2014). Data collected by Awsumb et al. (2020) revealed troubling gaps in understanding services for Black students with high incidence disabilities,

specifically with mental health-related diagnoses, which should be further explored through identifying supports that may be practical and impractical by professionals. Brantlinger et al. (2005) suggested qualitative studies are well-suited for investigating complex issues related to practices by professionals, as "[Qualitative] studies remind us to question what we think we know and who we think we are as professionals" (p. 200). Through a critical race lens, using focus groups and follow-up interviews may reveal some deep-rooted issues with both collaboration and CRPs that quantitative measures do not have the ability to identify.

Overview of Focus Groups and Interviews for Qualitative Investigations

Wilkinson (1998) discussed the traditions and background of focus groups as a method, and in past research, focus groups have been used for evaluation, health-related research, and anthropology. These disciplines often used focus groups for awareness and behavior change (Wilkinson, 1998). According to Wilkinson, education-related research using focus groups started being more widely used in 1995. Focus groups provide valuable insight as a form of qualitative research because the group dynamics offer understanding to inform organization culture, are helpful in discussing programming issues and improvement, and evaluating outcomes (Krueger & Casey, 2014). In the literature, focus groups have been described as informal discussions supported by group facilitation (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Wilkinson, 1998). These informal discussions are hypothesized to give participants the space to have open and honest discussions with a moderator guiding the conversation. Focus groups have two dimensions: (a) capturing the interactions of people in real-time and (b) creating themes that are important to the research (Kamberelis et al., 2005; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Thus, themes are largely expected as forms of results. In this study, the focus groups allowed me, as an educational researcher, the flexibility to gain a better understanding of the professionals as

participants in this study to get honest and interesting themes that could answer the research questions and add to the transition literature.

One-on-one follow-up interviews with participants allowed for more in-depth reflections of focus groups and themes produced from the first round of coding. Interviews are a source to provide more openness and a better understanding from the participants (Miles et al., 2018). They offer opportunities to assess agreement between focus group data and chances for participants to provide disagreement without being confrontational (Brewer & Hunter, 2006). In other research, by using a multimethod approach, researchers have been able to "respond to research questions that are continually subject to revision, innovation, and critical analysis" (Roulston, 2019, p.1).

Sampling

The transition professionals were first recruited using purposive sampling then through snowball sampling after 4 weeks of purposive sampling. This strategy was used to increase the likelihood of oversampling and gaining access to the participants (Frey, 2018; Lavrakas, 2008). During the purposive sampling phase, four Virginia school divisions and the state VR agency were contacted for research requests. The VR agency also provided approval and the district managers for those same school districts were contacted. Of the four school districts, only one responded and accepted the request. The four school districts were located in Hampton Roads, Virginia and had an overall Black student population between 13.2% and 60.3%. The schools were selected because of their diverse student population, particularly Black students, in one region of the state. Disaggregated data of Black students with disabilities was not available, however. The school districts required additional approval beyond the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Virginia Commonwealth University, a research request. At the school level, the different districts have research and development departments. I reached out to each person who

oversaw student-led research projects or their research coordination personnel. Once the school districts' research requests were emailed to the personnel in charge, a follow-up via email and phone call was made after 2 weeks of no responses. At Week 4, another attempt was made to get approval from three out of four schools, but there was no response. After 4 weeks of waiting for different school-level approvals, I moved to a snowballing sampling method. I recruited participants from various sources such as social media (e.g., education organizations' Facebook groups and Twitter accounts), state transition partners, and local and national transition organizations. Snowball sampling lasted for another 3 weeks before focus groups were scheduled to reduce loss of interest in participating in the focus groups among individuals who were already recruited to the study.

Participants

The inclusion criteria for this study included working as a high school special education teacher, transition specialist, or VR counselor who provided transition services to at least one Black student with high incidence disabilities within the last year. The exclusion criteria for participating in this study included: (a) not being a special educator, VR counselor, or transition specialist who works on a transition team; and (b) being a special educator, VR counselor, and transition specialist who does not have Black students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., emotional and behavioral disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and LD) on their respective caseload, or who primarily supports students with low incidence disabilities more than 75% of their professional time.

There were 18 total participants in this study from three different states in the southeastern United States: Mississippi, Texas, or Virginia. There were six special education teachers, seven transition specialists, and five VR counselors. As detailed in Table 2, most participants identified as White (n = 13) and female (n = 17). The majority of participants also

have graduate degrees, with 12 participants having a master's degree and two having doctoral degrees. Seven of 18 participants have between 1–5 years of experience, five have between 6–10 years, and six have over 10 years of experience. For caseload sizes, 10 participants have between 1–20 students who are considered transition-aged students on their caseload, and of those students, most participants had between 5–10 Black students with high incidence disabilities.

The first focus group was the special education teachers, there were six participants total in this group; five participated in the focus group and follow-up interviews. One special education participant only did the follow-up interview due to a personal emergency. The second focus group was the transition specialist/coordinator group, there were seven participants in that group with five being available for the follow-up interviews. The third focus group was VR counselors, which had five participants. Four participants were in the focus group and one did a follow-up interview only. One participant in the focus group was not available for a follow-up interview. An assumption for the lack of participation in the follow-up is that some participants listed their work emails and probably did not check for the follow-up interview. Two participants did state times they would be on vacation, but still did not reply after those timeframes. After participants were emailed two times about the follow-up interview, member checks, and gift cards, they were considered as attrition to the study.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Characteristics

Demographics	Special education teacher		Transition specialist		VR counselors		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*N*	%	*n*	%
Gender								
Female	6	35.3	6	35.3	5	29.4	17	94.4
Male	0	0	1	100	0	0	1	5.6
Race								
Black	2	50	0	0	2	50	4	22.2
Hispanic/Latinx	0	0	1	100	0	0	1	5.6
White	4	30.8	6	46.2	3	23.1	13	72.2
Education								
Bachelors	2	50	0	0	2	50	4	22.2
Masters	4	33.3	5	41.7	3	25	12	66.7
Doctoral or specialist	0	0	2	100	0	0	2	10.1
Years of experience								
1–5	2	28.6	3	42.9	2	28.6	7	38.9
6–10	3	50	1	16.7	2	33.3	6	33.3
over 10	1	20	3	60	1	20	5	27.8

Demographics	Special education teacher		Transition specialist		VR counselors		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*N*	%	*n*	%
Student caseload size								
1–20	6	60	0	0	4	40	10	55.6
21–40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41–50	0	0	1	100	0	0	1	5.6
Over 50	0	0	6	85.7	1	14.3	7	38.9
Black students w/ HIDs								
Under 5	1	50	0	0	1	50	2	11.1
5–10	5	62.5	0	0	3	37.5	8	44.4
11–15	0	0	1	100	0	0	1	5.6
Over 15	0	0	6	85.7	1	14.3	7	38.9
State								
Mississippi	0	0	1	100	0	0	1	5.6
Texas	0	0	2	100	0	0	2	11.1
Virginia	6	40	4	26.7	5	33.3	15	83.3

Note. HID= high incidence disabilities; VR = vocational rehabilitation.

Data Collection

This study used 90-minute focus groups (i.e., Phase 1) and 30–45-minute follow-up interviews (i.e., Phase 2) with each participant from the focus group. The recording procedures of the focus groups included using video calling software, Zoom under a VCU license (consent was provided verbally for the participants to be voice recorded and was in the information sheet for the participants). In addition to recording, a note-taker was also in the focus groups writing notes related to each question with a note-taking sheet, which had the question asked, key points, notable quotes, and observations. In Phase 1, the interviewer used open-ended questions and the focus group protocol, which focused on Research Questions 1 and 2 (see Appendix A). The focus group questions were semistructured with follow-up probing questions related to planning, assessment, implementation, evaluation, placement, and follow-up during transition (Trach, 2012). In Phase 2, the follow-up interview protocol was based on the initial/emerging themes from the focus group. The individual follow-up interviews were implemented as a precautionary measure to ensure when participants discussed ways to improve their practice, it did not create unintentional tension among coworkers or other participants when we discussed questions related to Research Question 3.

The audio recordings from the focus groups were transcribed, redacted for identifying information, and sent to participants for member checking with the assistance of a secondary research member (see member checks under triangulation). Once the data were collected and transcribed, the transcripts were triangulated with field notes taken by the note-taker and memos written by myself (i.e., the lead researcher) to assist with data analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Miles et al., 2018). To triangulate the data, the researcher assistants and I reviewed notes, memos, and transcripts during independent coding and discussed differences and similarities based on consensus coding. The chat feature was also used during the interview to provide

multiple means of representation and engagement. Questions were posted in the chat box and participants could also communicate/engage with chat features. The participants were made aware the chat messages were also included in the transcription report from Zoom during the recording. After the focus group and follow-up interviews, participants were provided with incentives for participating, which were $25 gift cards for focus group participation and $25 gift cards for the follow-up interview participation.

Focus Group and Interview Protocol

The interview protocol for this study was created to answer the three research questions seen in Table 3 and to understand the complex nature of collaboration and CRPs during transition. There are 12 questions in the interview protocol with follow-up questions specific to transition and collaboration domains (e.g., planning, assessment, implementation, evaluation, placement, and follow-up during transition; Trach, 2012). In the full protocol (see Appendix A), the questions are set up with opening questions (to make people feel comfortable), introductory questions (introduce the topic), key questions (driven by the research questions), and ending questions (to give the participants a chance to say something else regarding the topics discussed; Krueger & Casey, 2014). The research questions and focus group questions are related to the literature on collaboration and CRPs (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Awsumb, 2017; Awsumb et al., 2020; Bottiani et al., 2018; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Emerson et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2016). I developed the focus group questions to explore essential topics and understandings related to my three research questions: (a) experiences and successful practices which draw on implications from practice-based literature, (b) detailed descriptions of what collaboration and CRPs mean during transition that is based more on the implications of the theoretical literature, and (c) barriers to these practices. In order to reduce any issues with validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), these focus group questions were piloted with

experts in the field who had former roles as special educators, transition specialists, or VR counselors and now are experts either supervising professionals in these roles or have advanced training in transition-related special education and/or VR research. The results of the pilot data included simplifying questions by reducing filler words and using better phrasing for participants to understand.

Table 3

Matrix of Research and Focus Group/Interview Questions

RQ1: How do transition professionals, specifically special educators, transition specialist/ coordinators, and VR counselors, describe their experiences and the practices they have used for successful transition cases of Black high school students with high incidence disabilities?	RQ2: How do transition professionals describe culturally responsive practices and collaborative practices? What does that mean to them?	RQ3: What do transition professionals identify as barriers to their implementation of culturally responsive collaboration?
How do you all interact to create plans for Black students with high incidence disabilities? What are some of your experiences? Does this look different from other disability groups? Does this look different from other racial groups?	Please explain your role for transition planning and the transition process?	When collaborating to meet the service needs of Black students with high incidence disabilities, what are some things that can be improved on?
What are some of your success stories about supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities?	In your own words what does it mean to collaborate to support students?	What do you think are some things to improve on when providing culturally responsive practices?
When collaborating to meet the service needs of Black students with high incidence disabilities, what are some of your strategies?	How do you communicate that role with your team members?	
Can you describe some of the times you have intentionally used culturally responsive practices during transition? If so, what are some of your strategies?	How do you communicate that role with students? Is the communication different for different students? If so, how? What about families?	
	When you are working with Black students with high incidence disabilities, what do you think are important equitable practices that empowers them? Please describe your experiences.	
	Do your culturally responsive practices look different for different disability groups?	

Data Coding and Analysis

The analysis process for this study used a constant comparison approach outlined by Krueger and Casey (2014). This analysis is typically used in grounded theory studies; however, it is also commonly used with focus groups as a data collection method (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). During the coding process, there were three members of the analysis team. One is the researcher, one is a doctoral graduate student, and one is a master's level student. The researchers became acquainted with the data by practicing coding data together for in-vivo codes on two transcripts and were trained to use the data analysis software, Dedoose. The researcher and doctoral student coded the focus groups and half of the follow-up interviews. The researcher and master's level student coded the other half of the follow-up interviews. The steps in the coding and analysis process after gathering the data included: (a) becoming acquainted with the data by an iterative process of transcribing, or reading the transcript; (b) coding using constant comparison of the different excepts selected for the code; and (c) interpretation. To process this analysis, I used an in-vivo coding scheme as a first cycle of coding and elaborate the second cycle of coding by using *pattern codes* to develop themes (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Miles et al., 2018). In-vivo coding requires researchers to highlight key data that summarize a statement. The qualitative data analysis base resulted in iterative consensus documents for each transcript with final codes and themes (Maxwell, 2013). Dedoose, a qualitative analysis program, was used to analyze the data. The features in Dedoose are well suited to support the merger of descriptive demographic data to the focus groups which allowed for a deeper analysis of participants' experiences.

Validity

Threats to validity are inevitable; in qualitative studies, there are three threats that could have potential impacts on the study. The threats include researcher bias, reactivation, and social

desirability (Maxwell, 2013). First, researcher bias, as a former VR counselor, I have preconceived notions about the field of transition and the topic of collaboration and culturally responsive practices. I recognize my perception or assumption is not always accurate. Second, reactivation may be a threat to this study because some transition professionals may have experienced secondary trauma or have become burned out and their feelings about the discussion could overwhelm them. The third threat is social desirability, some research participants may not want to describe their true feelings, attitudes, or actions because the participants were in focus groups with their colleagues, in-state and out-of-state, and would want to highlight desirable aspects of their practices (Maxwell, 2013).

Trustworthiness

Validation procedures include strengthening the trustworthiness of the study. I used strategies from Brantlinger et al. (2005) and Maxwell (2013) to strengthen the trustworthiness of this study by using purposeful sampling, member checking, and triangulation while being conscious of data analysis procedures. In the participant selection process, participants were purposely sampled so the focus group questions were relevant to the group and provided rich data for this study. For credibility measures, procedures included member checking and triangulation. Member checking included providing detailed field notes/summaries which were taken during focus groups and follow-up interview transcripts, which were sent to each participant for their feedback. Investigator triangulation (Flick, 2007) was used to capture multiple perspectives and challenge biased thoughts. For this study, investigator triangulation was conducted through peer debriefs with members of the analysis team and reflective memoing (see Appendix B). In terms of data analysis, results were coded systematically, which is explained in the data analysis section.

Member Checks and Responses

Participants were sent a summary and their follow-up interview transcript to look over to ensure the essence of their conversation was accurately captured. Only one participant requested minor changes to their summary and made clarifications on their transcript. She requested clarification about the practices and answered questions about Black students with high incidence disabilities more directly. Out of 18 participants, 12 responded with no changes, and one responded with minor changes and clarifications in the transcript. Five participants did not respond, after two separate attempts, which were 2 weeks apart.

