Interagency Collaboration in Local Partnership Agreements: A Qualitative Case Study Identifying and Describing the Perception of Preparedness of Transition Specialists Working in WorkAbility I Projects

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Interagency Collaboration in Local Partnership Agreements: A Qualitative Case Study
Identifying and Describing the Perception of Preparedness of Transition Specialists
Working in WorkAbility I Projects
A Dissertation by
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Interagency Collaboration in Local Partnership Agreements: A Qualitative Case Study

Identifying and Describing the Perception of Preparedness of Transition Specialists

Working in WorkAbility I Projects

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I want to start by acknowledging that a dissertation is not an easy accomplishment and cannot be done without the support of those individuals who propel you forward and bring you to the end of your journey. First in my mind and heart, I would like to thank my Chair, Dr. Keith Larick. Through all the years you were always there, not waverin but only encouraging. You intuitively knew when to interject and when to allow me to grow through self-reliance. I recall my first interview with you at Brandman University, every commitment you made to me was kept. To reiterate, without your guidance, motivation, and immense knowledge this work could not have been accomplished.

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ABSTRACT

Interagency Collaboration in Local Partnership Agreements: A Qualitative Case Study
Identifying and Describing the Perception of Preparedness of Transition Specialists Working in WorkAbility I Projects

by Barbara Boyd

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WorkAbility I (WAI) projects as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, its purpose is to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in local partnership agreements (LPAs).

Methodology: This qualitative case study identified and described WAI transition specialists’ perception of transition programming and interagency collaboration. It employed the use of semi-structured interview questions consisting of open-ended questions. Using this methodology promoted the extraction of high quality information from the transition specialists.

Findings: Information received prepared transition specialists for their position. Cross agency professional development contributes to preparedness of transition specialists. The lack of interconnecting data systems across all agencies is a barrier to collaboration. Interagency collaboration coalesces all agencies into a group of like-minded members for the benefit of members. Networking and relationship building is the initial stimulus that creates a collaborative effort. Cross agency professional development is a critical element of LPAs. Local partnership agreements are critical to identifying lead agencies
and establishing roles and responsibilities. It is important to use several methods of communication to disperse information among service providers.

**Conclusion:** When transition specialists are not provided professional development, participation in programs with adult agency partners will not succeed. Local partnership agreements are critical to sharing of information and resources. Transition specialists who lack knowledge of education and education laws will fail at transition programming. Transition programming resulting in successful employment outcomes must connect with adult agency providers. Agreements between local partnerships that lack formal agreements that distinguish roles and responsibilities of the partnership will fail.

**Recommendations:** Create an evaluation tool for collecting quantitative data of the effectiveness of LPAs. Create a state level certification requirement for transition specialists in the preK-12 system. Data collected from LPAs must track the successful transition of individuals from special education to adult competitive integrated employment. Changes in policies and procedures must be brought about through stakeholder involvement and local level movement.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

As of 2016, individuals with disabilities represent the largest minority group in the United States at 12.8%, (WIC, 2019; Kraus, Lauer, Coleman, & Houtenville, 2018) yet, 62% are unemployed (McFarland et al., 2018). Today’s workforce demands that high school youth be fully prepared educationally with employable skills (Tomasello & Brand, 2018). All students need support to help develop the skills that lead to successful employment or educational endeavors after high school (Fazekas & Warren, 2010). The majority of adults experience employment as a way of obtaining financial independence, a way to connect socially and as a means of establishing personal contacts (Moore, Feist-Price, & Alston, 2002). Too often students are unable to make smooth transitions into today’s labor workforce; it is incumbent upon educational institutions to assist those in need of guidance in preparation for adult work and life (Fazekas & Warren, 2010). Employment affords the same benefits to individuals with disabilities as it does to those without disabilities. To the individual with disabilities it offers the chance to develop relationships, gain financial independence, improve self-esteem, and become productive adults (Siperstein, Parker, & Drascher, 2013).

For students with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD), strong supports and services can significantly impact the likelihood of a successful transition from school to employment (Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman, & Walther-Thomas, 2018). Interagency collaboration is a well-documented strategy for improving transition services and supports for students with disabilities as they transition to employment. As
noted by Plotner, Stinnett, Rose, and Ivester (2017) interagency collaboration adds to the successful transition from local educational agencies (LEAs) to competitive integrated employment (CIE) for individuals with ID/DD. Collaboration offers the mechanism for leveraging and streamlining key services and resources across agencies. Collaborative models of transition practices have been consistently thought to raise expectations that students with disabilities will have post-school outcomes that will lead to CIE (Grigal, Hart, & Migliore, 2011); however, employment for individuals with ID/DD continues to be far lower than employment of those without disabilities (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2017).

A recent collaborative project in California, the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint (Blueprint), is a state level interagency plan initiated to improve the employment outcomes for individuals with ID/DD (Leadership Workgroup, 2017). One action of the Blueprint requires that LEAs develop local partnership agreements (LPAs) in collaboration with local core state agency partners. Local partnership agreements are plans for interagency collaboration, that describe the structures and mechanisms for sharing resources of local partners who provide transition services to individuals with ID/DD. Within LEAs, transition specialists are responsible for developing LPAs as a component of transition programming. The creation of these LPAs, will effectively utilize the resources and services that will help support individuals with ID/DD in obtaining CIE.

With nearly 13% of the population comprised of individuals with disabilities (Kraus et al., 2018) coupled with the low employment rate for this population, there is a responsibility to provide services and supports. For students transitioning from high
school to adult agencies, it is critical that employment transition structures are put in place to promote the connection between these agencies. Working together is key for creating structures that will promote agencies’ collaborative efforts for addressing students with disabilities’ employment needs, resulting in positive outcomes for these transitioning students (Tilson, 2016).

**Background**

This section details the underlying basis that shapes this research study. First, it begins with employment background and history of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that have been underserviced and underemployed. Second, it proceeds to discuss the laws, and policies to increase employment and secondary transition planning. Third, it further describes California state agencies and the WorkAbility I (WAI) Program that offers secondary transition services. This section ends by presenting the Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming found in Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 (Taxonomy) (Kohler, Gothberg, & Coyle, 2017) as a means for identifying and describing the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists and to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs.

**Employment Background and History**

In 2016, the overall estimated population rate of people with disabilities in the United States was 12.8% with over half (51%) in the working-age range of 18–64 and 26% of those in the working-age range, are individuals with cognitive disabilities (Kraus et al., 2018). Employment of persons with disabilities lags far behind that of persons
without disabilities. Data reveals that 27% of 25–64 year-olds with disabilities were employed in 2015, in sharp contrast to 77% of those without disabilities (McFarland et al., 2018). Despite having a desire to do so, a large number of individuals with disabilities cannot find and keep competitive employment, (Cimera, Burgess, & Bedesem, 2014).

In the past, individuals with disabilities have been underserved and steered into sheltered workshops and subminimum wage jobs (Carter, Bendetson, & Guiden, 2018). This practice is changing as greater focus is on promoting pre-employment and employment development skills for improving the opportunity for CIE for those with ID/DD (Leadership Workgroup, 2017). Competitive Integrated Employment as defined under the Lanterman Act is the provision requiring at least minimum wage for individuals with disabilities, in a community work environment inclusive of individuals with and without disabilities (WIC, 2019).

**Laws and Policies to Increase Employment**

In the United States and California, improving the employment rate of individuals with ID/DD has become a priority with a focus on laws, funding, and resources that increase their opportunities for CIE. Despite public recognition of the need to improve employment for individuals with ID/DD. We find that those with ID/DD are provided little opportunity to obtain the most basic opportunities for employment that many Americans receive (Butterworth, Christensen, & Flippo, 2017). Recognizing that employment plays a critical part in improving the quality of life for individuals with ID/DD, both federal and state governments have invested billions of dollars in improving the employment opportunities for individuals with ID/DD to support their transition from
high school to the workforce (Carter et al., 2018; Siperstein et al., 2013; Wehman, Ketchum, West, Chan, & Luecking, 2015).

**IDEA and Transition Planning**

In 2016–17 school year nationwide, McFarland et al. (2018) noted that 6.7 million students were served under IDEA. The individualized education programs (IEP) is the vehicle through which students receive free and appropriate education (FAPE) and requires transition planning for students 16 years or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team. Improved transition planning can improve student postsecondary life and assist with assimilation into communities as viable participants. Successful transition is measured through the lens of postsecondary school outcomes i.e., independent living skills, postsecondary education, and engagement with the adult world. Those responsible for leading transition planning and service delivery are transition coordinators/specialists and secondary education teachers (Grossi & Thomas, 2016; IDEA, 2004; Trach, 2012).

**Secondary Transition**

The disparity in employment data between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities, speaks to the need to utilize the critical time that marks transition from school into adulthood with activities specifically planned to advance students toward their adult pathways (Wehman, 2013). The ongoing challenge of supporting youth with disabilities in gaining employment impacts everyone. Wehman (2013) states, transitioning from childhood through teen to adulthood can be onerous for anyone; however, for those with disabilities it can be especially burdensome with far greater challenges than those of their non-disabled counterparts. Services and supports greatly affect the student’s transition from the special education system (Povenmire-Kirk et al.,
Evidence-based transition programming models that incorporate collaboration have proven to be a predictor of positive post-school outcomes in both education and employment (Flowers et al., 2018; Plotner et al., 2017).

**California State Agencies Providing Secondary Transition Services**

Multiple California State agencies are responsible for providing services that support transition from school to the adult world of work. These services begin during the student’s pre-K education experience through the California Department of Education (CDE). One grant funded program offered by CDE, that is designed to improve the likelihood of future employment skills of recipients with disabilities is WorkAbility I. On a local level, WorkAbility I projects in LEAs provide the employment preparation needs of students with disabilities (CDE, 2019).

In addition to CDE, the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) provides vocational rehabilitation (VR) services offered to eligible youth 14 to 24. The purpose of these VR services is to augment the recipients’ skills and abilities to acquire and maintain part-time or full-time employment. Another agency, the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) regulates funds and orchestrates services throughout the state to 21 regional centers that provide services aimed at helping those with ID/DD to learn skills for everyday living.

**Interagency Collaboration and California State Agencies**

Recognizing that there are multiple government agencies charged with serving individuals with disabilities, federal regulations have recently attempted to coalesce its governmental policies with methods and procedures as they relate to services provided to those with disabilities (Carter et al., 2018; Grossi & Thomas, 2016). Interagency
collaboration among agencies can improve the likelihood of successful transition (Oertle, Sax, & Chesley, 2017). The degree, to which organizations participate in collaborations, reflects their commitment based upon their perceptions of what they stand to gain as opposed to what they have to give up (Kramer, Hoelscher, Nguyen, Day, & Cooper, 2017). In response to the California Employment First Policy, and to ensure opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities, the CDE, DOR, and DDS joined together on a state level to provide a roadmap for increasing the opportunity for individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities to engage in and prepare for competitive integrated employment.

As part of their interagency plan, a Blueprint was finalized in May 2017, marking the commitment from three state departments for entering into a collaborative project that is hoped to improve the employment outcome for individuals with ID/DD (Leadership Workgroup, 2017). Interagency collaboration offers a means for working effectively by streamlining services and maximizing resources. As the number of organizations, both for profit and not-for-profit, see the need to pool resources, interagency collaboration is seen as the way to make this happen (Kramer et al., 2017). On a local level, the Blueprint requires LEAs with WAI projects, DOR offices, and regional centers to form interagency collaborations known as local partnership agreements (LPAs). These interagency collaborations document the way WAI projects, DOR district offices, and regional centers, along with community partners, will collaborate to provide seamless arrays of transition services for students between the ages of 16–22 with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
Social Theory and the Application in the Study of Interagency Collaboration

When looking to explain and analyze phenomena, social theory provides concepts for understanding human interaction. Harrington (2005) defines social theory as “it encompasses ideas about how societies change and develop, about methods of explaining social behavior, about power and social structure, class, gender and ethnicity, modernity and civilization, revolution and utopias, and numerous other concepts and problems in social life” (p.1). Multiple social theories that explain behaviors, activities, and relationships exist, however; the four social theories of social network, structuration, conflict, and activity (social theory of learning) are discussed further as they exist within the study of interagency collaboration.

Evidence-Based Practices in Secondary Transition

Providing professional development that focuses on evidence-based transition services can help states and local districts to increase the capacity of staff as they strive to deliver transition services to students with disabilities (Mazzotti, Rowe, Simonsen, Boaz, & VanAvery, 2018). The expectation of CIE for every student (Whittenburg et al., 2018) must be the goal of all California educators. This can be accomplished by providing students and families information regarding CIE and the opportunities that exist to help students better prepare for and participate in a work place with other adults with and without disabilities (Employment First Policy, 2013).

Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0

Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 (Taxonomy) offers a model for transition programming that specifically identifies interagency collaboration as one of the elements for successful transition delivery (Kohler, 1996; Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler,
& Coyle, 2016). As part of the technical assistance structure to ensure quality transition services offered by the National Technical Assistance Center for Secondary Transition (NTACT), Taxonomy is widely accepted in the field of secondary transition. Taxonomy provides a list of elements for establishing interagency collaboration that are present in an evidenced-based collaborative framework. The eleven elements are interagency coordinating body, identification of a lead agency, designation of each agency’s contact person, formal interagency agreements, clear articulation of roles and responsibilities, shared understanding of educational and agency policies and procedures, minimization of systems barriers to collaboration, establishment of methods of communications among all service providers, established procedures of data sharing among agencies, professional development across agencies, and annual evaluation of interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures.

For purposes of this study, the collaborative framework of Taxonomy will be referred to as Kohler’s Collaborative Transition Programming. The establishment of collaboration between LEAs and adult agencies provides transition services that positively affect the post-school outcomes of students (Morningstar, Bassett, Kochhar-Bryant, Cashman, & Wehmeyer, 2012).

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Improving the employment rate of individuals with ID/DD has become a priority with a focus on laws, funding, and resources that increase their opportunities for CIE (Siperstein, Heyman, & Stokes, 2014). Collaboration among agency staff has long been recognized as an approach that will improve the postsecondary outcomes for individuals with ID/DD (Oertle et al., 2017). As indicated by Flowers et al. (2018), interagency
collaboration is critical as an indicator of postsecondary employment in students with disabilities. It should be included in transition programming of all individuals requiring adult postsecondary services to support employment after leaving high school.

Despite the investment of billions of dollars, in recent decades, aimed at increasing employment for adults with ID/DD, this population has experienced little growth in employment (Siperstein et al., 2014). Investing this level of funding demonstrates the importance of employment given that individuals with disabilities receive the same benefits from employment as those without disabilities. These benefits are the opportunity to gain financial independence, to socialize, and to increase their confidence in their own self-worth (Siperstein et al., 2014). Successful transition from the special education, pre-K system is measured by the student’s level of engagement in the adult world of work, postsecondary education, and independent living (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015).

With numerous programs provided from multiple state agencies, providing services that are designed in collaboration across agencies is an effective and well needed way to improve the employment outcome of individuals with ID/DD as they begin to embrace the adult workforce. Interagency collaboration provides transition services that are appropriate, well-sequenced, and meet the unique needs of the student and can improve transition outcomes. As indicated by Flowers et al. (2018), interagency collaboration is critical as an indicator of postsecondary employment in students with disabilities. No single agency can address all of the transition needs of youth; therefore, consistent service delivery is best achieved through partnerships across agencies (Federal Partners, 2015). The problem is that students with disabilities continue to have
difficulties transitioning from high school to competitive employment because of a lack of interagency collaboration between schools, communities and adult service providers (Taylor, Morgan, & Callow-Heusser, 2016).

**Research Gap**

In response to the despairing employment data for individuals with ID/DD (Wehman, 2013), multiple California State agencies have worked in concert to create guidance for promoting interagency collaboration on the local level. This interagency collaboration will result in documentation that spells out the degree of responsibility and roles each local partner will play in providing a system change for service delivery for individuals with ID/DD, with the goal of increasing their opportunities to receive competitive integrated employment (Leadership Workgroup, 2017). As part of a statewide push to improve the opportunities for individuals with ID/DD to receive competitive integrated employment, WAI transition specialists, have the responsibility of developing LPAs. Local partnership agreements are considered the documentation of interagency collaboration. Although required to provide transition programming and to develop LPAs, transition specialists have not received the needed training on how to include concrete practices for development of interagency collaboration. Transition services-focused training is critical to empowering secondary transition specialists with the knowledge and skills needed to implement and maintain effective programming and concrete practice (Morningstar & Benitez, 2013).

It is well proven that interagency collaboration is an evidence-based predictor of improved education and employment (Flowers et al., 2018; Timmons, Hall, Bose, Wolfe, & Winsor, 2011). However, transition specialists are not formally trained in how to
create interagency collaborations (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2008; Whittenburg et al., 2018). Success and effectiveness of LPAs require identifying if transition specialists are prepared to include evidence-based interagency collaboration components in developing LPAs.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, it is the purpose to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs.

**Research Questions**

1. How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

2. How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

**Significance of the Problem**

Most policy makers, providers, families, advocates and individuals with ID/DD recognize that improving employment outcomes for individuals with ID/DD is a priority and brings with it multiple benefits, yet increasing work opportunities has left much to be desired. When comparing policy to practice the reality of unrealized competitive integrated employment outcomes is exposed creating a point in which crucial decisions must be made in the field, to correct this disparity (Butterworth, Hiersteiner, Engler,
Bershadsky, & Bradley, 2015). Research conducted by Timmons et al. (2011) shows that when policy and interagency collaboration coexists, competitive integrated employment outcomes improve, for individuals with ID/DD. Transition services that include interagency collaboration are one of the predictors of successful employment outcome for individuals with disabilities (Kohler et al., 2016; Test et al., 2009); however, transition specialists report that they feel ill prepared to deliver them. Consequently, transition specialists who are unprepared to plan and provide transition services have the potential of greatly impacting the quality of transition services the student receives, and significantly impact employment outcomes (Morningstar & Benitez, 2013). A study conducted by Morningstar and Benitez (2013) showed that there is a relationship between the frequency in which secondary special educators perform transition practices and their preparation. These results showed that those with formal transition coursework and high rates of professional development showed a higher likelihood of regularly implementing transition practice. This reiterates the importance of training transition specialists in the use of transition interventions and services.

If WAI transition specialists are required to develop LPAs with the intent of improving the collaboration between LEAs and adult agencies that provide services for individuals with ID/DD, then the quality of these LPA’s relate to transition specialists’ preparedness. Preparedness is closely aligned to the transition specialist’s skill in using evidence-based practices in the delivery of transition services and how often these transition activities are employed (Oertle et al., 2017). Taxonomy is a model of effective transition programming documenting the elements that make up collaborative transition programming.
Including these elements in transition programming, greatly increases the likelihood that transition specialists are prepared to develop LPAs that are grounded in concrete effective practices. Using Taxonomy, this study will identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists. In addition, it will explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs. It is expected that the results from this study will help to provide a foundation from which to offer training and professional development that can be used to develop more cohesive LPAs and improve the post-school outcomes for students. As noted by Mazzotti et al. (2018) providing on-going professional development increases the likelihood that transition specialists will practice effective transition services with fidelity over sustained time. Identifying and describing the transition specialists’ preparedness will prove beneficial in improving collaborative transition programming provided for individuals with ID/DD. It is expected that this improvement will result in more effective transition services that will lead to improved opportunities to prepare for and engage in CIE for individuals with ID/DD.