Ethical Considerations

Once there was approval by Virginia Commonwealth University's Institutional Review Board, informed consent information sheets were sent via email to participants that signed up for the study. The informed consent information sheet provided details about the purpose of the study, the phases related to the research methods, any risks (which were minimal), and the confidentiality of the participants' identities and data (see Appendix C). Participants in the study were also informed about their rights to discontinue the study if they did not wish to participate at any time. The opportunity to collect data on participants' demographics (e.g., race, education level, professional title, years in the profession, and the number of Black students with high incidence disabilities on caseload) was presented before the study in a recruitment email. During the focus group and interview, participants were asked if the focus group/interview could be recorded, and once verbal consent was obtained, the interview only used the voice recordings of participants.

With qualitative research, there are personal emotions that may arise, and participants had the option to opt out whenever needed. Also, after the focus group data were collected, their personal information was purged from the database, leaving only pseudonyms. The focus groups

and follow-up interviews were conducted in a secure office space. I only saved voice recordings from the focus groups and interviews. When the focus groups and follow-interviews were transcribed, all identifiable information was redacted from the transcript. I did identify or name departments, programs, or regions, but not specific cities. If the participants or agencies indicated they would like to see the results of the study, they were emailed upon completion of the study with a shortened report after the dissertation defense.

Researcher Positionality

Brantlinger et al. (2005) noted qualitative research involves empiricism, knowledge based on experience, and requires reflection. Arzubiaga et al. (2008) furthered the notion of reflection in research as a *situated cultural practice* in which researchers should identify their sociocultural location and cultural presuppositions in a field's habitual practices. The aim of the proposed study is to understand CRP and collaboration practices that transition professionals use to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. Therefore, I identify my role as a researcher and my previous role as a transition professional.

As a researcher, I am a Black southern woman whose inquiry is situated in the regional U.S. South. My development as a researcher has been a journey rooted in understanding the complexities of culture, collaboration, transition experiences of Black students, and the professionals who serve them. My research background has largely been influenced by my work experience. As a former VR transition counselor, I am able to identify with the participants' perspectives of work experiences and understand the nature of working with transition students. My experience and identity inform how the research was driven; however, to find a balance of being both an insider and outsider for this research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and to decrease bias, credibility measures are discussed.

Additional members of the research team included two graduate students. One was a White female doctoral student with over 10 years of experience in education and who focused on transition services research. She has been trained in qualitative methods and worked on various transition qualitative research projects. The other was a White female master's student who worked in early childhood education and at the time of the study was completing her degree. She had some informal qualitative experience due to her research job related tasks. Perspectives the other members brought to the study were valuable because of their years of experience in education, and they provided a perspective different from the main researcher by identifying with the participant majority, as White women.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the concepts of collaboration and culturally responsive practices (CRPs) used during the transition process by special educators, transition specialists, and vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. The research questions serve as guidelines for the purpose of this study by asking the transition professionals to describe and define collaboration and culturally responsive practices, discuss their success stories and strategies, and identify barriers or areas of improvement. The questions were specifically as followed:

1. How do transition professionals describe culturally responsive collaboration and what does that mean to them?
2. How do transition professionals, specifically special educators, transition specialists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors, describe their experiences and the practices they have used for successful transition cases of Black high school students with high incidence disabilities?
3. What do transition professionals identify as barriers to their implementation of culturally responsive collaboration?

This study had two phases; the first phase was focus groups and the second phase was follow-up interviews. In the findings section of this study, I combine results of two phases but report which phase the quote references.

Overview

There were 18 study participants; participated in both the focus group and interview and others in only either the focus group or interview. Some participants were not available for both phases of the study due to different life events and this contributes to the study's attrition, which is discussed further in Chapter 5 under limitations. Participants were given pseudonyms which consisted of the group name and a number (see Table 4). Special education participants are labeled "SE." Transition specialist participants are labeled "TS." Vocational rehabilitation counselor labeled "VR." The following paragraphs provide details of each focus group, follow-up interview, and participants as well as major discussion points.

Special Education Focus Group and Interviews

In the special education focus group (SEFG), there were five participants and six participants for the follow-up interview, all from Virginia. Participant SE6 was not available for the focus group. Out six participants categorized as special education teachers, two participants identified as Black and four identified as White. Four had master's degrees and two had bachelor's degrees. Two had between 1 and 5 years of experience, three had 6 to 10 years of experience, and one had over 10 years of experience. All special education teachers had between one and 20 students and five have five to 10 students with high incidence disabilities. One participant had under five students with high incidence disabilities. Other demographic data revealed during the focus group included SE5 identified as a person with a disability, with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism. SE5 discussed her disability more during the follow-up interview and how her disability allowed her to understand her students more.

The focus group lasted 1 hour 23 minutes. During the focus group, participants agreed with each other on many conversation points related to collaboration; however, there were some contrasting discussions for CRPs. During the collaboration discussion, participants made

statements such as “everyone has their input,” “working in the best interest of the student,” and the importance of involvement with families and related services. The focus group discussion contrasted slightly when participants were specifically asked about race and culturally responsive practices as one participant preferred not to focus on race while other participants redirected the conversation. In the follow-up interviews, there were clear disagreements about the importance of race.

Transition Specialist Focus Group and Interviews

In the transition specialist focus group (TSFG), there were seven participants and five participants for the follow-up interview. TS4 and TS6 in the focus group were unavailable for follow-up interviews. The group lasted approximately 1 hour 13 minutes. Out of seven participants categorized as transition specialists, one participants identified as Hispanic and six identified as White. Five had master’s degrees and two had doctorate or specialist degrees. Three had between 1 to 5 years of experience, one had 6 to 10 years of experience, and three had over 10 years of experience. One had between 41–50 students and six had over 50. One had between 10–15 Black students with high incidence disabilities and six had over 15. Four were from Virginia, one from Mississippi, and two from Texas.

During the focus group, participants agreed on several occasions, such as defining their roles, collaboration and some barriers mentioned, by providing head nods and vocal yeses; specifically, when TS7 said “transition feels new . . . even though it’s not” and when TS2 stated, “wearing multiple hats and leveraging time.” One participant was also a family advocate and worked with elementary schools and middle schools. The participants’ roles varied based on school district and state, but five reported being the main coordinators for their district as they provided connections to adult service agencies. TS5 stated during the focus group, “I am the transition department.” TS5’s statement resonated with other participants as they verbally agreed

and laughed. The other two TSFG participants were a part of larger school districts that had other transition specialists serving in their district.

For Question 9, which stated, “Does your culturally responsive practices differ between disability groups? If so, how?,” participants took a long pause, and the moderator clarified the question by reviewing points during the discussion that could be expanded. Five participants then responded with ways to individualize, the intersection of socioeconomic status, evidence-based practices, and certain barriers different students face.

VR Focus Group and Interviews

The VR focus group (VRFG) had four participants and lasted 52 minutes. For the follow-up interviews, VR4 was unavailable. VR5 was unavailable for the focus group, but was able to do the follow-up interview. Two participants were government VR counselors and three were VR counselors from contractors that work with transition students. In the focus group, VR1 also disclosed she has a disability, but did not go into detail about how her disability influenced her work with her students. All VR counselors were from Virginia. Two had bachelor’s degrees and three had master’s degrees. Two had between 1 to 5 years of experience, two had 6 to 10 years of experience, and one had over 10 years of experience. Four had between one to 20 students on their caseloads and one had over 50. One had less than five Black students with high incidence disabilities on their caseload, one had over 15, and three had between five and 10.

During the focus group, participants were reflective about being a part of the group and bringing awareness to collaboration and CRPs. VR3 specifically stated, “you really made me think that we need to do better.” There were few instances of group disagreement. In the follow-up interviews, participants from this group expanded on many barriers their students faced in the workplace and issues participants had when working with employers.

Table 4

Pseudonym and Participant Data

PD	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Position	Education	Years of ex	Student caseload	Black students w/ HIDs
SE1	F	Black	SPED	Bachelor's degree	1–5	1–20	5–10
SE2	F	White	SPED	Bachelor's degree	6–10	1–20	5–10
SE3	F	White	SPED	Master's degree	6–10	1–20	5–10
SE4	F	White	SPED	Master's degree	1–5	1–20	5–10
SE5	F	White	SPED	Master's degree	Over 10	1–20	5–10
SE6	F	Black	SPED	Master's degree	6–10	1–20	Under 5
TS1	F	White	TS	Master's degree	Over 10	Over 50	Over 15
TS2	F	White	TS	EdD degree	Over 10	Over 50	Over 15
TS3	F	White	TS	Master's degree	1–5	41–50	10–15
TS4	F	White	TS	Master's degree	6–10	Over 50	Over 15
TS5	F	White	TS	EdS degree	Over 10	Over 50	Over 15
TS6	F	White	TS	Master's degree	1–5	Over 50	Over 15
TS7	M	Hispanic/Latino	TS	Master's degree	1–5	Over 50	Over 15
VR1	F	White	VR	Master's degree	Over 10	Over 50	Over 15

VR2	F	White	VR	Master's degree	1–5	1–20	5–10
VR3	F	Black	VR	Bachelor's degree	6–10	1–20	Under 5
VR4	F	White	VR	Master's degree	1–5	1–20	5–10
VR5	F	Black	VR	Bachelor's degree	6–10	1–20	5–10

Note. PD = pseudonym; F = female; M= male; SPED = special educator; TS = transition specialist; VR = vocational rehabilitation counselor; EX = experience; HID = high incidence disabilities.

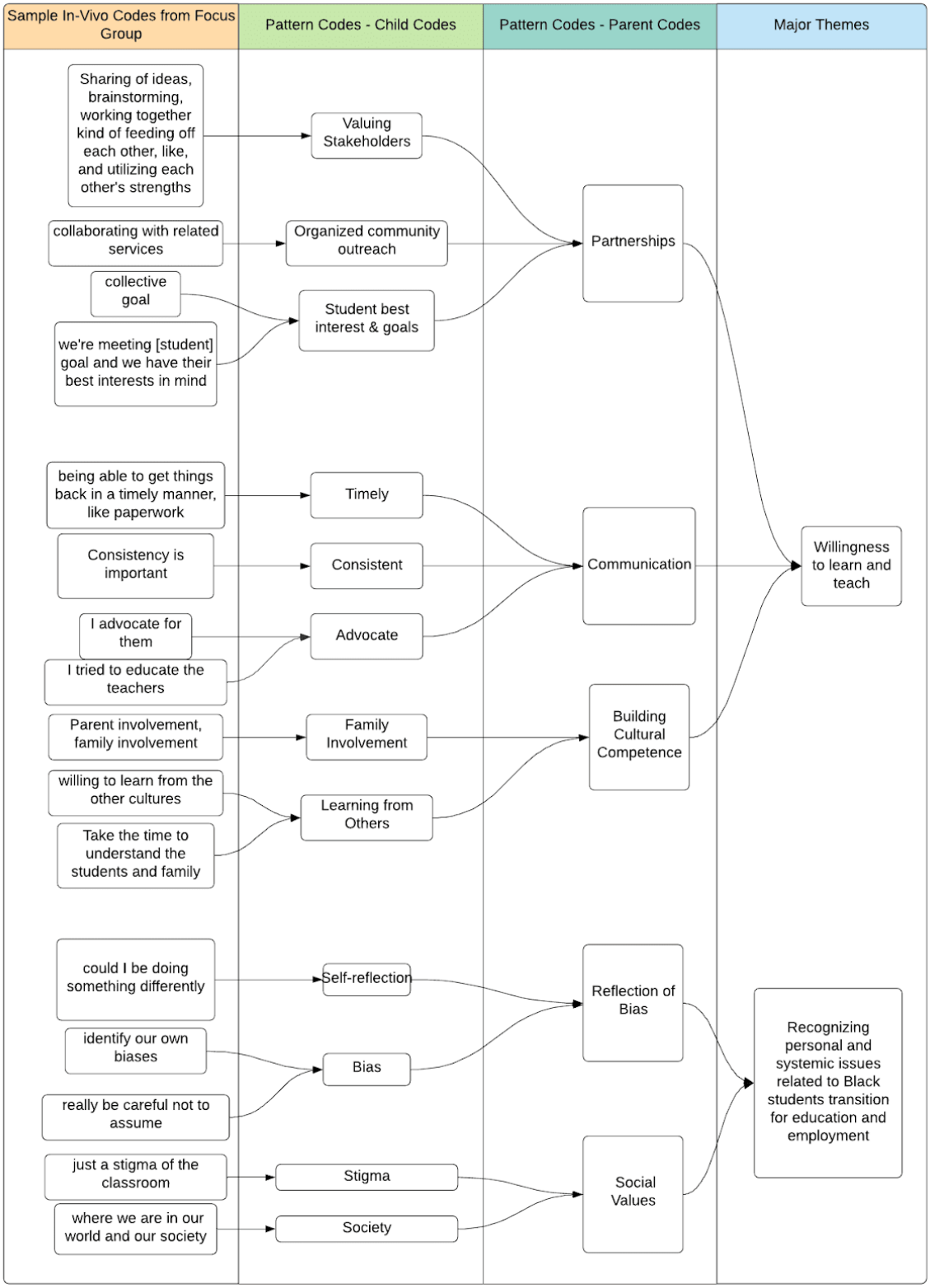
Research Question 1

The purpose of this research question was to have the participants collectively describe and define components of what culturally responsive collaboration could look like for Black students with high incidence disabilities. The participants described difficulties with working together as a team, and many suggested areas of improvement including communication and collaboration with families and other stakeholders. The participants across focus groups and interviews also identified aspects of successful collaboration and culturally responsive practices in which they were self-reflective of their experiences and the way students and families should be treated. The two major themes included: (a) willingness to learn and teach, and (b) recognizing personal and systemic issues related to Black students' transition for education and employment. The major themes developed from the consensus coding of all pattern codes to answer the two parts of Research Question 1. The first theme, willingness to learn and teach, is how the transition professionals described culturally responsive collaboration, which was explained more broadly and not always specific to Black students. The second theme, recognizing personal and systemic issues related to Black students' transition for education and employment, described what culturally responsive collaboration meant to the participants.

Figure 3 has the coding processing, which shows major theme parent and child codes. The themes were cocreated with coders as a result of pattern coding and coders recognizing similarities of in-vivo codes to create child codes and/or parent codes. There are five parent codes in Figure 3 and 12 child codes. Child codes have similarities that link the codes to parent codes, but the distinct child codes have subtle differences between each other.

Figure 3

Coding Scheme for RQ 1



Major Theme 1: Willingness to Learn and Teach

The first theme of Research Question 1 was the willingness to learn and teach. The theme was created to inform three interrelated factors of: (a) partnerships which describe how transition teams should work together, (b) effective forms of communication to maintain partnerships, and (c) building cultural competence specifically with students and families. When asked about collaboration, specifically, many described the process as strengths-based and acknowledged everyone has something to contribute to the team. The collaboration related codes, partnerships and communication were more general in most discussions and were not clear about their descriptions of race within these conversations. However, a few participants discussed collaboration in relation to race and these quotes emerged more around communicating as an advocate and building cultural competence. When the participants were asked more directly about culturally responsive practices, participants responded in a self-reflective manner, acknowledging that is an area of most improvement for education and society. However, participants were able to describe what being culturally responsive looks like during transition as ways that involved the family and required teaching other people about the students they work with while also learning from students and their families. Some focus group and interview questions were asked specifically stating with Black students with high incidence disabilities and while most were clear about their responses, some were not.