**Definitions**

Definitions of terms referenced throughout this study are defined as follows:

**Activity theory.** A social theory that analyzes human interactions and their outcomes through the use of their tools and artifacts (Hashim & Jones, 2007).

**California Department of Developmental Services (DDS).** Provides services and supports to individuals with intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism and related conditions through developmental centers (in the process of being closed).
one community facility and 21 nonprofit organizations called regional centers (DDS, 2019).

**California Department of Education (CDE).** Provides oversight of the state's public school system for more than seven million children and young adults in more than 10,000 schools (CDE, 2019).

**California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR).** Is authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the 2014 WIOA to increase the quality and quantity of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities (DOR, 2019).

**California Employment First Policy.** Established in statute an Employment First Policy (WIC, 2019).

**Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).** Full-time or part-time work performed by a person with disability within an integrated setting. Wages are at least minimum wage or higher and wages and benefits are at a rate comparable to workers without disabilities performing the same tasks (Federal Partners, 2015; Sulewski et al., 2017).

**Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint (Blueprint).** A California proactive interagency plan utilizing available resources to increase opportunities for individuals with ID/DD to prepare for and engage in CIE (Leadership Workgroup, 2017).

**Conflict theory.** A social theory that embraces disagreement and utilizes conflict to engage authentic discussion and promote genuine change that results in new agreements, collaborative activities and rules. Conflict theory is depicted with struggle and accompanying change. As a result, change is assured, abrupt, chaotic and potent (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).
Cross-agency professional development provided. This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy calls attention to the need for all agencies to provide training specifically designed to cross train in their areas of focus (Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, & Coyle, 2016).

Data shared among agencies via established procedures (with appropriate release of information and confidentiality). This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy encompasses establishing procedures and coordinating the release of information (Kohler et al., 2016).

Designated transition contact person for each agency. This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy states the importance of having one clearly defined person who is to be contacted within each agency (Kohler et al., 2016).

Employment First Policy. This policy offers a framework for systems change that believes that all citizens should have access to community based employment opportunities and be integrated members of that community (ODEP, 2019).

Established methods of communication among all service providers. This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy addresses the need for the transition community to establish multiple methods of communication and information sharing across agencies (Kohler et al., 2016).

Formal interagency agreement(s). This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy identifies the need to document the commitment of agencies to perform specific duties and agree on procedures that create smooth transition (Kohler et al., 2016).
**Integrated employment.** Defined as work paid directly by employers at the greater of minimum or prevailing wages with commensurate benefits, occurring in a typical work setting where the employee with a disability interacts or has the opportunity to interact continuously with co-workers without disabilities, has an opportunity for advancement and job mobility, and is preferably engaged full-time (ODEP, 2019).

**Interagency collaboration.** A collaboration where all members, coming from different agencies are viewed as co-partners, solving problems common to all. All share leadership duties, where no one individual or party has the final authorization or approval (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures are evaluated annually.** This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy refers to establishing a formal evaluative methodology by which team members from LEAs and adult agencies assess, on a yearly basis, their joint policy and procedures for conducting activities that improve transition (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).** A federal law that mandates services to students with disabilities. It administers how the law provides special education and related services to eligible infants, children and youth with disabilities (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

**Interagency coordinating body that includes students, parents, educators, service providers, community agencies, postsecondary institutions, employers, and other relevant stakeholders.** One of the elements that make up an interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy. It speaks to the need to include all
stakeholders when transition planning and coordinating resources and services (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Intellectual disability.** Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term “intellectual disability” was formerly termed “mental retardation.” (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

**Kohler’s taxonomy for collaborative transition programming.** Also referred to as Kohler’s Collaborative Framework for Interagency Collaboration. Offers a model for transition programming that specifically identifies eleven elements of interagency collaboration found in the collaborative framework for successful transition (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Kohler’s taxonomy for transition programming.** Referred to as Kohler’s Taxonomy or Taxonomy, is a scheme of classifications that provides a framework for designing educational programs that reflect effective secondary transition practices (Kohler, 1996).

**Lanterman Act (LA).** California law that is enacted for the purpose of providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities throughout their lifetime. These services and support are provided from an array of agencies namely, federal, state, county, local government, private business and even volunteers (Lanterman Act, 1977).

**Lead agency identified.** An element identified in Kohler’s Taxonomy for interagency collaborative framework. It speaks to the need to recognize the individual
and the agency that will take the lead over the entire group regarding specifically identified projects, tasks, and services (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Local educational agency (LEA).** Refers to a school district, a county office of education, a nonprofit charter school participating as a member of a special education local plan area, or a special education local plan area (CDE, 2019).

**Local partnership agreements (LPA).** Articulate the ways in which local partner agencies serving students with ID/DD will work together to streamline service delivery, engage their communities, and increase CIE opportunities for individuals with ID/DD (Leadership Workgroup, 2018).

**Roles and responsibilities clearly articulated.** This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy refers to describing the parts that team members play and the position team members take in the transition process (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Shared understanding of educational and agency policy and procedures.** This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy refers to knowledge of the agency policy and procedures that each member must have (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Sheltered workshop.** An institution providing employment opportunity for individuals with developmentally, physically, or mentally impaired. They typically can be state, local, or private organizations (SSA, 2019).

**Social network.** When engaging in interagency collaboration, the social network theory informs the analysis of strengths, and importance of relationships between the
social networks within the organizations. It can inform how the network functions and how to interact within it (Cross et al., 2009).

**Social theory.** Provides ideas as to how societies develop, highlighting their behavior as it relates to the concepts and problems of social life such as, class, ethnicity, revolution, utopias and civilization, just to name a few (Harrington, 2005).

**Structuration theory.** A social theory that provides a theoretical foundation from which to analyze interagency collaborations as social systems that transform due to changes in structures, norms, resources, cultural values, and rules of the collaboration members’ organizations. It is beneficial to use structuration theory to view and study the ways in which continuous communication helps to manage the incompatibility between participation and efficiency (Kramer et al., 2017).

**Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized.** This element from interagency collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy refers to the establishment of procedures within the transition community to assist teachers and service providers in streamlining services and providing greater ease for students to access and progress through the transition process (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Transition.** Movement from one phase of life into another; in the context of this research, movement of adolescents with disabilities from school into their next environments as young adults in the community (Leadership Workgroup, 2018).

**Transition services.** Activities offered for students with disabilities created for the purpose of enhancing the movement from one phase of life into another in the areas of school academic proficiency, post-secondary education, and vocational education, along with adult and independent living services (GPO, 2019).
**Transition specialist.** School personnel designated with the task of ensuring various coordinated efforts involving transition education are executed, as required by IDEA (Morningstar & Clark, 2003).

**WorkAbility I (WAI).** A competitive grant controlled by CDE that provides pre-employment training for high school students coupled with work experience placement for those in special education. Additional services offered are for those transitioning from school to work, living on their own and needing continuing education (CDE, 2019).

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).** The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), where its goal was to provide individuals with disabilities the tools to obtain employment, seek economic independence coupled with integration into the work environment (WIOA, 2019).

**Delimitations**

The study was delimited to three WAI transition specialists who are members of the California State WAI Advisory.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into four remaining chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter II is a review of literature regarding employment for the ID/DD population, collaborative interagency efforts to improve employment outcomes through laws, policies, secondary transition, the WAI program, and LPAs. It will present WAI transition specialist’s role in developing LPAs, using evidence-based secondary transition programming and the use of Taxonomy for identifying the preparedness of transition specialists. Chapter III elucidates the research design and the methodology used in this
study. This chapter includes the population, sample, and data gathering procedures that were used to analyze the data that were gathered. Chapter IV presents, analyzes, and provides a discussion of the findings of the study. Chapter V contains the summary of the study, which includes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations and actions for further research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

We see the future not as something out of our control, but as something we can shape for the better through concerted and collective effort. —President Barack Obama

Chapter II presents literature review covered in four sections, on the topics that form this research study. The first section will give employment background about individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD), substantiating a history of underservice and unemployment. It will present federal, state, and local legislation and policies aimed at bolstering opportunities for competitive integrated employment (CIE) for individuals with ID/DD. The second section will address secondary transition and the California state agencies involved in providing transition services that support pre-employment skills development for individuals with ID/DD, including the WorkAbility I (WAI) program. It will explain the benefits of transition, along with the essential role transition specialists play in transition programming (i.e., design and implementation). Section three will examine interagency collaboration using social theory as a lens for understanding how agencies interact to form collaborative groups for the purpose of reaching desired outcomes. Section three will conclude by introducing the concept of the local partnership agreement (LPA) as a written documentation that memorialize interagency collaboration. It will focus on the WAI transition specialists’ pivotal role in developing LPAs. Section four will address the element of interagency collaboration as a key component of an evidence-based transition programming model. Chapter II will conclude by presenting Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming found in Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 (Taxonomy) as a means for identifying and describing transition specialists’ perception of preparedness for interagency collaboration in the context of
secondary transition and exploring the transition specialists’ perception regarding the elements of interagency collaboration in LPAs. It is anticipated that findings from this study will help to develop cohesive LPAs across all areas. As a means for organization, a synthesis matrix was created to give a quick overview of the research topics presented in the review of the literature in this chapter (Appendix A). Additionally, to clarify, Figure 1 below, shows a graphic representation of the topics covered in the literature review.

*Figure 1.* A visual of the topics covered in the literature review.
Employment Background

To understand the current employment environment, one should look at previous years to establish trends that may be developing. In 2016, the overall population rate for individuals with disabilities in the United States, was 12.8% with over half in the working-age range of 18–64 years old (Kraus et al., 2018). Of these individuals with disabilities, 26% are individuals with cognitive disabilities (Kraus et al., 2018). See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Employment data for individuals with disabilities in the United States.

McFarland et al. (2018) reports that for individuals with disabilities in ages 18–64, the employment rate is 36% as compared with those without disabilities in the same age range, where the rate is 77%. See Figure 3 for the 2016 employment rate for working age range 18–64 below.
Figure 3. The employment rate of individuals with disabilities in the United States in 2016.

The employment to population ratio in 2018 was 19.1%, and 18.7% in 2017 for individuals with disabilities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Individuals without disabilities age range 16–64 employment to population ratio is 74.0% in 2018 and 73.5% in 2017. Two observations being noted by the data are that people with disabilities are less likely to acquire employment and the phenomenon is only slightly getting better.

When employed, individuals with disabilities earn only two-thirds of the annual income of individuals without disabilities or $22,047 in contrast to $32,479. Figure 4 depicts the annual employment income below.
Figure 4. Annual employment income of individuals with disabilities compared to the employment annual income of individuals without disabilities in the working age range of 18–64, in the United States in 2018.

As reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2019) the older the populations (65 and older) the lower the employment to population ratio irrespective of any disability and for those with disabilities it has become three-fold. As it relates to part-time employment, those with disabilities are employed at 31% versus non-disabled 17% of the total employed. This compares favorably with self-employed disabled persons at 10% of the total employed disabled workforce, in contrast to those who are non-disabled self-employed at 6.1% of the non-disabled workforce.

**History of Underservice and Unemployment**

For most Americans, employment is the gateway to a successful lifestyle, providing self-reliance, self-confidence and independence (Butterworth et al., 2017). Even with this recognized benefit, the employment of persons with disabilities lags far behind persons without disabilities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019) documenting that even though individuals with disabilities desire to work competitively within their communities, it is difficult for them to find and keep employment (Cimera et al., 2014;
Hart Barnett & Crippen, 2014; Migliore & Domin, 2011). Historically, there have been low expectations for providing integrated employment for individuals with ID/DD; resulting in this group being underserved and steered into sheltered workshops (Moore et al., 2002). Despite public outcry for change, there continues to be little increase in the number of individuals with ID/DD participating in integrated employment (Carter et al., 2018; Wehman et al., 2018). We find that those with ID/DD are provided little opportunity to obtain the most basic opportunities for employment that many Americans receive (Butterworth et al., 2017). Recognizing that employment plays a critical part in improving the quality of life for individuals with ID/DD, both federal and state governments have invested billions of dollars in improving the employment opportunities for individuals with ID/DD to support their transition from high school to the workforce (Carter et al., 2018; Siperstein et al., 2013; Wehman et al., 2015).

In addition to providing work for individuals with ID/DD, much attention is being placed on the settings in which these individuals work. There are notably fewer individuals working in sheltered workshops today, yet this decrease has not carried over to an increase in those working in competitive employment settings (Carter et al., 2018; Siperstein et al., 2013). Siperstein et al. (2013) conducted a study documenting the employment situation of working-aged adults with intellectual disabilities in which a sampling of 1,017 parents or guardians of adult children (21 years of age or older) with ID/DD out of approximately 341,000 households screened by Gallup, revealed an upsettingly low employment rate for adults with ID and an incomprehensibly low number who are in the labor force. This study concluded that until meaningful ways are
developed for incorporating adults with ID/DD into the workforce, the employment outcome for these individuals will continue to look inauspicious.

Competitive integrated employment is seen as a way of leveling the playing field by offering those with ID/DD the opportunity to acquire a fulfilling adult life. Given the benefits that CIE brings, it should be the first consideration for individuals with ID/DD; however, in reality, this is not common practice. Compared to individuals without disabilities, data shows that individuals with ID are far less likely to be employed in CIE, and continue to show high levels of unemployment despite the recent changes in federal and state policy (Grigal et al., 2011). Additionally, for those individuals with disabilities that are fortunate to find work, they typically report reduced pay rates and hours (Butterworth & Migliore, 2015). Competitive integrated employment is work with individuals without disabilities, in the community, making at least minimum wage, while being afforded the same benefits and opportunities for promotion (OSERS, 1983).

According to Butterworth et al. (2017) the research reiterates, employment outcomes of the ID/DD population fall far behind those without intellectual and physical impairments. Along this same area Test et al., (2009) reports that successful post-school outcomes for students with disabilities have shown very little improvement. The lack of improvement points to three deficient areas as culprits, namely: the employment rate of students is low, the absence of student graduation, and the most damaging outcome of all, the stunted rates of employment upon exiting secondary education, which puts these students on a path of economic despair, and possible incarceration (Noonan, Erickson, & Morningstar, 2012). However, as stated by Wehman and Yasuda (2005) students who
attend advanced education have a far greater chance of being successful in their careers and employment opportunities.

Employment for this population in comparison to those without disabilities, is very low, furthermore, there are high levels of unemployment and underemployment for this group. When it comes to postsecondary school education the students are still least likely to be in school and are the least likely to continue (Grigal et al., 2011). Since 2014, a social movement has started to correct this injustice. There is a direct movement to consider CIE as the first option for individuals with ID/DD with multiple federal and state agencies creating laws and policies to provide CIE as a choice. The mutual benefits of competitive employment are so vast that employers, government, local community and other stakeholders are constantly striving to push for continued advancement in this area. Employers notice the positive influences on the work environment, manifested by individuals with disabilities and how their involvement adds betterment to the company as a whole (Carter et al., 2018).

Young adults with ID/DD not working or working and making low wages continues to be a problem even today. Consequently, a strategy was developed by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) to create a game plan with the sole purpose of changing this dilemma by examining configurations, policies and the exchanging of ideas that govern the interaction of state agencies, parents, and all other stakeholders. The AIDD initiative offered ideas and plans that reflected the critical significance of working together with the intention and attention on a collaboration that brings stakeholders together from the various agencies of local, state and federal government (Butterworth et al., 2017).
In a systematic review of the literature reporting on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, Lindsay, Cagliostrò, Albarico, Mortaji, and Karon (2018) synthesized the results of 6,176 studies with an end result of 39 articles, based upon a selection criteria of articles that were peer reviewed, had a sample involving individuals with disabilities, and concentrated on competitive employment. Although the study recommends more research to explore ways benefits vary by type of disability, industry, and job, findings from this study identified multiple benefits resulting from hiring individuals with disabilities. The identified benefits were increased profits, competitive edge, inclusive work culture, and ability awareness. Increased profits were demonstrated in cost-effectiveness, turnover and retention, reliability and punctuality, employee loyalty, and company image. The competitive edge was seen through diverse customers, customer loyalty and satisfaction, innovation, productivity, work ethic, and safety. Individuals with disabilities received the benefits of a higher standard of living and greater earnings, improved self-confidence, extended societal connections and a feeling of community.

**Laws and Policies to Increase Employment**

This section describes the laws and policies initiated to increase the opportunity for employment for individuals with disabilities. These laws and policies extend from early provisions of support, and services in the pre-K through 12 educational system to interconnection during the secondary transition period—when plans are followed to buttress students’ movement into their postsecondary goals. During the period of secondary transition services, educational institutions coordinate activities for a student with disabilities.
**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that mandates services to students with disabilities. Reauthorized in 2004, IDEA administers how the law provides special education and related services to eligible infants, children, and youth with disabilities. The IDEA mandates transition planning to support the furtherance of education, employment, and independent living for students transitioning to adulthood, for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services. This language includes the requirement for collaboration with other agencies that have responsibilities for providing transition services (Grossi & Thomas, 2016; IDEA, 2004; Trach, 2012) and is done with the consent of the parent (IDEA, 2004). A framework has been structured to create, build, and promote community transition teams that assist with the new member’s development and orientation, goal setting, the preservation of the team, and design and formation of a mission statement (Noonan et al., 2012). One of the tools created identifies five steps to transition team development, (a) team building, (b) assessing the needs of the team, (c) creating a program, (d) executing the program, and (e) assessing the program. Knowing the essential features of effective interagency agreements promotes smoother communication and interactions.

An interagency agreement as defined by Crane, Gramlich, and Peterson (2004) is a plan that describes the commitment of school, community, and family to share the responsibility for students’ learning and to collaborate in achieving positive adult outcomes for youth with disabilities. Although these agreements are mandated by federal statutes under IDEA, the constituents of these federal and state agreements vary.
considerably. To assist teams in putting interagency agreements into action, Crane et al. (2004) provided a list of the essential features of effective interagency agreements. Listed below is Table 1 detailing the essential features of effective interagency agreements.

Table 1

*Essential Features of Effective Interagency Agreements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Features of Effective Interagency Agreements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Responsibility for design, revision, and implementation of the agreement by participating agency staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Commitment in the development and implementation of the agreement by participating agency directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Input from direct service staff in the design, revision, and implementation of the agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regular opportunities to meet, discuss ideas, and develop relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Willingness to learn from each other and see how each can benefit from the mission of the other organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Active involvement in strategic planning by participating agency representatives</td>
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<td>• Utilization of data to determine the impact and outcomes resulting from the agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Utilization of data for strategic planning and continuous improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dissemination of the agreement to direct service practitioners</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technical assistance provided to direct service practitioners regarding implementation of the agreement</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Adapted from NCSET Issue Brief (2004).