Partnerships

Partnerships were a factor important to the development of collaboration and the term was often used interchangeably to describe the process of developing relationships with stakeholders on the transition team. There were many definitions of collaboration that the professionals listed and many of those definitions included “stakeholder input,” “sharing ideas,” “being on the same page,” “working towards goals for students,” “working in the best interest of

the student," and "connecting with the community." Based on quote variations, partnerships were based on three child codes that include valuing stakeholders, organized community outreach, and students' best interest and goals.

Valuing Stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement and input were captured over 24 times throughout the focus groups and interviews. The participants also discussed the value of all stakeholders on a transition team and learning from each other by using the strengths of everyone on the team. A statement from TS1 during the TSFG described the process of collaborating as:

> Sharing of ideas, brainstorming, working together kind of feeding off each other, like, and utilizing each other's strengths. So if the school has more educational knowledge and understanding and working with our community counterparts and preparing our students to me, that is, you know, just using what we all can do and what we all can do well and helping our students meet with success.

This statement also resonated with other focus groups as they used some similar language that placed value in stakeholders' involvement and input. SE1 from the SEFG stated:

> I feel like collaboration is making sure that everybody has the ability to give their input. The transition, as far as, as you said, the teacher, the administrators, the students, the parents, everybody being able to have their say and then coming to an agreement on what's best for the students and their transition.

Also from the VRFG, VR3 stated, "that collective goal, like when everyone's willing to make different like concessions and change things for the common goal." These statements were also followed up with many similar statements that discussed the need for stakeholders' input and how to learn about their strengths.

Organized Community Outreach. In addition to valuing stakeholder input and learning about their strengths, many participants suggested community partners outside of the school are a

factor in developing transition partnerships. Organized community outreach is communicating and coordinating community events or partnerships for students. Sometimes the professionals described this as a way to introduce students to other services and employers and in some discussions, it was a way to have the community understand transition for students with disabilities or the professionals' roles.

In the TSFG, TS7 described community outreach as "I'd say that we bring in business owners and people within the community, and they do like presentations for our students with disabilities." While SE2 described this in the special education focus group (SEFG) as:

> We have orientation every year where I introduced myself to each the new parents. Most of the rest of my team, they know who I am, I'm the coordinator for our project search, but we have employment planning meetings, I hold and run the IEP [individualized education plan] meetings and orientation, open house, everything so that people know my role as transition person.

Although many participants had similar experiences and often hosted community events before the COVID-19 global pandemic, not many VR participants touched on this topic during the focus group. VR1 emphasized the importance of organized community outreach, but described it as difficult and requires creativity:

> It is challenging across the board, because everybody is busy and everybody has an agenda. And so sometimes it is hard to get people to participate. Namely too, with agencies, sometimes the agencies are stretched thin, so they don't always have the best representative at the table. They have somebody to stand in. But my experience I'm working on a project right now where I'm outreaching with families and outreaching with several different partners to come together for a summer program. And again, the creativity and reaching them. And the more notice you can give you're a stakeholder,

> your community partner, the better result, the more information you get them about what you're trying to outcome, you're trying to accomplish. The more success you have as well.

Students' Best Interests and Goals. Across transcripts of focus groups and interviews, discussion of collaboration and partnerships were student-centered, while also acknowledging being culturally responsive required learning more about students, their backgrounds, and interests to achieve their transition goals. TS5 specifically stated, "Collaboration and culturally responsive strategies place significant value on student's cultural background, values, personal experiences, interests, etcetera." Others had similar thoughts. SE2 from the SEFG stated:

> I believe that it's working together as a team for the best interest of the student, and everybody has to do something as a part of that team to help the student also. So I'm, everybody comes together. I'm really fortunate with our program that there is a, there has to be collaboration cause we're, I work with so many different partners.

Participants from the VRFG agreed with VR4. One participant specifically stated:

> I would especially in the position that I'm in, I feel like it takes a whole team to work with the individual to make sure that we're meeting their goal and we're, we have their best interests in mind. So it's a whole group of people working together having meetings, all that kind of stuff.

SE1 suggested although other stakeholders, like family, are important to the transition and collaborative process, students are the most important part of the job. SE1 stated in the follow-up interview, "People tend to put themselves first in the situation. When at the end of the day, this is not about you. It's about the student."

Communication

The second factor of the major theme of willingness to learn and teach was communication. Communication is the active process of providing education of roles, communication styles, and discussion of the transition process to maintain the relationships of all the stakeholders involved. In the focus groups and interviews, participants differed in avenues and content of communication used during the transition process, but consistently described ways they maintained collaborative relationships. The three most common are timely communication, consistent communication, and advocating for students as a form of communication.

Timely Communication. Timely communication is prompt communication when responding to other team members as defined by the research team when building the codebook. It was considered an effective communication strategy for many participants because they were able to provide services more effectively. Timely communication was mentioned most among the TSFG; however, the theme continued in 47.2% of transition services follow-up interviews and 52.8% of follow-up interviews with VRs.

In the TSFG, timely communication was brought up specifically with regard to paperwork. TS3 stated, “And I would also include like being able to get things back in a timely manner, like paperwork and things like that.” In follow-up interviews the impact of timing on services and students was described in more detail. TS2 specifically stated:

> So we maintain that really, we have really good communication with our office, so they keep us informed about what’s going on. That’s been very effective for us as far as maintaining those types of communication. We also have a good, for us it’s not called community services board anymore. It’s now [redacted] integrated behavioral health, but we have a good relationship with them as well. And they also keep us updated if they

> have students who they're currently serving. We don't have a lot of students who have open cases with them because most of our students are on waiting lists for waiver services. But if we do have students who are currently receiving services, they're really good about, now those case managers will attend meetings. Because again, they're typically, if they're already have a case with them, they're paying for services and they will attend the meetings. Timeliness is, that's a very important one.

TS2 continued with an example about one of her students, while the question was in response to working with Black students with high incidence disabilities, she was not specific about race in this discussion:

> We are very strict with our timelines. We try to monitor again; we have very large caseloads. . . . Our department chairs within our individual schools, do a very good job of keeping track of what those timelines look like and make sure that we're staying on top of those. They keep us informed so that we know what we're looking at, as far as our timelines. The only time that those typically will get tripped up on is if we have a student who we think we have additional time with. They have FAPE remaining, and then all of a sudden, they decide, Nope, I'm done. I'm out of here. And then that will trip us up because we will have planned for that student on a plan where we think, "oh, you know, we've got another year, we've got 2 years."

This statement resonated with VR participants; however, three of four VR participants in the VRFG discussed how timely paperwork and documentation is important to facilitate services. VR3 stated:

> Well, I think the timely paperwork one, at least for timely paperwork, I would say that like, just having that documentation, like at least at first we do daily document notes. And sometimes if a staff member hasn't worked with that particular student or a particular

> client all week, they it's really important that they can be able to like, look at your notes and be caught up on what happened or that you're available to have that conversation with them, for collaboration. Especially when, because we're teaching a job skill.

Consistent Communication. Participants also identified consistency facilitates communication of services, maintains stakeholder partnerships, and reduces confusion. VR3 continued the timely discussion with consistency:

> So I just feel like consistency is important for the staff and for the clients, because if everyone's teaching them how to do the job a different way, it can get really confusing. And then the client gets frustrated and the staff gets frustrated. So I think it's really important to have good documentation and be available for collaboration.

In focus groups and follow-up interviews, others had the same thoughts about the consistency to maintain their caseloads and ability to work. VR5 stated:

> You don't want things duplicated. I've seen that happen before, so you don't want to waste resources. So you got to have some amount of communication because oftentimes a client might have so many people involved in their world that they are not quite clear, who's doing what.

TS1 also stated how consistency is linked to knowledge, information, and resources:

> So to me, consistency is extremely important because that way, me as a public school transition counselor, school counselor, and parent resource center coordinator, I'm able to offer the same information, whether you live, where I live in [redacted], or you live in [redacted], which is [redacted] Virginia. So to me that's a big one.

TS1 continued to discuss the need for consistency across many Virginia offices and regions. Through that discussion, there was also a conversation about requesting release forms to start the conversations about the transition process, which was also a piece of the conversation

with VR5. SE4, VR5, VR1, and TS3 also discussed the alignment of consistency and students knowing who is serving them.

Communicating as an Advocate. Another form of communication is advocating. Many participants advocated on behalf of students and their families to other stakeholders. Participants also commented about speaking up for the student to gain access to resources, services, and learning opportunities. Unlike the other child codes, communicating as an advocate was more specific to Black students with high incidence disabilities. Many special education participants were advocates by "educating other teachers." During the SEFG, SE1 referred to Black students with disabilities in the general education setting and stated:

> I tried to educate the teachers. Sometimes they listen . . . but I felt like the special education department and the school, as much as we supposed to work together with a black sheep of the building . . . we're a problem to them. [General education teachers] don't understand how [their] input helps me when I'm developing different things for my students. Because again, [special education students] act different. They act different when they get home from public with the other teacher. So I need you to tell me what they're doing in their class. And don't just tell me my kid's a jerk. Why? And then when I explained something to them and I told them about the way he was brought up, they were like, oh, well maybe then he's not right. Take the time to understand the child.

In the follow-up interviews, SE4 also referred to how some general education teachers are not fully accepting of special education students; however, it is unclear about the reference to race. They said:

> A lot of teachers don't mind having students with disabilities in the classroom. And then I have a lot of teachers that will, that play into these are not my students. And getting the teachers to understand that just because they're in special education doesn't mean that

> they're not your students. So they shouldn't be sent to a resource room or a self-contained room or a pullout group because you don't know how to educate them. And so helping teachers understand this is how you work with a student. This is, these are. I definitely had a student who the teacher is just so frustrated with him in the classroom because she didn't know how to work with him. She just saw him as being lazy and that, that's a word that I really like don't use in my vocabulary.

The other participant also recognized they are advocates for their students and students should also be able to advocate for themselves; however, this was not specific to race. TS2 went and stated:

> I felt like if we are giving them what they need when we are actually enforcing, because it allows them that advocacy. It allows them the ability to say, "I know what I'm what I'm supposed to be doing and I'm doing it successfully." And that is what they needed. As again, I think we lose sight of the fact that these are still children. They're still learning and we need to give them the tools they need to be successful. And I think that's important, is giving them that voice to be able to say, "Hey, look, you told me how to do this and I'm doing it successfully." Giving them the opportunity to be successful.

VR5 provided a specific example of using advocacy in the workplace as she talked about a Black woman:

> Now, my client is struggling when she got this beautiful hairdo, but the hairnet won't fit. So now I'm having to communicate with the employer that, "well, this is our issue. This is our concern." And they don't, they can't wrap their mind around it. In some instances. So it's just little small things. And being able to say to the client, "it's important to be able to express your concerns to your employer, and this is how you can do it," and teaching them that.

Advocacy is a teaching component of how many participants were able to communicate for their students and teach their students how to better communicate for themselves.

Building Cultural Competence

The third factor of the major theme willingness to teach and learn was building culturally competence. This factor is largely learning and taking time to understand their students and the students' families by involving the family and doing outreach.

Family Involvement/Outreach and Learning From Others. Participants discussed some challenges of getting Black families involved, but participants also discussed some of their experiences trying to understand the families' views on how to support their children. Participants in the VRFG nodded in agreement with VR3 about understanding the fears families may have if their child works. VR3 spoke about Black families, their financial situation, and how she learned from them to be mindful of how she provides services for Black families who depend on public assistance, saying:

> I think just being cognizant that it's not necessarily that families want to depend on the system, but sometimes like, it's hard to look at the bigger picture when this money may be helping to pay for bills or medicine or different things like that.

During that conversation, VR1 also acknowledged "parents get anxious with graduation approaching" in reference to Black military families. In other focus groups, family involvement was important because it was a connection to the students' best interests and individualization. During the TSFG, TS4 suggested:

> I guess it goes back to what I was saying about making sure that it's individualized, it's what that student needs and what that family needs. And that's what should drive . . . what should drive everything. It should drive the IEP. It should drive your relationships. It should drive their transitional plans for their whole educational career.

In the individual interview, TS1 expanded on this thought from TS4:

> So outreach has to kind of meet the families where they're at and that's not always easy or simple. Because you're bringing in, you're having to try to figure out how to mesh all these people together in their own timelines. And also, you have to look at the culture of a family you're working with. Some families and some parents think transition or what comes after high school. Well, we'll focus on that the closer we get to graduation and that realizes that that needs to be discussed starting in sixth grade. So I guess, you kind of, you sort of have to feel out each kid needs family with where they're at, some are ready to talk about [redacted] and making that team, setting up that team well in advance and are going, "you know what we just need to get through high school."

In addition to meeting the family where they are at, SEFG participants recognized families should also try to understand their child; SE5 specifically stated this in reference to a Black family who relied on generational support:

> We have a lot of families and they all kind of build and establish together. I think sometimes getting the grandparents and the parents and to work together and understand . . . I am looking out for what's best [for the student]. And if, I can get them to kind of believe in their kids' abilities you know, especially with the parents, and then get the kids to buy in.

SE2 went on to also state during the focus group:

> And I just feel like, again, we've said this before about building relationships with families and then learning the family and their culture and where they're coming from is huge. And that's how that building that relationship with the parents and learning from them is going to make more trust and a better transition for the student.

Other participants acknowledged some barriers families face to be involved in the transition process and services for their children. These barriers were related to resources and settings which are more related to Research Question 3.

Major Theme 2: Recognizing Personal and Systemic Issues Related to Black Students Transition for Education and Employment

The second major theme for Research Question 1 was related to the second part of the research question, which was what does collaboration and providing culturally responsive services mean to participants. Participants were mostly reflective and recognized with many ways they described collaboration and culturally responsive practices, there were also many barriers to achieving better outcomes for Black students with high incidence disabilities. During the TSFG, TS5 stated:

> As far as culturally responsive instruction with the literature, a lot of literature that I have read reads that it's important for us to look inward and kind of identify our own biases and also be open and willing to learn from the other cultures, various other cultures and various other students allow the students to take the lead on explaining to you what their culture is like. I'm explaining to you how their role within their family is. So I think it's an open-minded culturally responsive instruction and interaction is being open-minded and, and recognizing within ourselves our biases and, and being open to learning from other communities.

This comment led to a larger discussion about self-reflection and society. The reflection of bias and social values was also seen across other focus groups and follow-up interviews. Reflection of bias and social values are parent codes under major theme 2.