Noonan et al. (2012) reports that the function of transition teams is to create programs; assess and identify the working efforts of the team in an attempt to augment the current status of services received by students with disabilities. Under IDEA, a pathway to employment is supported through transition services included on the IEP and based on each student’s strengths, preferences, and interest (IDEA, 2004). Through
transition planning students with disabilities have the opportunity to identify their goals for employment. Local school staff play a role in coordinating with adult agencies to create the transition teams responsible for the student’s transition to adult life.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

The federal law, WIOA, similar to IDEA, governs the provision of transition services aimed at increasing employment opportunities for students with disabilities. This law specifically targets the provision of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services for students who are of transition age, which is determined to be between ages 16 to 22. Reauthorized in 2014 from the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the WIOA increases VR services that are provided to individuals who are of transition age (Grossi & Thomas, 2016; WIOA, 2019). With a particular focus on promoting the opportunities and preparation of youth, ages 14 through 24, with disabilities to enter the workforce, the VR services are administered through the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR, 2019). Pre-employment transition services for youth ages 16 to 24 are one of the VR services administered through the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) on a local level. As mandated by WIOA, VR agencies and LEAs must work together in unprecedented ways to prepare individuals with ID/DD for CIE opportunities.

**Employment First Policy**

President Barrack Obama in 2013 expanded the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA) to guarantee individuals with disabilities the same opportunities as others do to move from school to the workplace and to have access to transportation that will get them to work (Siperstein et al., 2014; Sulewski et al., 2017). The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) promoted the Employment First Policy
as a result of the changes to ADA. This policy offers a framework for systems change that prioritizes access to increased community-based, integrated employment opportunities for all citizens including individuals with significant disabilities. In the Employment First Policy community-based, integrated employment is defined as wages paid directly by employers, for preferably full time employment, at minimum wage or higher with corresponding benefits, where both employees with and without disabilities always have the opportunity to interact and there is equal opportunity for advancement and job mobility; competitive integrated employment, is the first consideration (ODEP, 2019). Strong interagency collaborations on state and federal levels, focusing on integrated employment as the preferred employment outcome for individuals with the most significant disabilities have resulted from the Employment First Policy (Federal Partners, 2015)

**California Employment First Policy**

In 2013, following the federal Employment First Policy, the California Governor, signed into law the California Employment First Policy for the purpose of providing ID/DD working age individuals the right to equal opportunities for competitive integrated employment (Employment First Committee, 2016). This act made California the 12th state to institute an employment first policy into law (Employment First Committee, 2016). The California Employment First Policy, much the same as the federal policy, requires that when planning adult services for individuals with ID/DD, first consideration is given to employment as an option regardless of the severity of their disability. It prioritizes work and places its importance in the Lanterman Act, requiring that the
developmental services system makes every effort to give access to regular pay through regular jobs as an option for people with ID/DD (Committee, 2016).

**The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act**

Unique to California, the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act directly mandates the provision of services to individuals with disabilities as an entitlement (Lanterman Act, 1977). Its purpose is to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout their entire lifetime. This commitment was made on behalf of California, which also provided services along with needed support through the aid of various governmental agencies such as, federal, state, county, and local; along with volunteers and community businesses.

In the Lanterman Act, individuals with disabilities, from birth to adulthood, are entitled to the habilitation services provided locally by regional centers. The California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) administers funds and services through 21 statewide regional centers. The DDS contracts with regional centers to provide habilitation and transition services to individuals with ID/DD. Services provided through regional centers assist individuals with ID/DD in acquiring and maintaining employment.

**Home and Community Based Services Settings Final Rule**

The Home and Community Based Services Settings Final Rule establishes the belief in comprehensive person-centered planning that includes employment. The Home and Community Based Services Settings Final Rule along with the WIOA of 2014 prioritizes integrated competitive employment outcomes as the preferred option for service delivery intended to address access to quality employment outcomes (Carter et al., 2018). Given this priority, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
issued the Home and Community Based Services Settings Final Rule requiring the integration of customized services to support individuals with ID/DD into the community by March 2022 while meeting their individual needs. It requires the utilization of the person-centered planning process to ensure that services be individually tailored; that wherever services are provided, they be integrated into the community; and that California, the same as all states, submit a plan for CMS approval specifying the detailed plan for transitioning the monitoring services to ensure integration by the deadline date of March 2022 (SCDD, 2014).

**IDEA and Secondary Transition**

According to McFarland et al. (2018), 6.7 million students were served under IDEA in 2016/17 school year. More specifically, McFarland et al. (2018) noted that 14% of all students in public school nationwide, in the 2016–17 school year, received special education services. Students with disabilities, ages 3–21 account for a large portion of all students in public school nationwide. Additionally, there were 3,123,524 student ages 12–21 receiving special education services in the United States in 2013 (Federal Partners, 2015).

These students receive educational supports and services through an individualized education program (IEP), to access free appropriate public education (FAPE). With the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 there has been a focus on the importance of providing transition services to individuals with disabilities, examining the methods of transition service delivery, and defining transition planning as a way of empowering individuals to take on adult life and become integrated into their communities as independent adults. The IDEA mandates that the IEP to be in place when
the student turns 16 or younger if determined by the IEP team, must provide for transition planning. As reported by school staff completing the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, transition planning activities were provided for 75% of students age 14, 84% of students age 15, 91% of students age 16, 96% of students age 17, and 96% of students age 18 in 2001–02 school year (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). For individuals in the preK-12 system, it is important to receive instruction in transition related services that prepares them to live fulfilled adult lives (Blanchett, 2001).

Transition planning under IDEA includes the coordination of transition services that measure the improvement of academic and functional achievement of students, while students move into post-school settings (IDEA, 2004) this is interpreted to mean the requirement for collaboration with other agencies that may be responsible for providing transition services (Grigal et al., 2011; Grossi & Thomas, 2016). Successful transition from the special education system is measured by post-school outcomes that show the student’s level of engagement in the adult world of work, postsecondary education, and independent living (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015). Collaborative models of transition practices along with requirements and standards have been consistently thought of as means for raising expectations that students with disabilities will have postsecondary outcomes that will lead to CIE (Grigal et al., 2011).

Students with ID/DD have been receiving transition services for over 30 years, this has been done through IEPs ensuring that based on their needs after school, transition services through assessments are available to assist successful postsecondary outcomes. Through this approach, we see that proper transition planning can be a great aid to students’ postsecondary education and employment success (Grigal et al., 2011).
In the United States, transition coordinators/specialists and secondary education teachers are typically the school staff who are responsible for transition planning and service delivery (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009). Language in IDEA mandates transition planning for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services includes the requirement for collaboration with other agencies that have responsibilities for providing transition services (Grossi & Thomas, 2016; Trach, 2012; IDEA, 2004) and is done with the consent of the parent (IDEA, 2004).

**Secondary Transition**

The need to utilize the critical time that marks transition from school into adulthood with activities specifically planned to move students toward their adult pathways is reiterated by the disparity in employment data between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities (Wehman, 2013). It’s apparent that assisting youth with disabilities in gaining employment is an ongoing challenge that impacts everyone. Wehman (2013) states, transitioning from childhood through teen to adulthood can be onerous for anyone; however, for those with disabilities it can be especially burdensome with far greater challenges than those of their non-disabled counterparts. Transition services improve the outcomes of youth with disabilities.

In looking at the discrepancies of expectation and perceptions between parents and teachers, the feeling by parents is that teachers are often less encouraging. The reason offered is that teachers lack the specific information in this area and are unable to counsel students and families as to what avenues are available for ID/DD students to achieve postsecondary education success and competitive integrated employment (Gaumer, Morningstar, & Clark, 2004). The amendments of the Higher Education
Opportunities Act, aimed to shore up this discrepancy by clearly articulating definitions addressing successful comprehensive services. Following evidence-based transition programming models has proven to be an effective means of supporting individuals with disabilities to reach their adult employment goals. Finn and Kohler (2009) noted that several influences affected post-school success including inclusion in general education, career and technical education, work experience, parent participation, and interagency collaboration. More specifically, interagency collaboration is identified as a predictor of positive post-school outcomes in both education and employment (Flowers et al., 2018).

A student’s transition from the special education system is greatly affected by services and supports the student receives (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015). Compared to individuals without disabilities, youth with disabilities continue to lag behind in employment and postsecondary education (Crockett, Billingsley, & Boscardin, 2012; Karpur, Brewer, & Golden, 2014). Numerous research studies corroborate the benefit of transition services when all agencies involved work collaboratively together, focusing on the best interest of the individual and tailoring a transition service plan that is person-centered and results in optimal outcome. Given this inequality, it is imperative that students with ID/DD receive transition planning that supports and greatly increases their likelihood of success in their careers and educational pursuits.

**California State Agencies Providing Secondary Transition Services**

Multiple State agencies are responsible for providing transition services. These services begin during the student’s pre-K education experience and continues after the student has transferred into the adult world. This section points out the California State Agencies that provide secondary transition services to students.
The California Department of Education

The California Department of Education (CDE) oversees an excess of 10,000 schools throughout California. Additionally, in 2017–2018 it administered funding, program monitoring, and education laws for over 6,000,000 students enrolled from birth through 12th grade (CDE, 2018). Included in this number are individuals with disabilities who are either educated through general education programs or meet eligibility qualifications to receive special education services through individualized education programs, as regulated and mandated by IDEA. In 2017–18 there were 774,665 individuals with IEP’s who were served by local educational agencies (LEAs) of which the CDE oversees (CDE, 2018).

Close attention is being placed on students in the eligibility categories of intellectual disability, autism and traumatic brain injury because these students have historically had the least amount of CIE after they exit high school and go on to adult lives. Over 150,000 students with the eligibility of ID/DD or more specifically, 112,318 children with autism; 1,618 with traumatic brain injury; and 43,855 with ID attend California public schools (CDE, 2018). Poor vocational outcomes for students with ID who are leaving high school and going on to their adult lives have been well documented through numerous studies in the early 1980s. These studies documented that 75% to 90% of adults with ID throughout the United States were not employed. In the 1990’s due partly because of the reauthorization of IDEA and its greater emphasis on transition, lawmakers began to focus on improving outcomes for students with ID.