Reflection of Bias

Based on participants' responses, part of being culturally competent and aware of issues Black students with high incidence disabilities may face is being reflective of bias. Throughout the individual interviews, participants thought back to the focus groups and were more reflective about what culturally responsive means to them and the importance of being culturally responsive for their students. In the focus groups, there were many instances of awareness of large inequities, but participants during the focus groups were not as self-reflective as some of their interviews. Other than the TSFG, the VRFG had some instances of reflection and bias. VR1 stated:

> I think in light of just where we are in our world and our society, when we are now working with anybody and particularly Black students, is that you want to make sure am I not missing something, you know could I be doing something differently? You know, and these opportunities, things that you're hearing the real, I mean, the real out there and, you know, I want to make sure that I'm not a part of that system of neglect or oversight. And so anyway, so with those two examples, I didn't go in saying, okay, so they're Black.

Similar sentiments were provided by SE5 in the follow-up interview:

> I think one of the biggest things that we have to be self-aware of our own biases and then to really listen and be attuned to the student, really be careful not to assume. I think, I don't know, like I don't want to lead the student to do something. I want to be in tuned to what that student wants to do. So kind of paying attention.

Based on participants' statements it seems in some ways they are trying to learn from the social climate and be able to listen to their students better when it comes to transition.

Social Values

In regard to social values, participants recalled the role stigma and societal pressures plays on Black students and students with disabilities in the classroom and society. When participants discussed social values, participants also reflected on the outcomes of their Black students. SE4 stated:

> So I think one of the things that I got out of the focus group when you talked about the barriers to African-American males accessing those transition needs and transition services, what I gained the most is that it's not the educators. They, just, I mean, I remember I wrote down so many things from what other people were saying things that people are using, because I know I want to, I'm trying to grow my program here as much as I possibly can. Cause this is only my first full year in this special ed coordinator position. And so, but it, it's not educators that are looking at, or that are putting kind of those constraints. I really think a lot of it is the societal values.

An example of the stigma students face included a quote by SE5 from the SEFG. She discussed one of her Black male students in a general education classroom:

> It's like they have such an issue because he cries all the time. Like he's not going to do anything academically. Actually he can, he's one of my highest flyers. There's such low expectations. And I think that's just a stigma of the classroom that I'm in.

In the TSFG, TS5 mentioned the data around Black students with disabilities' outcomes and reflected on how data reveal gaps in practice:

> We have indicators and indicator 14 is contacting the students, see a year after and finding out, you know, what kind of job they have, what kind of education they have, and whatnot. And the data shows that male Black students are the lowest have the lowest

> success rate as far as getting jobs, getting into employment, any type of post-secondary success. So again, that takes, that forces me to look at, okay, there's, is there something I can do differently? Or is there a different approach that I can take to help these students be more successful? What can I do and, and ask again, get information from them about what they need?

VR5 suggested being culturally aware means not to stereotype the students and their abilities, because society and stereotypes often limit Black students with disabilities:

> I think, it's the first thing that comes to my mind is to not stereotype and put people in a bubble. Don't just assume that they can only do food service or just really get into what the client's strengths and skills and abilities and what their capabilities, what they can learn to do. And don't just assume, "oh, you live over there and you're Black. So we're just gonna look for these kinds of jobs." So really listen and talk to a client and their family and see what they, what's really going to work for that person. Stretch them. They can, all my folks can learn and do all kinds of things.

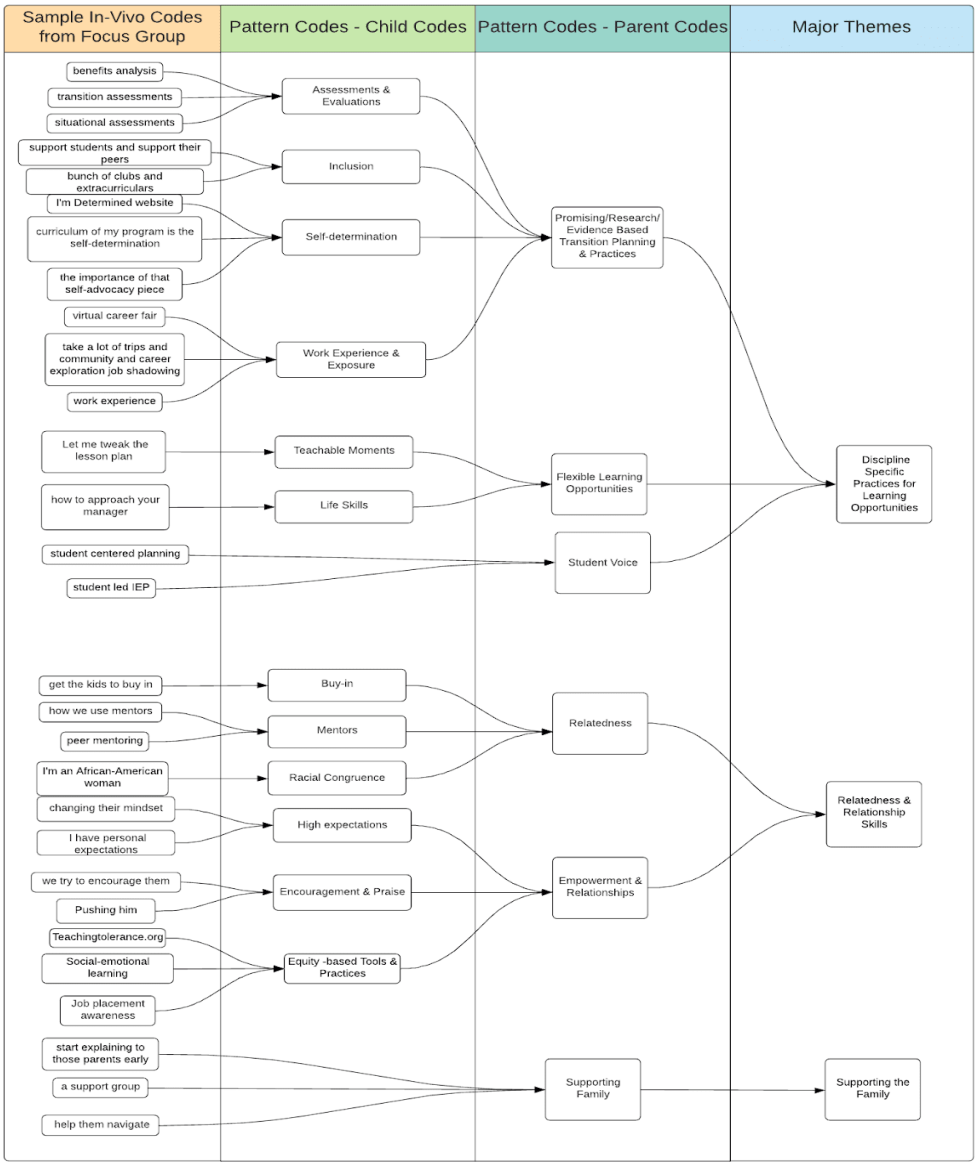
Research Question 2

The experiences and practices used by transition professionals for successful cases included different forms of understanding disability-related issues versus societal and race-related issues. These experiences were intersectional of students' different identities, but successful practices encapsulated a mix of practices that considers disabilities, race, and SES. There were three major themes for Research Question 2. Those themes were (a) discipline-specific practices for transition practices, learning opportunities, and student voice; (b) relatedness and relationship skills; and (c) supporting the family. Participants from across focus groups and interviews all discussed variations of strategies, and some of those are typical transition practices, relationship skills, equity-based tools, and ways participants support

families. In Figure 4, there are six parent codes that supported the major themes and 12 child codes. Supporting the family does not have child codes because participants described a variety of examples. Almost of all the first-round child codes under supporting the family did not have many occurrences alone. Thus, the child codes were revised in second-round coding to only supporting the family.

Figure 4

Coding Scheme for RQ 2



Major Theme 1: Discipline-Specific Transition Practices, Learning Opportunities and Student Voice

Major Theme 1 had three factors associated, which are (a) discipline-specific promising, research, evidence-based transition practices; (b) flexible learning opportunities; and (c) student voice. These experiences and practices were discussed both broadly and specifically for the student population. During these conversations, some participants stated, "I do not focus on race" or "race is not a factor;" thus, many responses are general practices.

Discipline-Specific Promising/Research/Evidence-Based Transition Practices

When asked about specific strategies to support Black students with high incidence disabilities, many participants were general about the strategies and discussed typical transition practices applied to different situations. Even though focus group and follow-up interview questions related to Research Question 2, some participants were vague about Black students in their descriptions of their practices. Many eluded to practices that are key practices of special education and transition, in general. Discipline-specific transition practices refer to the practices based on participant's role. For example, special education teachers have different roles and responsibilities than VR counselors, so some practices are specific to their roles. Some transition specialists; however, described their role as a person who "wears a lot of hats." Participants from Virginia often referred to different state programs, grants, and conferences, such as "I'm determined." More specifically, many participants discussed practices such as assessments and evaluations, inclusion, self-determination, and work experiences and exposure.

In the special educator focus group and follow-up interviews, the participants discussed different activities related to academics, transition planning, inclusion, and self-determination. SE3 discussed the importance of inclusion and clubs:

We have a bunch of clubs and extracurriculars that happen through our school. So definitely giving our students, my students, the same opportunities to participate in those opportunities. We also started it's called best buddies. It's an international organization. We started a best buddies chapter at our high school last year. So that looks at more social inclusion with caring, caring individuals. So that's definitely two things looking more so back at the question that's in the chat with equitable practices.

SE5 continued to talk about Virginia-specific practices and working with general education teachers for implementation:

I use a lot of that. VDOE I'm determined materials with my students and I have represented it to the mainstream. Only maybe a handful of gen ed [education] teachers use it, it's something we encourage.

In the follow-up interview SE2 expanded on these practices by also discussing student-centered planning:

I feel like that's where that student-centered planning is really important. And I use that like the I'm Determined website to help students lead their own IEPs and to become invested in their own education and future and getting them invested in their own future and making them decision-makers in their planning for transition is what helps guide that for me.

Transition specialists often discussed how their services supported the intersection of IEPs and work experiences by providing families and students with resources and assistance with understanding transition as a process. One example of work experiences and situational assessment during the TSFG included this statement:

We have our programs that we operate, work experience program. We have a coffee shop that we operate. We have we call it skill builders, but it's a portable shop that we have set

> up that gives them some hands-on opportunities to experience some it would be a step before they go into the work experience program to kind of get an idea of what type of skills they may, that would match their interests.

In the follow-up interview TS2 stated:

> So I try to encourage them to invite us, particularly for 8th-graders. It's like, "come on, invite us to these meetings." It is helpful particularly for parents who don't truly understand those post-secondary goals. They kind of see them as something far off in the distance, they don't really understand why they're doing the transition assessments, why the students are being asked to do these things.

VR counselors mostly discussed ways to provide work experiences, job development, and the importance of benefit analysis. Participants in the VRFG emphasized the need for early benefit analysis. VR participants discussed benefit analysis as practice applied to Black students which is an important aspect of their services, saying:

> I think getting them the VR counselor to do a benefits analysis, a benefits analysis for our interns early on in the process, like when I first started with [workplace], it was something we just did, like towards the end of the year. And then we started [to think,] hey, maybe we need to be doing this around January or so because I felt that, and it wasn't necessarily specifically just with Black students, but I felt that we would get to the end of the program and get to job development.

In follow-up interviews, VR2 discussed VR agencies can offer work-based learning experiences, "We can provide a work-based learning experience for you this summer. However, let me come to this meeting and get you connected with some folks who can help you achieve that."

Each discipline offered different services for students. For example, special education teachers focused more on educational goals and assessments related to in-school experiences and VR counselors focused more on workplace learning experiences. There were some examples throughout the focus groups and interviews where the special education teachers also discussed internships and summer work experiences. However, the transition specialists had converging services for students that are both employment and education-based and were the only group to mention preemployment transition services and coteaching.

Flexible Learning Opportunities

Flexible learning opportunities are learning experiences described as teachable moments and life skills. These learning experiences were created impromptu by the participants. Most teachable moments in participants' responses were described by special education teachers. Participants in the SEFG started the conversation around individualization and discussed "teachable moments." Transition specialist and VR participants also discussed teachable moments, but not as in-depth as special education participants. Transition specialist and VR participants talked more about life skills training and creating a professional tone with students to "be treated like adults." In the SEFG, SE1 does not specify race, but stated:

> like you said, teachable moments [participant 3] as you said go small and little things like writing. So this year I started a whole week before we started. Let me teach you how to write an email to your teacher. Don't yo [redacted- referring to self], when you're gonna put my grades, I don't know. Like I talked to them and ask me that way. And then I tell them in the moment, I'm gonna tell you how to properly do it, but I'm going to answer you the way you answered me. You have to be professional.

Others in the focus group agreed and SE1 spoke of life skills and adapting the daily lesson plan to work on skills with students, saying:

> And there after because every day is practice for life after high school, you need to know how to approach your manager. . . . And then it turns into a whole lesson and I'm like, oh, well then that's what I need to speak to you guys today. Let me tweak the lesson plan.

In the interview SE6 also discussed informal ways of teaching different life and work-related professional skills to Black students, noting:

> Everything is a teachable moment. I can turn anything into a teachable moment. I don't care if you're chewing gum. I will turn it into a teachable moment. I think that that is really important, especially with those groups of students, because a lot of times the community that they're coming from is not the best. And so a lot of times they just might not know. They might not, they just might not know, "okay, I'm supposed to wear a belt with my pants," especially going into the workplace.

Other interviews with different professionals also stated similar ways of providing teachable moments and life skills. TS2 and 3 discussed teachable moments more generally by providing examples of professionalism and learning opportunities to make mistakes. Specifically, TS3 stated, "You're probably going to learn more from getting that wrong answer than you do from getting the right ones because it resonates with you." However, TS1 and VR2 recognized teachable moments for professionals. TS1 stated:

> I think continued growth and continued recognition because the only way we're going to move forward is the kids coming up because they're going, they're coming up through a pandemic and all of the political climate of the past 2 years, and they're seeing our mistakes. So hopefully the kids that we're teaching will take our mistakes and do better.

VR2 stated:

> Teachable moments. We don't have enough of moments where staff is talking about [staff] experiences working with this population. We don't have we don't have somebody

> coming in and saying, “these are the things that are happening within this population. How do you think we can make the services more conducive to what their needs are?” We don’t have those moments where we’re actually sitting down and discussing it. I think our focus group touched base on it, that we got more of that in our master’s program than we have in our experiences as workers. So, I would like to see more moments where we’re educated on best practices.

Student Voice

A common practice, specifically in special education, was student voice and many participants used strategies like student-led IEPs and student-centered planning to allow students time to lead the conversations about their lives. In this study, student voice was defined as practices that allow students to direct their services. Approximately 33 student voice excerpts had similar responses to participants in the TSFG:

> One is it is that student-led IEP. It is giving them that opportunity to speak up for themselves to present their IEP in their words, regardless of what you might think should they should say, or how they should say it is providing them that voice . . . giving them that safe space sitting down and taking the time to listen, like someone was saying is building that relationship, building that rapport, just listening

The quotes about student voice by participants were unclear about race and if it was important particularly for Black students with high incidence disabilities.

Major Theme 2: Relatedness and Relationships Skills

This major theme had two factors associated which are (a) relatedness and (b) empowerment and relationships. Relatedness refers to how participants build rapport or connection with students based on identity and resources. Examples of relatedness include buy-in, mentors, and racial congruence. Empowerment and relationships are skills or practices used

to encourage student success. Examples of empowerment and relationships skills include high expectations, encouragement and praise, and equity-based tools and practices.

Relatedness

All four Black women and the Hispanic man in the study acknowledged their race and the role it plays during their service delivery. For example, SE1 mentioned in the SEFG, "how I try to approach them as motherly. Obviously, I can relate a little bit more as a Black woman." As participants with disabilities and children with disabilities, SE5, TS3, and VR1 also acknowledged it gives them deeper thoughts into what the students they serve go through. During the discussion examples of buy-in, mentors, and racial congruence emerged. SE6 provided an example of her racial identity and how she uses empowerment and high expectations with her students, stating:

> I mean, I just would say like, just care. I mean, maybe because I'm an African American woman, I look out for my people, you know what I'm saying? As a Black woman, because I know the struggle, I know the struggle for the Black mother, the Black father, the Black sisters, the Black brother. Like I know that struggle. And I'm not saying that I treat any other students differently, but I know that that student needs a little bit more than this student. When everybody is getting exactly what they need, you know what I'm saying? Like, it's not like, okay, I'm going to give you 60% and you only get 50. No, everybody's getting that 100%. You just get it, getting it in the way that you need it. You know what I'm saying?

SE1 in the SEFG also suggested the reality for Black students is seeing someone that looked like them and had some similar challenges providing inspiration to the students:

> I would say, and it wasn't done on purpose, but because of, because of my friends, my circle when I did my career fair, a lot of the people look like me. A lot of people look like

> them and that's reality for them. So when you provide somebody, like I said, in a different career, then they're able to see, oh shoot, I can do that. Or even like go. So for one of the things, I had my fiancé and he's a track coach and he's a barber, but he also had a rather rough start in life. So, when I allow him to speak, it gives me like, oh, and you even got in trouble when you were in school. So, they really see somebody that looks like them and has been through some challenges that they've been through. Some of the challenges that they've been through. So they're like, oh shoot, maybe I'll just do this. I do have the opportunity to be great.

Empowerment and Relationships

TS7 during the TSFG also discussed ways he provided support for his students: "I try to pull alumni from the community that some of them are students with and that builds relationships." Other participants also discussed equity-based tools and practices they use to increase their ability to support students. SE2 suggested an equity-tool, "I have used teachingtolerance.org. And we've received a lot of free material from that website." SE5 discussed how using social-emotional learning is an important practice she connects with to build relationships and buy-in with her students:

> I teach a program that is guided by a scope and sequence of social emotional development that I created. So over the course of the year, I work on building these skills in the students. So, at times I used these strategies to help as a class work through some of the effects from the social challenges [in the] classroom. I used a dialogic form of teaching to do so. This seemed to really help.

TS5 in the follow-up interview discussed the use of communities to support lesson planning so that students feel represented:

Connect lessons from curriculum to student's communities to make it more relevant.

Take inventory of classroom; make changes such as new posters, books, bulletin boards so that they are representative of diversity in our society.

VR participants discussed job placement awareness and the success of practicing intentional placement of Black students in employment settings that are a better fit for the students. VR3 in the VRFG provided an example of job placement awareness:

> Specifically, for Black students when I think about things that worked well, we always were really aware of where we were placing interns in the hospital and things like that and the, you know, kind of piggyback on the mentorship. So we identify like mentors on the intern sites. And I definitely think that certain matches would be, you know, better than others. Like certain environments we'd be like, oh, you know, this team is really friendly. Like we think they'll kind of take this intern in and like show them what to do and provide more support. And I do always feel like that made like a better match. Like if we, when we really looked at the coworkers that made up the internship and not just like the job duties.

VR4 continued the conversation with a success story due to job placement awareness:

> I agree with both Participant 3 and 1. But to throw in some success stories. I have an individual who works at one of the Walmart locations and he got employee of the year or employee of the year in the month, I guess that's terrible. I can't remember. So he's just really loved by his fellow employees. And then our guy who just got employed at another hospital, he has found the community that I think he really enjoyed here, but it's so much more welcoming at this other hospital. So I feel like he found the community that he was searching for, not just with, he was searching for employment. He was searching for a place that he felt like he fit in and he loves to be social and, you know, they just walk on

> to him and really made him feel a part of the team. So I feel like that's a successful story. And another guy actually was just called out by the hospital on how well he, like, he took down every supply in the supply closet and reorganized it. And the hospital was so impressed with what he did that they did a shout out for him. So those are three really successful stories.

Major Theme 3: Supporting the Family

The last theme for Research Question 2 was support for Black families. Many participants, like SE5, SE4, and TS7, noticed some issues of supporting their students is intergenerational. The importance of supporting families was mentioned by SE5. She stated "because most of his generation up through his grandma anyway, have been living off of disability." The conversation led to a discussion about families by the SEFG participants. SE4 commented after SE5, and shared:

> Sometimes we have grandparents raising their, their, their grandchildren too. And so there's a real a real matriarchal society, you know, kind of thing. We have a lots of families and they all kind of build an established together. And I, I think sometimes, you know, getting the grandparents to, you know, and the parents and to work together and understand and you know, sometimes it's really just all about you're right.

SE5 continued the conversation:

> So with my students I try to get to know them and who they are in the areas that they live in and their family and the dynamics and what's going on, what their hopes and dreams are, what they think their, their barriers are. Try to try to help them reflect on that. I have one student right now African American male, he and I get along well. He he's all set up for work experience that he's going to do for the last couple of Fridays and then hopefully turn into a summer internship.

SE4 suggested one way to support Black parents is helping them understand different options for work for their child:

> We need to work harder to help those parents understand, "yes, your child does have the ability to go out and work." No, we don't need to sit around and collect SSI or something along those lines. I know that check is important, especially in my area, in this rural community, a lot of those checks make the difference between putting food on the table. And I understand that, but there's so much more out there and getting parents to understand that they can make a competitive wage if we get them to work harder. I think some of the things that I would love to see in this rural population is more community-based experiences, allowing kids to go out into the community and work, exposing them to different types of work.

Participants from other groups also discussed ways they support families. TS7 in the TSFG described his experience:

> I feel like I've had to do a little more coaching or meetings with parents, my Black and Hispanic students because they're not always willing to call Texas workforce or call TexAna is our service provider for Medicaid waivers. I have to spend some more time making sure they understand that process that they're comfortable with it. And then another thing is just getting their students, state ID cards has been a challenge. And then they would need that in order to get a job or work with Texas workforce. So there's things that I think I spend a little more time with our parents on helping them to navigate those processes.

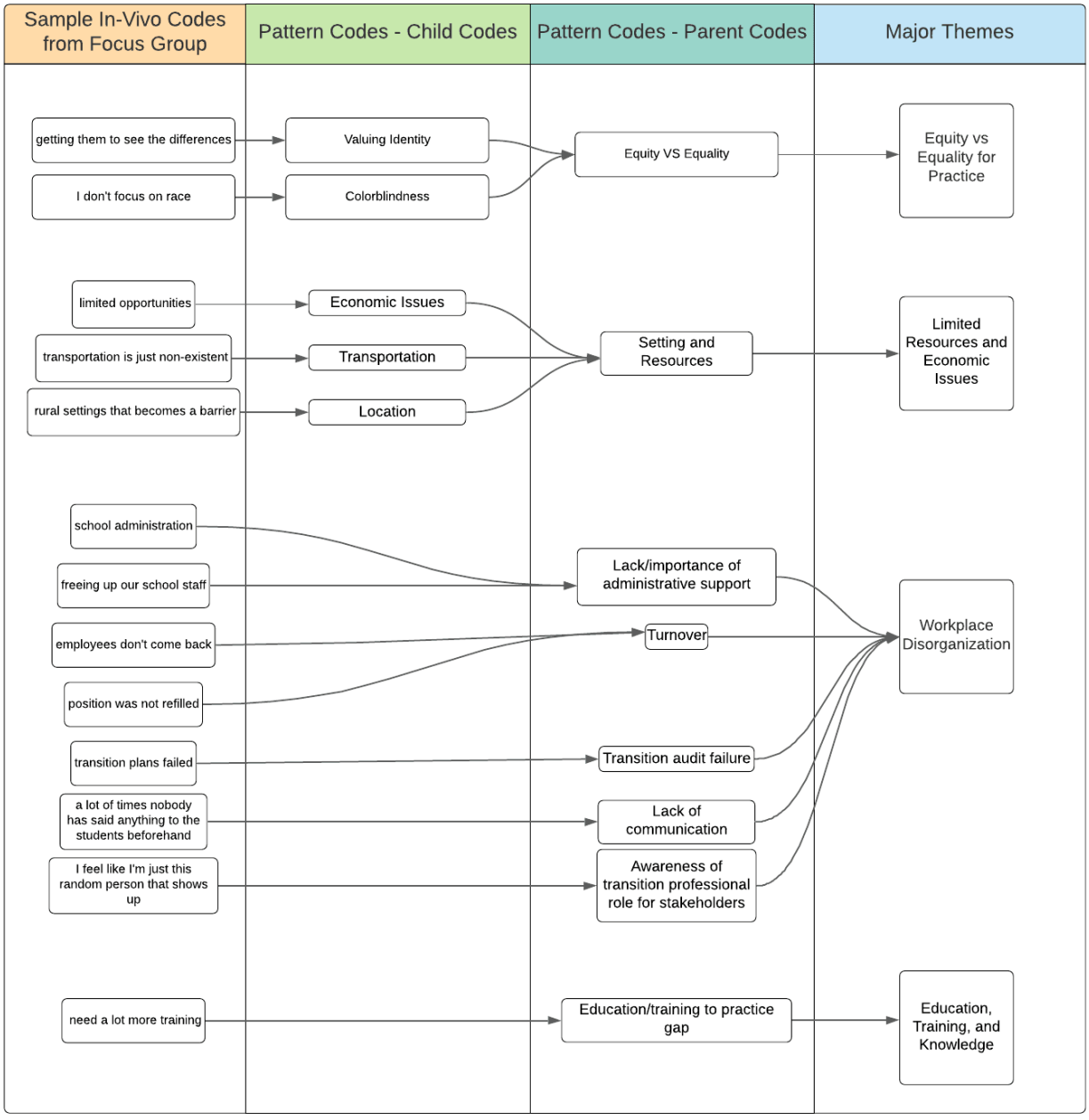
Research Question 3

Many barriers or areas of improvement described by participants are related to systemic and workplace-related issues for professionals and students (see Figure 5). Some recognized

there are practical barriers for students related to equity in education and employment, for Black students and for students with disabilities in general. Others also noted workplace and role-related issues of their jobs such as lack of or importance of administrative support and turnover, which is categorized as workplace disorganization. The last major theme was education, training, and knowledge which describes many professionals themselves have little training related to culturally responsive practices or that other stakeholders are unaware of the importance of the transition process. Interview questions related to this research question were more directly answered in the follow-up interviews because that was the main purpose of the follow-up interviews.

Figure 5

Coding Scheme for RQ 3



Major Theme 1: Equity Versus Equality for Practicing

Equity versus equality was seen as a barrier and challenge specifically brought up by the TSFG, was in-vivo coded, and became a major theme. In the other focus groups, the equity versus equality phrase was not expressed directly as it was in the TSFG, but there were many contrasting statements about colorblindness and valuing student identities. TS1 said during the TSFG in relation to a statement related to barriers from another participant in the TSFG:

> You know, the difference between equality and equity, that they're not the same and getting case managers and teachers, families, administration, to realize that what is . . . our end game is getting them to see the differences and not everybody needs the same accommodation, not every student needs the same accommodation, you know, in talking to families and honoring their culture and kind of bringing it into the team because they, you know, they have that unique perspective and unique support, and is something we can learn from, and maybe in helping them in the classroom, in, you know, in the school setting and bringing that forward and honoring it and supporting it and using it as part of their, you know, ways to help them meet their goal.

One example of the contrasting statements was among special education teachers. During the SEFG, SE3 stated:

> I don't focus on race when I'm planning lesson plans. I don't focus on race when it comes to disabilities. As far as some differences I've seen going into family involvement a lot of my students in the minorities I've seen, and this is just from my experience, it could be completely different in another people's experience, definitely have lower family involvement a lot of transportation issues because of single parents. And it's not saying that I haven't seen that in other students as well, but it's definitely, I feel like higher. In those Black student's single families, one income, transportation issues,

> definitely some motivation issues. A lot of, one of my, one of my students is one of nine kids. And his older siblings always have just stayed at home after graduation. So he's really never had the motivation to become anything or he's just expecting to stay home. So it's very hard to kind of fight some of that family culture that's coming from the house. But yeah, as far as creating plans, I can't say that I've done anything differently for the for the different races.

In contrast, during the follow-up interview SE2 stated:

> I remember somebody specifically said that they don't treat their students differently, but I also don't agree with that. I think that we all do, and we just don't realize that we treat our students differently. And that we see students from a different lens and we communicate with our students differently. I don't think that we necessarily always realize that we do that, but I do think that we actually all do. So I disagreed with some of the comments that people said when they said, "oh, I don't treat anyone any differently." They don't intend to treat anyone differently. I still think we do. I think that's something that we're working on and, or it could be a good thing. Like we might treat someone differently because we need to foster a relationship with that student in order for them to trust us as professionals that are there to help them, instead of like torture them, like some students think.

These passages show contrasting opinions about valuing student identities. SE3 claimed she does not focus on race, while SE2 disagreed with SE3's perspective and suggested they should not ignore how they treat their students. Similar to SE2, other focus groups and follow-up interviews saw equity versus equality as an issue.

In VRFG, VR3 reflected on how equity versus equality may be a barrier:

> You know, I would say at our agency, I don't think we do anything specifically different for our Black students. I think that's something that I've been, I don't know what the word for it is kind of sitting with that. Like, are we doing a disservice by not like recognizing some of the barriers that our Black students may have with employment? But I just, I don't think that it's something that we talk about as a team. I don't think it's something that was ever discussed. Some cultural things like I, when I would work with some of our Black students, especially when it came to job development from things that the other team members would see as sometimes barriers, I was able to see as like cultural difference because I'm Black between, you know, between groups or whatnot. But I just, I wouldn't say that we're doing anything specifically for our Black students personally.

VR5 provided a specific example of how color blindness is an issue in the workplace:

> So that when you go to work, you are, you just fit in like any other employee. Now some of the cultural things that come up might be, for example, hair. Hair is a big issue. So for example, I've had the young ladies that have the different braids and it's a lot of braids and employers, and others involved might not quite grasp this concept of "yesterday you had a small amount of hair and today you have this huge amount of braids," you would think in 2021 folks get it, but they don't. And then even stuff like the hairnets that don't fit over. Something as small as a hair net.