Today, nearly two decades later, employment outcomes have not positively changed (Cimera et al., 2014). In addition to education, transition is covered under other
federal and state regulations and provided through other state agencies. State agencies such as the Department of Rehabilitation and the Department of Developmental Services are mandated to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

**The California Department of Rehabilitation**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 required that the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) offer VR services to youth with disabilities. The age range of eligible youth is 14 through 24 with eligible high school age students being 16 through 21. These services termed VR are provided for the purpose of enhancing the individual’s skills of acquiring self-sufficiency in the competitive employment workplace that works in concert with individual’s strengths, goals and abilities. The services are provided with the goal of full-time or part-time employment coupled with supported or individualized customized work.

The DOR is in a symbiotic relationship with various agencies including LEAs, colleges, community rehabilitation programs, regional centers, and other stakeholders in an attempt to provide the best possible services to students with ID/DD. Their job is to offer the best service available, while attempting to obtain comparable services at the best price. When the funds are low, all individuals cannot be served. The DOR then operates under what is termed the order of selection. In the order of selection, priority to benefits and services must be maintained. Currently, the DOR is under this order and is serving those in the most need and greatest disabilities, which always includes those individuals who are ID/DD as being first in line. There will be a waiting list that determines priority after ID/DD students are served to then fulfill the order of selection. The structure of the VR services delivery teams is comprised of 104 teams. Each team will have the
following: two service coordinators, one appointment coordinator, two office technicians, the general manager, and five qualified rehabilitation counselors (Leadership Workgroup, 2017).

The California Department of Developmental Services

The California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) administers funds and services through 21 statewide regional centers. Regional centers contract with DDS to provide habilitation and transition services to individuals with ID/DD. The transition services provided through regional centers assist students with ID/DD in their movement from the secondary education system to the adult system and help them to receive competitive integrated employment. Competitive integrated employment as defined under the Lanterman Act is the provision of at least minimum wage for individuals with disabilities, in a community work environment inclusive of individuals with and without disabilities. Regional centers must inform consumers 16 years and over, when appropriate, their parents, legal guardians, conservators, of authorized representative about California laws regarding the Employment First Policy and their right to choose competitive integrated employment. This information must be in an understandable form (SCDD, 2017).

The WorkAbility I Program

Within California’s large structure of transition are programs designed to offer transition services that develop pre-employment skills and promote employment skills. One such program offering transition services to youth with disabilities is the WorkAbility I (WAI) program. On a local level, the WAI projects provide an array of services that promote successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
Located in LEAs and administered by the California Department of Education, WAI projects prepare transition age students with disabilities for work in the adult world by offering work-based learning, work preparation training, and work experiences. Research shows that high school work experience is an effective strategy for predicting successful employment for youth with ID/DD (Whittenburg et al., 2018). In this capacity, transition specialists are responsible for employment focused transition services for students served by WAI projects. Included in the number of students served through WAI projects are students with ID/DD.

The WAI began in 1981, in California, as a way of offering pre-employment skills development and work experiences to youth with disabilities. The WAI program is defined through legislation and continues to serve students with disabilities who receive special education under IDEA, in 248 school districts. To ensure continuity of the WAI program within the local WAI projects, local WAI projects offer an array of services that provide work experience and pre-employment skills development such as job exploration, social skills, appropriate attire, language, and on-the-job conduct, and other employment skills training (CDE, 2019).

The WAI program is designed from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth Guideposts for Success (NCWD Guideposts). Based on transition needs identified through research, NCWD Guideposts delineate principles from which to establish policy and practice that lead to improved employment outcomes for all youth. On June 30, 2018, it was reported that the WAI program served 197,468 students, at 273 school sites in 55 counties in California. Of those students, 25,313 were placed in integrated employment, in competitive settings, and compensated at or above minimum
wage (Leadership Workgroup, 2018). During 2014/2015 school year, there were 18,689 individuals with ID/DD participating in WAI (Leadership Workgroup, 2017). California legislation requires that the WAI program collaborates with other agencies to provide transition from school to the adult world. The WAI is identified in legislation as an essential component of transition services developed and supported by the CDE.

**WorkAbility I Programs and Secondary Transition**

This section details the invaluable array of transition services provided through WAI projects that reflect the student’s preferences and interests and that are crafted with the intention of moving toward the attainment of the student’s postsecondary goals and competitive integrated employment. In California, WAI projects, in LEAs, support the employment preparation needs of students with disabilities. Here, transition specialists design transition programming that addresses employment preparation needs of individuals. Despite transition specialists’ effort, transition programming design and delivery that results in the desired post-school outcomes for students with disabilities cannot be accomplished without collaborating with others (Eber & Nelson, 1997). The WAI transition specialists play a pivotal role in developing transition services for a student with disabilities; however, to truly understand transition and importance of the service it provides, we must examine the legislation that interrelates to transition as it is covered under IDEA.

Cawthon et al. (2016) conducted a study in which the perceptions of preparedness of transition specialists working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing students measured the competence level of the transition specialists. Conclusions of the study were that experience has a positive impact on the perception of preparedness, in addition to the
transition specialist’s proficiency in American Sign Language. More notably was the explanation for acquisition of knowledge. Length of time is not the only way to acquire experience. Acquiring additional training or developing collaborative partnerships with individuals who have the experience is a means of ensuring that professionals with well-rounded in-depth experience are included on the transition team to give overall assistance and support to the student and the team (Cawthon et al., 2016). Kohler and Field (2003) went so far as to suggest that transition planning provides the fundamental basis from which to design educational programs that focus on post-school education and employment skills designed for person-centered successes.

For individuals with ID/DD, sheltered workshops have long been considered the preferred choice for employment (Moore et al., 2002). CIE for individuals with ID/DD should be the first consideration; however, this segment of the population is not expected to acquire CIE as adults. With a social movement started to correct this injustice, since 2014, there is a direct effort to consider CIE as the first option for individuals with ID/DD with multiple federal and state agencies creating laws and policies to provide CIE as a choice. Despite the recent changes in federal and state policy, compared to individuals without disabilities, data shows that individuals with ID are far less likely to be employed in CIE, and continue to show high levels of unemployment (Grigal et al., 2011). Competitive integrated employment is work with individuals without disabilities, in the community, making at least minimum wage, while being afforded the same benefits and opportunities for promotion (Federal Partners, 2015).
Interagency Collaboration

Governmental agencies with acknowledgment of the critical role employment plays in improving the quality of life for individuals with ID/DD, have invested billions of dollars in resources and supports intended to improve transition from high school to the workforce (Grossi & Thomas, 2016; Federal Partners, 2015). As seen as a pathway for improving service delivery systems in the United States, governing officials, organizational leaders, and members of the community at large are enthusiastically encouraging collaboration among their agencies (Longoria, 2005). Through collaboration, resources and key services are leveraged across agencies (Korbel, McGuire, Banerjee, & Saunders, 2011; Noonan, McCall, Zheng, & Gaumer Erickson, 2012; Plotner et al., 2017). Grigal et al. (2011) stated it is expected that in order for students with disabilities to have positive post-school outcomes leading to CIE, collaborative models of transition practices should be utilized.

Interagency collaboration has been identified as one variable predicting successful post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. However, at times and in certain contexts, collaboration between these disciplines has been inconsistent and limited (Parker-Katz, Cushing, & Athamanah, 2017; Taylor et al., 2016; Test et al., 2009). Within the school context, transition staff consisting of transition coordinators, transition specialists and secondary education teachers, usually provide transition planning and service delivery (Li et al., 2009).

Oertle et al. (2017) noted that a cross-systems transition study conducted by the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues documented systemic issues between the VR System, education system, and other systems mandated to provide transition services. The study
revealed that collaborative partnerships and long-term alliances are needed to bring the shared vision of improving successful outcomes for youth with disabilities into fruition. Even with this clear vision across multiple systems, individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with the most significant challenges, continued to receive few services to support outcomes leading to viable education, independent living, and competitive integrated employment. Providing transition services requires more than coming together to share resources, it requires a change in thinking that will embrace the concept of accepting and relying upon others’ expertise; no one agency can be responsible for it all (Morningstar et al., 2012; Federal Partners, 2015).

**California State Level Collaboration**

Historically, individuals with ID/DD have been offered day programs and sheltered workshops (Grigal et al., 2011). Although sheltered workshops are considered an improvement from previous ideas of employment, it is still far away from offering integration with persons without disabilities at a functional wage (Moore et al., 2002; Siperstein et al., 2014). Recession has little effect on individuals with ID/DD who are working in sheltered employment. Primarily because their employment in uncompetitive when compared with those individuals with ID/DD working in CIE, and their chances of job loss are almost nonexistence. Additionally, much disconcerting concern has grown as it relates to the purported justification for sheltered settings—to prepare individuals with ID/DD for CIE (Cimera et al., 2014; Migliore & Domin, 2011; Siperstein et al., 2013).

In an effort to implement Employment First Policy, and to ensure opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities, the CDE, DOR, and DDS joined together on a state level to provide a roadmap for increasing the
opportunities for individuals with ID/DD to engage in and prepare for competitive integrated employment through the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint (Leadership Workgroup, 2017). The Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint (Blueprint) was finalized, in May 2017, marking the commitment from three state departments. Under the creation of the Blueprint the three departments coordinated their efforts to create an understanding of how to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with ID/DD (Leadership Workgroup, 2017).

**Local Partnership Agreements**

The LPA as a document is considered the conduit for establishing collaboration that will improve employment outcome for individuals with ID/DD. Through the LPAs services that are provided locally by the three agencies are examined to determine ways in which local level interagency collaborations will increase the outcomes for individuals with ID/DD in seeking CIE. The core partners for the LPA include LEAs, DOR offices, and regional centers. These three core partners form an interagency collaboration to streamline services and provide services and resources directed at increasing CIE outcomes for individuals with ID/DD (Leadership Workgroup, 2017). As part of their interagency plan the local agencies will work together to provide seamless services and to streamline

In these agreements, the consistent thread running through all of them is the need for collaboration from all agency members. The roles and responsibilities of various agencies are communicated and the skills of members are augmented to achieve the best return on services for the benefit of youth with disabilities (Leadership Workgroup, 2018). It is anticipated that this will also serve to educate the three core partners about
their agencies’ roles. Many agencies while understanding their roles and responsibilities often neglect to comprehend the similar roles of other transition team members (Riesen, Schultz, Morgan, & Kupferman, 2014). As the number of organizations, both for profit and not-for-profit, see the need to pool resources, interagency collaboration is seen as the way to make this happen (Kramer et al., 2017).

**Local Partnership Agreements and WorkAbility I**

As part of the requirements of the WAI grant, the California Department of Education has required that WAI projects develop LPAs. As of 2018, one of the assurances of the WAI project is to document the collaborative relationship between it and other agencies. This is done through the development of LPAs. Local partnership agreements document the ways in which LEAs will work collaboratively with other state agencies and community partners to facilitate services and resources for individuals with ID/DD. It is well documented that individuals with ID/DD are underserved and underemployed (Malin, Bragg, & Hackmann, 2017; Siperstein et al., 2014); the goal of requiring that WAI projects develop LPAs is to increase the opportunities for individuals with ID/DD to receive competitive integrated employment. Competitive integrated employment is one of the goals of the Blueprint. The successful transition for students with disabilities as they exit secondary education and enter adulthood requires shared responsibilities among the individuals, their families, and the professionals who serve them from the preK-12 system and the agencies that support postsecondary education, employment, independent living, and access to the community as they become adults (Morningstar et al., 2012; Oertle et al., 2017; Federal Partners, 2015).
For LEAs with WAI projects, the requirement to form collaborative relationships is three-fold; 1) as mandated by IDEA, by which LEAs serving students receiving special education services are governed; 2) by California legislation that govern the WAI Program; and 3) by WAI grant assurances as a condition of receiving funds. In order to fulfill mandated requirements, the onus of developing LPAs is placed on WAI transition specialists. To develop LPAs, WAI transition specialists must know how to design transition programming that includes interagency collaboration. The creation of LPAs requires the WAI transition specialists use a guideline or have a model from which to draw proven effective collaboration. As of April 30, 2019, of the 248 statewide WAI projects, 15 have reported completed LPAs (Leadership Workgroup, 2018).

It is reasonable that transition specialists who are responsible for providing and planning transition services, along with transition programming, serve transition age students most efficiently by perceiving themselves prepared for interagency collaborations. Identifying and describing transition specialists’ perception of preparedness along with exploring their perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs using Taxonomy is expected to promote the development of cohesive LPAs.

**Social Theory**

Social theory is reasoning about the social world for enhanced human understanding, it provides concepts for understanding interactions, relationships, and behavior. The application of social theory to phenomena helps to analyze and explain its growth and transformation. Social theory is considered to have begun as a quest for organized knowledge acquisition about society (Garner & Hancock, 2014), it uses methodological techniques for thinking about shared experiences (Harrington, 2005).
Initially, writers of Europe wrote critically about society in hopes of stimulating a movement for change from brutality, superstition, and unreasonableness. Writers such as Immanuel Kant spoke of liberating society from the cruelty and inhumanity in existence during a time that is the European Enlightenment period in social theory development. In response, other conservative writers, in contrast, used the same social analysis methodologies for defending the social occurrences of the time. As noted by Giddens, Spilerman, and Habib (1976) conservative, in this context, is not a political view but instead refers to prescribing to a series of key methodical theories basic to sociological tradition. Discourse borne out of conflict resulted in the development of social theories, as each side was forced to elucidate ideas, make its thinking logical and methodical, and gather empirical evidence (Garner & Hancock, 2014). As Harrington (2005) summarized, “theory is impossible without empirical observation, and equally that empirical observation is impossible without theory” (p. 5). This concept holds true today, as data must support formulated social theories.

August Comte is considered one of the founders of sociology. Comte first coined the term ‘sociology’ in the 19th century (Harrington, 2005) and is one of the major sociologist attributed with supplying the motivation that led to modern sociology with his application of natural science to explain phenomena (Giddens et al., 1976; Harrington, 2005). In disagreement to the application of scientific methodologies in the examination of phenomena, modern theorists initiated the concept of applying both data and human involvement.

The specific term social theory was not commonly used in reference to the discipline until the 1940’s. Harrington (2005) defines social theory as, “it encompasses
ideas about how societies change and develop, about methods of explaining social behavior, about power and social structure, class, gender and ethnicity, modernity and civilization, revolution and utopias, and numerous other concepts and problems in social life” (p.3). In social theory, the social theory framework is used to develop tools for analyzing social phenomena. Phenomena, such as behavior, activities, existence, and relationships are examined in a social context and is appropriate for explaining how societies change and make progress. Anthropology, political science, psychology, history, and humanities are some of the fields from which social theory is drawn.

Social theory arises from experiences of ordinary life as a way of interacting with the world. The basic premise of social theory is that it is common sense, and can explain every day occurrences, for example, the level of communication with neighbors, and interaction with persons walking by. These types of interactions govern the creation of social organizations i.e., political parties, trade unions, charitable foundations and many other organizations. The difference between social theory and common sense as stated by Harrington (2005) is that social theory categorizes, highlights and identifies our problems in social life through the use of analytical tools. Social theory requires a connection to social life while at the same time, objectivity from social life. The expectation is that the researcher using social science will care about the phenomena being investigated while still maintaining a level of objectivity. Some see the importance of objectivity as their destination while others see it as the path they choose to travel (Harrington, 2005).

Although relevant to politics, social theory is typically concerned with the social behavior of groups and their structures and the dynamics of organization as opposed to
being concerned with questions relative to government systems that sponsor independence, justice, and equality in social life or those relative to the justification of obedience to a ruling power. Psychology and sociology are closely associated barring the distinction that “psychology is mostly concerned with the emotional and affective behavior of individuals treated as physiologically conditioned actors who respond to sensory stimuli from an environment” (Harrington, 2005, p. 11). Psychology is concerned with the organism and environment exchange. While social theory looks at the relationships between individuals as part of a cultural group in historical contexts.

In 1897 sociological thinker Emile Durkheim in his famous suicide study posited that social factors affect people’s mental state and that psychology cannot be the only theory used to explain mental decisions such as feelings of despair or depression (Garner & Hancock, 2014; Giddens et al., 1976; Harrington, 2005). Further pointing out the close connectedness between sociology and psychology, in that societal resources can help the constituent. After explaining social theory relative to political science, and psychology, it’s useful to mention that social theory lays a foundation for understanding the humanities. This is explained by comparing it to anthropology; history; art and cultural criticism; and philosophy. Each comparison reiterates its relevance of looking at events that shape the real world using social theory to understand them.

Anthropology is the study of man. Social theory is concerned with social relationships and social institutions within a society. Although on the surface this seems the same as anthropology, a closer examination reveals obvious divergences. Social theory is concerned with more technologically advance societies, their structures, and
their more complex economic infrastructure, while anthropology looks at more primitive, agricultural and tribal societies.

Harrington (2005) reports that history along with social theory, in the opinion of social theorists such as Karl Marx and Max Weber, is foundational to the structure of sociology. The interplay of arts and culture criticism in social theory has shown prominence in Western culture. As a result, new academic categories are being developed in new media technologies such as film studies, communications, and media studies, offering a renewed look into the meanings of high culture and popular culture as it relates to social theory (Harrington, 2005). Philosophy as with social theory utilizes analytical reflection on the way things appear to be with the world.

Inasmuch as social theory is a reflective way of reasoning observable facts or events, its application to phenomena helps to explore and describe its development and change. The application of tools developed from social theory framework, serves for analyzing how social phenomena such as behavior, activities, existence and relationships develop and change. By using scientific methodology and human involvement, the evaluation of the idea or significance of concept can be explained through social theory. The next section explains the application of the social theories of social network theory, structuration theory, conflict theory, and activity theory and how they apply to the study of interagency collaboration.

**The Application of Social Theory in the Study of Interagency Collaboration**

The focus of this section is to discuss social theory’s application in the study of interagency collaboration with the intent of understanding social phenomena such as behavior, activities, and relationships that exists within interagency collaborations. This
section identifies collaborative efforts that exists within the framework of social theoretical mechanisms—norms, resources, cultural values and control.

Collaborations are a form of inter-organizational relationships. Whereas researchers have developed an extensive body of literature explaining collaboration in organizations joining together based upon a common goal (Zaheer, Gözübüyük, & Milanov, 2010). In interagency collaboration, the common goal is a decided upon purpose that benefits the single purpose of each organization on an individual basis. Although difficult to evaluate because of the intricacies of collaborative efforts and the ineffectiveness of current systems (Cross et al., 2009), current research validates the use of the social network theory on outcome evaluations using network structures and the strength of ties. These features distinctly effect outcomes of interest such as transfer of knowledge, changes in structure, increased efficiency, innovativeness, and service provisions (Cross et al., 2009).