Major Theme 2: Limited Resources and Economic Issues

Limited resources and economic issues were a substantial portion of what participants cited as a barrier. Sixteen of 18 participants discussed some form of limited resources and economic issues. During many introductions to practices or strategies, some participants highlighted economic issues, locality, and transportation. However, most responses did not

specify the context of race and disability. In all three focus groups, transportation was mentioned without the researcher probing for barriers or areas of improvement and the TSFG all commented about having a transportation grant to support their students. In the SEFG participants described how transportation impacts employment opportunities. SE3 provided a vivid example unclear of racial context:

> I have three students that I work with who are really out, like even more rural than the school itself and none of them have their driver's license or permits or anything like that. And, and mom doesn't have access to like other, like there's no taxis there's no, Uber's, there's no buses there's no. And that's one of the biggest challenges with them getting them employment is there's no way of getting them there. They're all employable could easily get a job, hold a job with no problems, but transportation is just nonexistent. So mom's actually potentially moving to [redacted], which is a more suburban area. So hopefully she can get employment set up for them there cause they'll have access to public transportation there. So yeah, it's definitely transportation is definitely a huge impact for sure.

SE2 highlighted this challenge even further with more specific examples of limited economic opportunity for her community:

> So we have very little jobs in our community, we have a McDonald's and we have a food lion, you have your dollar generals, your dollar stores, some gas stations. There is no hospital. We do have a prison system; we have the prisons. And so that employs some, some people, but that that's one particular. I mean, I do have a student that is wants to work in the prison, that's what he wants to do, and he's going to be great at it because he has his mindset. But, in terms of we have some logging companies, but again, you have to have a license and transportation to be able to do that. So, and then the bigger cities,

> [redacted], [redacted]. [Redacted] is 30 minutes. [Redacted] is 30 minutes. [Redacted] is an hour. [Redacted] is an hour. So yeah, I mean, when it comes to job opportunities here, they're very few. And without the transportation piece, it does really affect the kids in the area.

TS1 continued the discussion on transportation and limited opportunities by mentioning it is also a barrier for families to be available to support school activities; however, she is not clear about the context of race:

> Geographically, if you have an urban setting, I think in some ways it might be a little easier because you have more resources. You have access to public transportation. In rural settings that becomes a barrier and families have to travel and their home life and their work life sometimes takes precedence over being available during the school day.

In the VRFG, VR2 indicated there are transportation resources through VR but often come with different stipulations:

> Just I know in our area, transportation is huge. We do not have any consistent transportation and the pandemic has pretty much wiped out some cab companies because I'm looking for transportation constantly. And that barrier in of itself, I can tell you has really has really taken the chance of some of our individuals to be successful. And I, you know, I feel helpless and hopeless sometimes trying to research community ways to come together to solve that problem. And so, you know, every single community organization that I work with, they do not pay for transportation or, you know, and DARS can pay for transportation, but then we can't find good, consistent transportation. And so I'm oftentimes closing a case with the individual because they can't, they can't get to and from work.

VR5 even had a student willing to work and had a creative plan to overcome the transportation barrier, but did not stay at the job because the situation became unfit for the student and his family who are Black:

> And we discussed what, that's gonna look like. "You're going to be outside in the weather. You got to get back and forth to work. It's going to be hot." And he's plan was to ride his bicycle. Okay. We drove the route. "This is what it's going to look like." You know, unfortunately, his family needed him to work as well. They needed the income. So I don't think they thought it through, even though I tried to help them think it through, we rode the route. "This is what it's gonna look like. What about when it's rain? And what about this? What about, you know, all of those types of things." He, we got him the job, we did the onboarding, we did the initial training. He worked a few shifts and then quit. But I mean, so in cases like that, maybe that does need to be, I don't know who in that situation would have been able to help them understand that this is not a good fit. It's just not a good fit. We do our best with all those people involved. We talked to the client, the family, [redacted], with the, looking at the different transportation.

Major Theme 3: Workplace Disorganization

Workplace disorganization refers to issues participants have at the professional level with school districts or agency management. Many challenges were due to turnover, transition audit failure, lack of communication, and awareness of transition professionals' roles among stakeholders. Some participants expressed how these challenges should improve, because workplace disorganization can negatively affect students and their access to services. SE4 mentioned transition failure is not surprising because of lack of access for students due to the need to improve collaboration:

> When I go out and I look at when we do the indicators, so they SPP 13 and SPP 14. So those are the follow-up indicators. A lot of our kids haven't really accessed a lot of that. And it, there is a bigger discrepancy between our, our males and our females, and especially with our Black males, they just, after high school, they don't always access services. So does it surprise me that our transition plans failed? No, because I think we could be doing better. I always think we could be doing better. I think there's always room for improvement, always room to make things better. . . . So no, that part did not surprise me. When it comes to collaborating with the different agencies. I mean, I would love to see more of that, but I know this year with DARS especially in that that's pretty much the agency that we utilize out here.

SE4 discussed transition failure because SE5 and SE2 mentioned it in the SEFG and highlighted the state department involvement and administrative support. SE5 shared, "we were audited as a county and we, they failed . . . the support [administrative] there's those really stubborn lens." SE2 then added:

> I participated in the indicator 14 review last summer and I called students and families who've graduated and asked them a lot of questions, like a survey. And a lot of people are sitting at home after graduating. And so I'm sure that's why the VDOE is getting more involved.

Participants in the TSFG also highlighted administrative support should be encouraged more to build better connections. During this discussion; however, there were some contrasting statements about how the participants felt about their administrative support. The contrast revealed the lack of administrative support is a barrier or area of improvement, but is important for bettering transition programs. In the focus group, TS7 and TS6 agreed lack of administrative

support is a challenge in their positions, but TS2 suggested great administrative support does make a difference. TS7 stated:

> They have these transition specialists in their district or in their schools and the administrators don't have, typically, a lot of experience in special education. . . . But what I find a little bit more difficult is freeing up our school staff to be able to facilitate those relationships. So, the school administration, for example, has to be willing, in my mind to say, "Hey, [redacted] was, is going to, I'm not going to see him every day, all day around the school, because if I really want him building these relationships with outside agencies, he's gotta be out there mingling with those outside agencies." Now that's hard for some administrators to do, to just say, "I'm just going to trust my staff to go do that." But I think that kind of like what you were talking about, if they understand that how important this inter-agency collaboration is and how it's one of the predictors of post-school success and how we can't do it, just sitting in our classrooms, we've got to get out and make those connections, or really build those relationships.

TS2 stated:

> So we do get a lot of support in that regard, and it's not new for us. It's, we've been focused in our systems for a while.

VR2 also suggested the importance of administrative support for work-based learning:

> I think we need to reach out more with administrators and let them know that we're here. I think the reason why project search has been such a big success is that sometimes a lot of times the administrator is involved, right, at least in some of the meetings. And so knowing that projects like that is becoming so successful in terms of our outcomes. I think we should have more projects. We don't need to just have it with [redacted]. Let's have more projects where the administrator is there and saying you know; this is

> something we can do. We can provide a work-based learning experience for you this summer. However, let me come to this meeting and get you connected with some folks who can help you achieve that.

TS5 discussed the challenges of having a lack of communication and awareness among stakeholders:

> I think we're a gap is that the case manager explains to the student that a transition specialist is also going to be collaborating with you on your transition goals. I think that that's a piece that's missing a lot of times, I feel like I'm just this random person that shows up and says, Hey, tell me what you want to do after you graduate. And so I, I think it goes back to how do we communicate with everybody anyway, within the district? How do we communicate with the teacher's case manager's admin? So I think by the time it gets to the student, or my hope is that somebody in the building would have said, you have also have a transition person, that's going to be working with you on these goals as well. So that is a little bit of a challenge because a lot of times nobody has said anything to the students beforehand about the transition piece we've said earlier that it seems new, but we all know it's not. And so that's like a huge gap too.

Other workplace related disorganization included turnover. In the TSFG, TS1 referenced turnover and the COVID-19 global pandemic and how it hindered a work experience program:

> So we do have a work experience program and in our larger high schools where we have the where the population is predominantly African American, we did in the past, we had two job coaches that serve that school. So we were able to take larger numbers of students in our work experience program. Unfortunately, one of the job coaches retired and when that job coach retired, that position was not refilled. And then of course we had COVID.

Major Theme 4: Education, Training, and Knowledge

Education, training, and knowledge as a major theme referred to challenges or areas of improvement needed by stakeholders in terms of understanding transition, collaboration, or culturally responsive practices, broadly. All three focus groups had different areas of what should be focused on in terms of building understanding. However, participants acknowledged they also need more training particularly for culturally responsive practices. SEFG participants focused on the need for families to build more understanding about transition:

> I think someone also talked about some about parents too. I think there's a whole lot lack of parent education. In general, again, not just transition. I think transition's a big one that it, it definitely slips up a lot, but I think with just supports that parents could be giving at home because parents don't sign up to have a kid with a disability parents don't sign up to have a kid with down syndrome or autism or something like that. They're kind of figuring it out as they go, but us as experts might have some suggestions and it won't work for every student and won't work for every family, but at least we have some guidance that we could be providing. And I feel like, especially in the rural area that I'm in, you don't have, we haven't given the parents that option. So then the parents blame the school and then the schools blame the parents and it just gets into a pointing match of who actually is going to take responsibility for providing that for the students.

SE2 suggested teachers need more training:

> I think that we could have more education for our teachers. So I haven't, so I think I took like way back in the day I took a one class on it was like a cultural like education, cultural or cultural or culture. Oh, I'm not even going to say it, responsive practices. It's been a long day, [redacted]. But I think I only took one class in college on that. And all I even remember from that whole class was just to make sure that when you put pictures around

> your room or you're showing material, that you are not just showing material of all White students, that you're involving all cultures. And, and that's all that I remember from that class and that was years ago, but I think I should know more than that. Like, I should have had more education in that area. I would gladly take it now. And I think that we should be doing that. We really need to, so.

Participants in the TSFG discussed that in general stakeholders are not aware of transition, which could be improved:

> So a lot of getting resources out to the community, to the parents and also to the staff at, at case managers, teachers, admin, not a lot of there's not a lot of knowledge as far as what transition is and what transition, what makes a solid transition program.

TS7 in the follow-up interview suggested education in culturally responsive practices is vital because the outcomes of Black students:

> I think that that's something that we just need a lot more training and focus on. Like I remember in our focus group, one of the participants talked about the data that showed how the low employment rates of Black males with disability, with a disability. And I knew the incredibly low unemployment rate for people in general with disabilities, but I did not dive down deep enough to understand that even within that group, there's a subgroup of Black males that are, that the data is even worse for, do you know what I'm saying? And so I think that had I, before she mentioned that, and for me, it was a bit of an aha moment and me saying, you know what, that's something that I could have done better. I could have said, Hey, like, for example, in, in Texas, in special education, and maybe this is the same everywhere, I don't know, but in Texas special education, when we talk about removing the special education students who get removed from settings for disciplinary actions, it is almost exclusively male.

Participants in the VRFG discussed how they learned inclusive and culturally responsive practices in their programs, but those practices are not applied to their work now:

> You know, I feel like I learned more about like culturally responsive practices in my master's program. . . . I think in the last year we've had like a lot of training at [redacted] specifically about what we can do. But I don't know. I don't think, I couldn't say what we're doing [culturally responsive practices] now

VR3 suggested trainings must be more targeted to be more culturally responsive for supporting students particularly in the workplace:

> I think that like our inclusive trainings need to say the word Black, I think like in the special education field, we just look at inclusive practices as separated into two groups, usually like general education or special education. But I think within that special education group, we do need to have more training on best practices with you know people that are clients that are Black. And I think job coaches need training on sometimes being a Black job coach, which I would experience different things than like my coworkers did. And like that relationship building, I think sometimes it could be a little bit more difficult. So I think training and having other coworkers be cognizant of the Black experience is just helpful because it's like maybe I'm not meeting my job development numbers because you know, I'm working out in this rural area and maybe people don't want to talk to me which I've definitely experienced.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study explored the perspectives and experiences of transition professionals' collaborative and culturally responsive practices (CRPs) to understand transition service delivery for Black students with high incidence disabilities. As mentioned in the literature review, the Federal Partners in Transition workgroup (2015) and Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2012) suggested ineffective collaboration could have negative implications for students with disabilities, more specifically, students from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. According to Awsumb et al. (2020), Black students with high incidence disabilities have some of the highest transition referrals to vocational rehabilitation (VR) but early case closures which indicate either unsuccessful cases or cases closed during the VR eligibility phase. Using critical race theory as a lens, the research questions, focus group questions, and follow-up interview questions were intentional about understanding how transition professionals support Black students with high incidence disabilities. The research questions included:

1. How do transition professionals describe culturally responsive collaboration and what does that mean to them?
2. How do transition professionals, specifically special educators, transition specialists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors, describe their experiences and the practices they have used for successful transition cases of Black high school students with high incidence disabilities?
3. What do transition professionals identify as barriers to their implementation of culturally responsive collaboration?

Interpretation of the Findings

Results from this study are similarly aligned with the literature-base of collaboration and CRPs (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gray, 1989). However, more applied and situational practices were discussed in this study. Combining collaboration and culturally responsive practices reveals most participants are aware of both barriers and success but need more support and training to provide better overall service delivery, in terms of transition, collaboration, and CRPs. Many Black students with high incidence disabilities face negative postschool outcomes in education and employment which can impact independent living. Transition is vital point for Black students with high incidence disabilities to gain the knowledge and skills to be successful in life. Thus, transition professionals should understand how to build better practices to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. In this chapter, I address the study's findings in relation to the literature and discuss the implications COVID-19 global pandemic had on the practices participants were currently using at the time, implications for practice, policy, and research, study limitations, and future directions.

What Does Being Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Look Like?

For Research Question 1, participants were asked to describe what collaboration and being culturally responsive means to them, and overall, the participants described a process that involved building and maintaining partnerships, communicating, and reflecting on themselves and society. The first theme was the willingness to learn and teach, highlighting the participants' thoughtfulness in what they imagine a collaborative environment would look like for them, the students, and their families. The second theme was recognizing personal and systemic issues related to Black students' transition, specifically for education and employment. During the focus groups, after answering questions about collaboration and working in teams to support Black students, many professionals start to realize macrocosmic issues of race, employment, and

education. It seems to provide culturally responsive services for Black students, participants must recognize how the world sees their students and any bias participants may have toward people who are different from them.

Both themes align with two components of critical consciousness (i.e., critical reflection and critical action), one of five tenets of critical race theory (i.e., race and racism are fundamental aspects of U.S. society; Brown Ruiz & Scott, 2021; Diemer et al., 2016; Solórzano 1997; Yosso, 2005). For example, VR3 self-reflected on how we may be doing students a disservice and SE4 discussed how educational issues are also societal issues. A possible sign of reflective critical consciousness is participants' self-reflection and understanding of stigma and society. The advocacy and partnerships with students could also align with critical action. Jemal (2017) also considers using colearning as a tool for improving student–teacher relationships because students are not "empty vessels," (p. 606) and their knowledge and contributions are valuable to their successes. The colearning for participants in this study seemed to be with families and students, as participants become more of a partner in supporting families and students.

Participants' Experiences and Practices

For Research Question 2, participants were asked to discuss their experiences and practices to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. Some of the "what does it mean to them" for Research Question 1 carried over into their practices. For example, involving the families sometimes meant supporting the family; having partnerships and communication is ideal, but there are specific relationship skills needed. The first theme for Research Question 2 was discipline-specific practices for learning opportunities. Opportunities include education and work-related learning. Many participants responded with traditional practices such as assessments, inclusion, self-determination, and providing work experiences typical to the

transition process but added different ways to support learning through flexible learning opportunities. One participant acknowledged it was a way to provide students meaningful feedback by " [telling them] how to do it properly." Participants from each focus group also discussed the use of student's voices in multiple ways (e.g., student led individualized education plans and student-centered planning) as their practices. The second theme, relatedness and relationship skills, was how some participants build rapport to support students and offer services. Relatedness and relationship skills are slightly different from communication in Research Question 1 because it is student-focused and based on some principles of culturally responsive instruction and equity-based tools. The third theme of supporting the family is vital to student development and access to services. Participants described many students have limited options for employment. Some participants referred to the limitations as barriers, but others suggested that to overcome those barriers, they support families by providing them with resources (e.g., benefit analysis and transition coaching about the program).

The three themes for Research Question 2 are similar to practices Aceves and Orosco (2014) cited specifically as responsive feedback and modeling. However, possible developmentally appropriate culturally responsive practices for transition students could include the use of mentors and empowerment (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). TS3 stated during the TSFG students should learn from their mistakes because "[they're] probably going to learn from getting that wrong answer." SE6 suggested even if they get the wrong answer, professionals should still encourage them. For modeling, based on the participants' responses having the students see role models they can relate to is "reality for them," according to SE1.

Relatedness and relationship skills are both significant aspects of Research Question 2. Some participants were specific about the tools or skills they used in relation to Black students with high disabilities, while other participants were more general and did not explain in the

context of race. For example, SE2 told the group she used "teachingtolerance.org," to find supplemental information about supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities, or VR3 and VR4 when they discuss job placement awareness and issues Black students with disabilities have on the job. However, others use curricula, including "I'm determined" as a general transition practice, which is neutral about race.

Some participants also contributed their practices to the students' intersectional identities, suggesting that socioeconomic status (SES) and disability are more salient than race when they work with students. Others suggest that none of those identities are important. In the TSFG, TS2 stated "it's, more of socioeconomic thing" and in the SEFG, SE3 stated, "I don't focus on race." It was also seen as a barrier to other participants as they disagreed with SE3's statement. However, most participants agreed with TS2 as the different intersections in the students' identities play a role in some services and barriers students face. During discussions such as these when asked specifically about Black students with disabilities, it seems some participants deflected the question to answer in a way that suggested race is not an important factor in the transition planning process and practices they select. Interestingly, when these same participants discussed race, they described barriers that existed for Black students. For example, SE3 stated, "In those Black students' single families, one income, transportation issues, definitely some motivation issues." The previous statement suggests the existence of an implicit use of colorblindness, which seems to indicate Black students with high incidence disabilities identities are not valued.

Reasons Why Collaboration and Culturally Responsive Practices are Critical

Research Question 3 targets why collaboration and CRPs are critical for students, especially Black students with high incidence disabilities. Research Question 3 reveals the systematic issues that are barriers for the participants to do their jobs and the students to access

quality culturally responsive services. The first major theme is equity versus equality for practice, which is a barrier to the services transition professionals provide. It does not seem professionals can truly individualize based on students' identities, needs, and the challenges they face without recognizing systemic and social barriers in classrooms and employment. This is often referred to as color blindness, and some professionals recognized this as a struggle for them, while others suggested it is how they intentionally provide services. The additional impacts of colorblindness could also create unintended biases and lead to complacency among transition professionals who are supposed to support students. Zionts et al. (2003) found families feel a lack of support and respect when special education professionals do not value the identity of their family. Cannon (2019) also found comparable results among Black women with disabilities after they completed high school. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) suggested that colorblindness is harmful because students may not feel validated, and it centers Whiteness.

In addition to equity issues, there were also challenges with providing services because of economic and resource issues. Twelve out of 18 participants mentioned there are transportation and rural locality issues for their transition students, in general, which have often negatively impacted employment for some participants, even citing that these issues may be more severe based on race and SES. The challenge of limited resources and economic issues is common in all transition barriers literature, even for interventions like communicating interagency relationships and collaborative linkages for exceptional student (CIRCLES), which is designed to build better collaboration (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015). Many transition programs struggle with transportation and the implications of being located in a rural area (Magee, 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). One participant noted Virginia is offering grants to some high schools to target limited resources and economic issues schools are seeing by writing ways to use school transportation for students with disabilities into transition programs. The participant said the program is called

"Start on Success," and their school will be receiving the grant in the fall. According to the Center on Transition Innovations housed at Virginia Commonwealth University (2014), the Start on Success program is a:

> year-long program in which students enroll in a career pathways course during the 1st semester and participate in a paid internship at a local business 2nd semester of the school year. This model is intended for at-risk seniors who are pursuing a regular diploma, have little to no work experience, and need support in obtaining and maintaining employment. (p. 1)

So far, there have been positive outcomes for this program.

Among participants, workplace disorganization reveals many organizational issues Magee (2019) mentioned as barriers for transition professionals. Issues such as administrative support, turnover, lack of communication, and role awareness are all aligned with most literature about workplace and organizational barriers. One barrier not captured; however, is transition audit failure. This code seems to be specific to Virginia and seems to be an implication of some of other barriers. The audit participants were referring to is called the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC, 2020). JLARC conducted a review in 2018 and reported graduation rates have been improving for all students, but not for Black students with disabilities. The report also stated, "IEPs are not consistently designed to be effective and reliable guides for special education services" (JLARC, 2020, p. 36). Therefore, it seems to be implied there are larger barriers for the state of Virginia that were not fully discussed other than some frustrations of participants when they described their barriers.

In relation to the JLARC findings, many participants also suggested there is a need for more education, training, and knowledge among stakeholders, including themselves, about transition and culturally responsive practices. Participants suggested some families and

administrators need more knowledge about the transition process; however, when the participants referred to themselves, they suggested they need more training in culturally responsive practices. Interestingly, participants who stated they did have training felt like they have not applied it enough in practice. It seems the workplace is not set up for the participants to use culturally responsive skills even though they have been trained.

Implications and Recommendations

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires collaboration among educators and VR counselors (US Department of Education, 2014; WIOA, 2014) while Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) focuses on creating better culturally responsive school spaces. Yet, many special education teachers, transition specialists, and VR counselors are not collaborating effectively (GAO, 2012; FTP, 2015; Taylor et al., 2016). Also, in light of the JLARC report, there are significant gaps in successful outcomes for Black students with disabilities in Virginia. Based on national data Virginia is not the only state where Black students with disabilities are struggling. Some policies and research areas examine teacher retention, training, and service delivery when it comes to state-level data reporting, it is interesting that administrators are not more involved, according to participants. All barriers listed are important to supporting outcomes of students with disabilities, but who is supporting the staff? In the JLARC (2020) report, not only are teachers held accountable for student outcomes, but administrators are as well. Participants in this study acknowledged supportive administrators who understand special education and transition help build better programs for their students. Practices within the schools should build communities where special education and transition services are not, as one participant indicated, “black sheep,” but are truly integrated and supported.

The findings of this study provide practical implications for transition professionals and their administrative staff as they all are engaged in providing quality services to Black students with high incidence disabilities. While more research is needed to confirm these results, it is evident that these findings have important implications in terms of individualized services based on valuing identity and understanding the issues Black students and families may face. Unfortunately, participants answered the questions more generally and not specific to Black students with high incidence disabilities. Specific practice, policy, and research implications and recommendations are reported by role: (a) special education teachers, (b) transition specialist/coordinators, and (c) VR counselors/ professionals.

Special Education Teachers

All the special education teachers in this study were from Virginia and according the JLARC report, which audited school districts in Virginia, Black students with disabilities are the only group of students with disabilities graduating below the state's average. Special education teachers work under both IDEA and ESSA to deliver school-based services to students and being a high school special education teacher often means collaborating to deliver transition services. Based on Research Question 3, special education teachers require targeted supports, such as CRP training, to collaborate and use in transition planning. Although there were some disagreements among the special education teachers about certain practices, it was evident the special education teachers need targeted training to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. For participants in the special education group, color blindness and race neutrally were discussed, and some participants did not agree on colorblind practices. The practices are harmful, but the participants who did not agree also suggested the need for increased learning of CRPs and collaborating with families.

According to Awsumb et al. (2020) and Landmark et al. (2010), families do not have enough information during transition, and the lack of information creates family involvement issues. In the focus groups, transition specialists spoke about the gap that happens between them and the case managers (special education teachers), which could hinder the families understanding the roles of transition specialist and other transition professionals are not in the schools as often as case managers. Transition specialists and VR counselors shared similar solutions about involving families, which was starting some transition services earlier, for example benefit analysis and including the transition specialist in the IEP meetings. Thus, more practical skills such as culturally responsive interpersonal skills and the ability to "coach" families are needed for special education teachers/ case managers as stated by TS7.

In the literature, teacher training and time to build relationships have often been a barrier for collaboration, CRPs, and providing transition services (Magee, 2019; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Taylor et al., 2016). Two implications of the study may be the potential impacts of having trainings about culturally responsive collaboration and having comprehensive support for transition. Researchers such as Magee (2019) and Taylor et al. (2016) recommend teacher trainings; however, SE4 mentioned teachers often do not have the support to attend trainings. SE4 referred to financial support and time to attend. Conferences and seminars can be expensive and if they are in the middle of a semester, teachers would probably have to use their personal time to request off for elective trainings. SE2 stated, "[schools] will typically send the transition specialist, but not the teachers." Therefore, for practice, special education teachers should increase their knowledge of CRPs, collaboration, and transition, but a policy implication of training is to provide federal funding and opportunities to attend trainings without it impacting their personal time. Educational policies such as IDEA and ESSA could create better ways to integrate support for special education teachers to learn better collaborative skills and culturally

responsive practices. Future research could explore the effectiveness of trainings, particularly cross-disciplinary and transdisciplinary trainings, and how effective collaboration would help special education teachers deliver better culturally responsive practices.

Transition Specialists

Transition specialists are at an interesting intersection of all three policies (i.e., IDEA, ESSA, and WIOA) to support Black students with disabilities during transition. However, not many school districts have access to transition specialists. Their main goals are to connect students with disabilities to adult services and provide career-related services until students graduate. During the focus groups and follow-up interviews, transition specialist participants discussed they worked in multiple capacities to do their jobs, but also not officially recognized under an any of these federal policies. Under state policies, transition specialists' roles, responsibilities, and duties vary. Transition specialist participants are at a key advantage point to support Black students with high incidence disabilities because of their specialized role, so policies, higher education programs, and research about transition specialist should be increased.

Participants noted coaching families and having people that look like the students are important, so increasing the workforce of transition specialist that are Black or people of color should also be encouraged. If transition specialists are to be better at supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities, stronger CRPs should be learned and implemented by systematizing relevant CRPs during transition and having support to provide strong CRPs during service delivery. However, administrative support and limited resources were two top barriers they faced in terms of providing transition services. The transition specialists also often struggled to answer how they support Black students with high incidence disabilities with practices other than mentoring and supporting the family. Two implications for transition specialists include having better access to administrative support and funding for more programs like Start on

Success, which found positive results and provided resources for students to maintain their job placement (i.e., transportation; McNeill, 2017).

Administrators should be learning more about transition and the transition professionals in a collaborative environment. It will also be important that transition specialists build their skill set to support Black students with high incidence disabilities and through programs comparable to the Start on Success, transition specialists could decrease barriers. If barriers are decreased, it may allow the transition specialist opportunities to learn more about the students they serve. Administrators could support transition specialists in getting grants such as the Start on Success. For policy implications, transition specialists should be recognized under a federal capacity so there can be more transition specialists in each state and support grant programs similar to Start on Success should be universal to support disadvantaged communities. Research related to the implications for transition specialists could evaluate specific measures of transition programs have grants to decrease economic barriers for students, specifically outcomes of Black students with high incidence disabilities, and increase administrative support for transition specialists.

VR Counselors

There were many instances during which VR counselors discussed the need for better culturally responsive training and application. VR counselors were reflective of how they support Black students with disabilities and recognized they could be doing more. VR counselors also recognized they had classes about cultural competence, but they did not apply it in practice. One solution the VR counselors recommended was starting earlier with benefit analysis, which could also help create better school partnerships and collaboration with the family. VR counselors in the study also suggested job placement awareness, such as making sure students were with employers who were willing to accommodate them adequately. Two practice implications for VR counselors are increasing opportunities for collaboration and CRP trainings

and working with families to understand services VR can offer earlier. The current age of program eligibility for VR is 16 but varies by state. The policy implications could be to increase collaborative transition and CRP cross-disciplinary/transdisciplinary training funding for VR to partner with schools. Another larger workforce policy implication for Black students with disabilities is making sure Black students with disabilities are protected and accommodated in the workplace. Although there are antidiscriminatory laws for people with disabilities and civil rights laws, policies around microaggressive behaviors in the workplace are a gray-area. VR counselor participants were aware of where they placed students, but there should be policies in place to protect and accommodate Black students with disabilities on the job. For example, VR5 discussed how she had to work with employers on understanding Black hair. In 2019, California passed the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act, because "race-based hair discrimination" as described by writers of the CROWN act. The act has passed 13 states including Virginia; in Texas and Mississippi legislation is filed, but not passed. Research could focus on the outcomes of employment and postsecondary education for Black students with high incidence disabilities when they start VR services earlier. Future research could also consider how VR counselors are applying culturally responsive practices in the field through observation in workplace settings to understand the dimensions of job placement awareness.

Overall Recommendations for Collaboration and Culturally Responsive Practices

Transition is important time for Black students with high incidence disabilities and there are many professionals involved in the process of building transition and work-related skills. While this study focuses on three transition professionals, the special education teachers, transition specialists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors, there were many other stakeholders that these professionals discussed as part of their teams and organizations for

support and service delivery. These other stakeholders may not have the experiences or training like many of the transition professionals in this study, but everyone involved in transition process is working towards supporting students' goals. The most important part of this process is the reality of the barriers that many Black students with high incidence disabilities face as they work, live, and go to school in places that are not innately created with them in mind. The overall recommendation for transition professionals is to restructure systems and places that do not adequately support Black students. Two of the key findings from the study includes (a) willingness to teach and learn and (b) recognizing personal and systemic issues is a starting point for shaping the way these systems can be restructured. Transition professionals must gain critical consciousness of addressing issues of social justice and racial inequality to collaboratively deliver transition services that are culturally responsive which takes reflection, learning, teaching, and self-correction.

Learning requires transition professionals to have opportunities that expands their abilities to provide quality transition services. At the organizational structures level, learning should be upheld in policy as much as practice recommendations. For example, both IDEA and WIOA recommend collaboration, but support for learning how to collaborate is vague. Quality learning also requires resources and funding therefore policies around learning for transition professionals should also reduce barriers for learning opportunities. Teaching involves gaining adequate knowledge about how to support and deliver CRPs during transition. At the collaborative dynamic level, transition professionals are working with multiple stakeholders to create the most optimal services possible and based on findings from the study that requires educating other stakeholders about de-stigmatizing Black students with high incidence disabilities. In the context of this study, self-correction is holding ourselves accountable for our actions and how we uphold oppressive teaching, learning, and workplace settings. The process of

being self-corrective is also understanding the outcomes of Black students with high incidence disabilities and practices/services/ educational trajectories (i.e., alternative diplomas) that do not work for them.

Learning, teaching, and self-correction are key parts for the overall recommendations for the three transition professionals:

1. For learning, higher education programs should develop robust transdisciplinary training to build awareness of each transition professionals' roles, transition skills, quality training in CPRs, and provide ongoing professional development to maintain transition professionals' skills out in the field.
2. For teaching, transition professionals should consider formalized check-ins and build-in time to collaborate with others (e.g., general educators, employers, and community members) on developing and maintaining culturally responsive transition services for Black students with high incidence disabilities and holding each other accountable for actions that harms students.
3. For self-correction, transition professionals should practice understanding oppression, the ways oppressions can be perpetuated, and hold themselves accountable for the quality of their services.

Study Limitations

Considerable limitations to this study include the timing/sampling method and typical limitations of qualitative research. Due to disruptions to the educational system brought about by COVID-19 global pandemic, there were unforeseen circumstances that impacted the direction of this study (e.g., local high schools and VR agencies hold on internal reviews). The original direction of this study was to conduct the multimethod research with intact teams, but school-level approvals were never returned after 4 weeks of waiting for approval. Therefore, no

participants were coworkers in the same focus group. The implication of not having the participants in dedicated teams could have resulted in the loss of rich, detailed data about dynamic and observable behaviors. Participants in this study were majority White females, which is reflective of the United States teacher population, but the sample size could have been more diverse with males and other racial and ethnic groups. A more diverse sample could have provided an opportunity to gain information on participants' experiences.

The largest criticism of focus groups is researchers or interviewers may not fully explore group participants' experiences due to the number of participants/dominating participants and moderation. The mitigation of these two issues included preparation on behalf of the researcher by conducting a pilot of materials and skill set to manage a focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Ryan et al., 2014) and follow-up interviews. Results from this study are also not generalizable.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic Impact

A significant implication of how participants provided services was affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic because many school districts were virtual most of the time before the data collection phase of this study. Some participants noted some improvements in transition involvement, but more issues arose related to organizational structures, such as turnover. According to participants, the COVID-19 global pandemic reduced some issues related to transportation as many districts had strategies to support distance learning. However, as far as hands-on learning and work experiences, a few participants noted their students did miss a lot of work opportunities. One participant, SE1, knew this was an issue, so she hosted a virtual career fair to keep supporting student opportunities online. Participants in the transition specialist group expressed positions, such as job coaches, were not being filled.

Summary and Conclusions

The present research aimed to explore transition professionals' collaborative and culturally responsive practices to support Black students with high incidence disabilities. There were multiple themes based on the focus groups and interviews, such as organizational factors, the factors beyond the control of transition professionals, and situations related to the practices used. Many of the participants were self-reflective during this study and commented that both areas need to be significantly improved. The convergence of themes and transition professional's recommendations all align into another narrative of how education perpetuates systemic issues related to race and inequitable organizational structures. Even though there were many stories of success and practices that are slightly different from the literature base, such as job placement awareness that considers the implications of workplace discrimination and microaggressions, there were participants that saw colorblindness as a means of support. Based on the tenants of critical race theory and participants from the study, not being intentional about the ways we support students does create better opportunities or truly prepare them for life after high school. The implications of successes and barriers of this study could move the field forward in understanding the importance of supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities and the need for better support for transition professionals to do their jobs.

Based on historical and contemporary issues of Black students, there are so many societal factors that impede on their education, which in turn could impact their postschool success. The U.S. Department of Education and Department of Labor has policies and reports around disability services and support for disadvantaged people, but often neglects how supports are being implemented. For example, in 2019 when the 2016–2020 Education Administration neglected equity-based programming and assessments for students with disabilities targeted at supporting racially and ethnically diverse students. The outcomes of complicit oversight of

departments and agencies that are the systems in which Black students with disabilities matriculate through have serious implications of their postschool education, employment, and independent living.

In the study, the participants provided details about some of the struggles Black students with high incidence disabilities go through. However, some of the details are systemic issues that Black people, in general, may face and some are the layered issues of being Black and having a disability. It is clear transition professionals and administrators must understand the ways they contribute to systemic issues or negative postschool outcomes of Black students with disabilities. By recognizing the responsibility transition professionals and administrators have on postschool outcomes of Black students with high incidence disabilities, it will become clear that Black students with high incidence disabilities should not be graduating with alterative diplomas, have undesirable work experiences (i.e., experiences that do not build on work-related skills), or not know how to access adult community resources and services. It is important to note that many transition professionals are using whatever is at their disposal to make sure they are doing what is positive for students, but they often do not have the resources or support at the organizational structure level to do their jobs adequately.

Like the cited literature and reports, transition professionals need more funding for their programs, more collaboration to build collective resources, and more training. The greatest take away from this study was that in order to improve outcomes for Black students with high incidence disabilities, transition professionals must be better prepared to confront the realities of what could happen to Black students after high school, if they are not intentionally prepared. At an organizational level, more support for transition professionals and attracting and retaining mentors or transition professionals that are relatable to Black students. There is also a need for technical assistance and policies that combine and financially support specific discipline

knowledge for transition (i.e., special education and adult services such as VR) and understanding of culturally responsive practices.

The typical/general practices during transition are important, but there should be more intentional research about Black students during transition. There are so many layers to students' identities where individualization is important, but more policies, research, and practices should focus how to individualize based on intersectional identities which takes a collective effort. By identifying the systems that Black students encounter and issues that are contributed to educational system flaws, future works should continually examine how to improve collaboration and support for Black students with disabilities with collaborative service models and models that provide economic and administrative support.

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Appendix A

Focus Group and Interview Protocols

Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I am looking forward to this discussion. First, I would like to give you a little background about the study. According to a brief by the Government Accountability Office (2015), the lack of collaboration by transition professionals could impact the eventual outcomes of students, specifically those of diverse cultural backgrounds. A group of students with the most adverse transition outcomes are Black students with high incidence disabilities, such as students with EBD, ADHD, and LD. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of transition professionals in supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities, focusing on two areas (a) collaboration and (b) culturally responsive practices. At the end of this focus group, you can receive a gift card thanking you for your participation. Remember to fill out the google form with your contact information, if you're interested in receiving a gift card, it will be emailed to you and dropped in the chat at the end of the focus group.

- Do you have any questions?
- Do you consent to have this focus group recorded? Also, any names used in this recording will be removed and de-identified.
- Please note that when recording, the chat feature is also included with the audio recording of zoom. This information may be used as part of the study data. Also, if you need to make comments or ask questions, feel free to use the chat feature. I will be posting each question in the chat to ensure everyone has access to the questions through multiple representations.
    - First let us discuss collaboration.

    - How would you describe collaboration?
- In this study, collaboration is a group process such as shared rules, norms, structures, and knowledge to achieve a common goal of working together to support transition outcomes of students. Also, please feel free to address how any of these situations has changed because of COVID-19.
    - Please explain your role in transition planning and the transition process?
    - How do you communicate that role with your team members?
    - How do you communicate that role with students? Does the communication of roles differ by students? If so, how?
        - What about families?
    - How do you all interact to create plans for Black students with high incidence disabilities? What are some of your experiences?
        - Does this differ from other disability groups? Does this look differ from other racial groups?
    - When collaborating to meet the service needs of Black students with high incidence disabilities, what are some of your strategies?
        - Planning
        - Assessment
        - Implementation
        - Evaluation
        - Placement
        - Follow-up
- Now let us discuss culturally responsive practices.

    - How would you describe the culturally responsive practices or even equitable practices?
- Culturally responsive practices in study are defined by the empowerment of students by providing support through understanding your students' culture and using equitable practices that can create systematic changes.
    - When you are working with Black students with high incidence disabilities, what do you think are important equitable practices that empowers them? Please describe your experiences.
    - Can you describe some of the times you have intentionally used culturally responsive practices during transition? If so, what are some of your strategies?
        - Planning
        - Assessment
        - Implementation
        - Evaluation
        - Placement
        - Follow-up
    - Do your culturally responsive practices differ between disability groups? If so how?
- Do any of you have any other comments or suggestions can you provide regarding collaborative or culturally responsive practices for transition teams on behalf Black students with high incidence disabilities?

Thank you for your time! Once focus groups are completed, we will be sending you an email with a summary of the focus group discussion for your review and feedback. Also, if you think

of something else that you would like to add to the discussion later on, please email browna35@mymail.vcu.edu. Again, thank you so much for your participation!

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I am looking forward to this discussion. As you know from our last discussion according to a brief by the Government Accountability Office (2015), the lack of collaboration by transition professionals could impact the eventual outcomes of students, specifically those of diverse cultural backgrounds. A group of students with the most adverse transition outcomes are Black students with high incidence disabilities, such as students with EBD, ADHD, and LD. Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of transition professionals in supporting Black students with high incidence disabilities, focusing on two areas (a) collaboration and (b) culturally responsive practices. At the end of this interview you can receive a gift card for your participation. Remember to update the google form with your contact information if there have been any changes since the last time we spoke.

Are you still interested in receiving a gift card?

Do you have any questions?

Do you consent to have this focus group recorded? Also, any names used in this recording will be removed and de-identified.

- Please note that when recording, the chat feature is also included with the audio recording of zoom. This information may be used as part of the study data. Also, if you need to make comments or ask questions, feel free to use the chat feature. I will be posting each question in the chat to ensure everyone has access to the questions through multiple representations.
- Also please feel free to address how any of these your collaboration or culturally responsive practices have changed because of COVID-19.
- What did you think about the focus group and some of the discussions?

- Last time we spoke during the focus group and other focus groups there are some topics to consider for collaboration:
    - Stakeholders having input
    - Working in the best interest of the student
    - Family and related services involvement
    - Timeliness
- In your own words, how would you use these practices stakeholder input, work in the best interest of the student, working with families and other related services, and timeliness if you would use them?
    - What do you think can improve when using collaborative practices to support Black students with high incidence disabilities?
        - Planning
        - Assessment
        - Implementation
        - Evaluation
        - Placement
        - Follow-up

In your focus group and other focus groups we also discussed topics of culturally responsive practices which are:

- Educating others about students serviced
- Empowerment
- Creating teachable moments
- Mentorship

In your own words, how would you use these practices educating others about students serviced, creating teachable moments for the students, empowerment, and mentorship to support a Black student with high incidence disabilities, if you would use them?

    - What do you think can improve when providing culturally responsive practices?
        - Planning
        - Assessment
        - Implementation
        - Evaluation
        - Placement
        - Follow-up

- Do any of you have any other comments or suggestions can you provide regarding collaborative or culturally responsive practices for transition teams on behalf Black students with high incidence disabilities?

Thank you for your time! Once focus groups are completed, we will be sending you an email with a summary of the focus group discussion for your review and feedback. Also, if you think of something else that you would like to add to the discussion later on, please email browna35@mymail.vcu.edu. Again, thank you so much for your participation!

Appendix B

Memoing and Debriefing

Focus Group ID:

Date:

Moderator:

1. Emerging themes? What discussions seemed the most reoccurring?

2. What about the themes in this group seemed different from the last focus group or literature?

3. What was said that seems unclear?

4. What was not said but observed during the focus group?

NOTES:

FOLLOW-UP:

Derived from Guest, G., Namey, E. E., & Mitchell, M. L. (2013). *Collecting qualitative data: A field manual for applied research*. Sage. & Maxwell, J. A. (2013). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (Vol. 41). Sage publications.

Appendix C

Research Subject Information and Consent Form

TITLE: Collaborative And Culturally Responsive Practices Of Transition Professionals To Support Black Students With High Incidence Disabilities

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the collaborative and culturally responsive practices of transition professionals when they support Black students with high incidence disabilities. We are specifically looking to interview special education teachers, transition specialists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors that work with transition students.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to verbally agree to participate after you have had all your questions answered and understand the study. Participation in this study will involve participating in one focus group interview session and a follow-up interview. The focus groups are predicted to about 90 minutes in length and the follow-up interview is predicted to be about 45 minutes. Focus groups will be scheduled at a time convenient for all group members and will be done virtually using Zoom meetings. The follow-up interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you and will also be conducted virtually.

Please wear headphones to participate or try to reduce the volume so that anyone else in your household cannot hear the answers of others in the group. Please remember that to maintain the

confidentiality of all participants by not sharing any comments made by participants outside of the focus group. You can ask questions during the focus group, but please refrain from using any last names if possible.

The focus group will be recorded. No identifying information will be included in the transcripts. Transcripts of these recordings will be provided to all participants for review and accuracy confirmation.

COMPENSATION

Compensation is available for participation in the focus group and additional compensation is available for participation in the follow-up interviews.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, now or in the future contact:

Amber Ruiz

browna35@mymail.vcu.edu

OR

LaRon Scott, Principal Investigator

scottla2@vcu.edu

Appendix D

Focus Group Note Sheet

Date: _____ Number of Participants: _____

Focus Group ID: _____ Moderator & Notetaker: _____

Q1. How would you describe collaboration?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q2. Please explain your role in transition planning and the transition process?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q3. How do you communicate that role with your team members?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q4. How do you communicate that role with students? Does the communication of roles differ by students?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q5. How do you all interact to create plans for Black students with high incidence disabilities? What are some of your experiences?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q6. When collaborating to meet the service needs of Black students with high incidence disabilities, what are some of your strategies?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q7. How would you describe the culturally responsive practices or even equitable practices?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q8. When you are working with Black students with high incidence disabilities, what do you think are important equitable practices that empowers them? Please describe your experiences.

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q9. Do your culturally responsive practices differ between disability groups? If so how?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes	Observations

Q10. Do any of you have any other comments or suggestions can you provide regarding collaborative or culturally responsive practices for transition teams on behalf Black students with high incidence disabilities? --- This is an ending question, so just note things that are stated.

Follow-up questions or notes:

Vita

Amber Brown Ruiz was born on June 4, 1993, in Hinds County, Mississippi. The University of Mississippi is where she earned her bachelor's degree in 2015. She received a Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Psychology program from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and became a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) in 2016. In the past, she worked as a mentor and counselor for students with disabilities.