When looking at interagency collaborations it is clear that much of what emerges in interagency collaborations is dependent upon the relationships that develop when individuals from other organizations form a group with the intention of completing a task or project. They have a specific purpose, objective and outcome in mind when forming this collaborative relationship. The degree, to which organizations participate in collaborations, reflects their commitment based upon their perceptions of what they stand to gain as opposed to what they have to give up (Kramer et al., 2017). Because agencies bring into collaborations the norms from their own agencies, various growth and formation activities must take place to move the interagency group in the direction of the intended purpose.
Longoria (2005) proposes that there are four powerful ways to define the relational connectedness in collaboration. First, collaboration is the relationship formed between two or more stakeholders. Stakeholders can be thought of as, entities, sets of individuals, agencies, organizations, or citizen groups. Second, the relationship between the stakeholders combines with other stakeholder groups to become part of a bigger interconnected system of stakeholders. Third, this interconnected system creates a synergy whereby the combined efforts of the interconnected stakeholders are greater than what they could have accomplished independently. Fourth, the relationship happens within the confines of an organizational structure or framework.

The social network theory, is used to describe the relationship between individuals and groups within an agency (Bossche & Segers, 2013). A social network is a system comprised of individuals, as well as events, concepts, and other things, known as actors or nodes. The relationship between actors is defined as ties or links (Hoppe & Reinelt, 2010). Relationships facilitate interagency collaboration between organizations and have a direct effect on the strength of the collaboration and performance outcomes (Zaheer et al., 2010). Multiple social interactions through collaborations result in organizations having numerous connections. Figure 5 depicts the social network theory.
Figure 5. Example of a social network in interagency collaboration. Note: one agency is represented by the triangle and other agencies are represented by the square. Lines represent strength of the relationships. Adapted from (Moolenaar, 2012).

When creating interagency collaboration, it can help to look at the social network theory to explain the patterns between the social networks and social ties within the organizations. Studying a network’s structure offers distinct information about its interagency connection; as a result, it is pivotal in coalition building (Cross et al., 2009; Hoppe & Reinelt, 2010). It is useful to look at social networks as a way of understanding how it constrains or supports collaboration. Moolenaar (2012) explained how the social network theory is used to show that social relationships among teachers may improve the understanding of the constraints or supports of instruction, learning and educational change in teacher collaboration. It may explain the connection between a teacher’s success and contentment with students, their commitment to their work, and their careers in teaching based on their relations with colleagues (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2005).

As we further understand how social networks are created and function we thereby can deeply explore the inner workings of interagency collaboration.

Structuration theory provides a theoretical foundation from which to analyze interagency collaborations as social systems that while seemingly stable, changes over
time. These changes are due to members of the collaboration altering established 
structures using norms, resources, cultural values and the organizational rules of the 
collaboration member’s organization (Koschmann, 2013; Kramer et al., 2017). It is 
beneficial to use structuration theory to view and study the ways in which collaboration 
members’ continuous communication helps to manage the incompatibility between 
participation and efficiency (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Kramer et al., 2017). 
Inter-organizational collaborations are formed to focus on issues that cannot be addressed 
by organizations individually (Kramer et al., 2017). Structuration takes into 
consideration the structures that exist in various organizations while considering 
agency—the individual’s ability to exercise independence and freely choose. 

Structures are symbolic resources and rules of social systems, that direct social 
collaboration by constraining behavior (Scott & Myers, 2010). There are a set of 
guidelines that allows each member to give equally to the process, thereby creating input 
where all goals and tasks can be achieved (Kramer et al., 2017). The structures that will 
be addressed in this section are norms, communication, and processes. In order to stay on 
tasks, accomplish goals, foster participation and promote the creation of new ideas, 
collaborations need both formal and informal structures (Kramer et al., 2017). 

Already existing structures from partnering organizations can help the 
collaborative group to establish processes for the interagency collaboration. There is a 
duality when we think about the structure of a group. Individual behavior is explained 
through the social structures that support it through resources and constrain it through 
rules. The structure of a group can be created by the actions of its members. However,
the structure of a group can limit and/or empower the actions of its members (Scott & Myers, 2010). Figure 6 below depicts structuration theory.

![Figure 6: A visual model of structuration theory. Adapted from (Kramer et al., 2017)](image)

When developing interagency collaboration duality exists if the purpose to the interagency collaboration is to combine resources, streamline processes and provide a better service, then, using structures that are already in place can limit the new collaboration. Moreover, if everyone in the collaboration is allowed equality in creating policy, this can slow down the system. Full participation results in restriction of efficiency and structures put in place to enable efficiency does not allow for full participation (Kramer et al., 2017). Collaborations run the risk of failing to accomplish their main purposes and losing member’s commitments if they cannot deal with tensions that emerge from the imbalances between reaching their goals and members having equal involvement (Kramer et al., 2017).

For any organization or group of people coming together conflict is inevitable. Conflict theory embraces disagreement and utilizes conflict to engage authentic discussion and promote genuine change that results in new agreements, collaborative
activities and rules. By considering each member of the collaborative group as equal partners and addressing disagreements the collaboration has the opportunity to move forward.

The conflict theory has been developed by contemporaries Ralf Dahrendorf and Randall Collins born in the early to middle 1900s. Many have proposed that the conflict theory could be a complement to the consensus theory developed by Talcott Parsons born in 1902 or even possibly that both theories could be combined and understood as a single theory (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Conflict theory is characterized with those involved in class strife, struggle and change. It looks at struggle over power to describe the way societal change is produced (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

It must be noted that the conflict theory’s roots are embedded in the teachings of revolutionary Karl Marx (1818 – 1883). Conflict Theory is characterized by having a ruling class versus a subordinate class, one group dominates; therefore, change is inevitably abrupt, disorderly and forceful (Farganis, 2013; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Dahrendorf’s theory of conflict highlights authority as a key component. Roles are described as dominant and subordinate, the struggle is for members to identify leaders versus followers and create this through chaos. People with complementary views come together and when necessary create change through conflict, typically the subordinate group members (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Success of a collaboration can be influenced by misunderstandings and conflicts that result from differences of desired outcomes and degree of dedication (Kramer et al., 2017; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).
People in the subordinate proposition attempt to gain control through interpersonal conflict they must fight against the beliefs imposed by those in control coupled with the lack of material resources (Farganis, 2013; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). In the case of an interagency collaboration, whereby representatives are together moving toward a common goal, it is not uncommon for there to be disagreements around strategies that will result in accomplishing those goals. Conflict moves the group forward in a direction that becomes agreed-upon and gives the opportunity for innovation by finding new ways to address old challenges.

One lens in which to look at interagency collaboration is through activity theory. Activity theory, expanded the basic Vygotskian model to depict the social/collective elements in an activity system (Engeström, 2001). In activity theory, actors described as tools, rules, community, and division of labor and object, directly influence the outcome, based upon how they intersect with each other. See Figure 7 below, for activity theory.

**Activity System (Engestrom)**

![Activity System](image)

*Figure 7. A graphic representation of activity theory Wechsler (2011).*
Activity theory explains how the systems of the interagency collaboration works given the actors within the system are from different organizations, but have come together to form a newly created collaborative group with the objective of accomplishing an agreed upon outcome. As specialists come from multiple disciplinary settings, the approach, methods of communication, procedures and context from which to tackle problems become difficult to navigate. It has become typical in team settings to include members that possess multidisciplinary expertise, skilled in understanding the problem and goal from a vast array of perspectives (Kaiser, 2011; Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014; Zahedi, Tessier, & Hawey, 2017). Activity theory will help to conceptualize interagency collaboration activities that help to build capacity through professional learning across agencies (Warmington et al., 2004). Activity theory explains the collaboration between the organizations that influences the actors that work together and make a direct impact on the result.

**Evidence-Based Practices in Secondary Transition**

As states and local districts strive to increase the capacity of staff in delivering transition services to students with disabilities, providing professional development that focuses on evidence-based transition services can help (Mazzotti et al., 2018). The expectation of CIE for every student (Whittenburg et al., 2018) must be the goal of all California educators. This can be accomplished by providing students and families information regarding CIE and the opportunities that exists to help students better prepare for and participate in a work place with other adults with and without disabilities (Employment First Policy, 2013).
To identify predictors of successful post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities, Test et al. (2009) carried out a study as a follow-up to a previously conducted study in which the evidence-based practices from experimental research designed to teach specific transition related skills were identified, but fell short of measuring the impact of the skills on post-school outcomes. In this situation, Test et al. (2009) conducted a correlational study which systematically reviewed correlational literature on secondary transition. Results from this review identified 16 evidence-based, in-school predictors of improved postsecondary outcomes. Identified as one of the 16 predictors of post-school outcomes, interagency collaboration was predicted to improved post-school outcomes in education and employment.

Seeking to collect post-school outcomes, the Washington State Division of Developmental Disabilities Job by 21 Partnership Project for FY 2009 was an initiative appropriated by the Washington State Legislature for the years 2007–09. Its goal was to establish procedures and methods through a collaborative effort of ameliorating how we employ young adults with ID/DD.

As a result of this collaborative effort, data was accumulated addressing the level and type of collaboration that bolstered positive results in bridging the divide between secondary and postsecondary employment through transition programming. The practices were organized into the following themes:

- maximizing monetary and non-monetary resources;
- collaborative activities to support employment outcomes; and
- comprehensive and targeted program models that help young adults become employed.
In summary, the study concluded that interagency collaboration coupled with identifying best practices proves to have an effective positive impact on students with ID/DD as it relates to employment outcomes subsequent to secondary education (Winsor, Butterworth, Lugas, & Hall, 2010).

Even with interagency collaboration identified as a predictor of positive post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the areas of education and employment, (Cross et al., 2009; Test et al., 2009) at times, collaboration between California educators, i.e., secondary transition services providers, and adult agencies is unreliable and inadequate (Flowers et al., 2018; Plotner et al., 2017). Given this phenomenon, Taylor, Morgan, & Callow-Heusser (2016) conducted a study, modeled from a study conducted in 2002 by Agran, Cain, and Cavin, seeking to explain why interagency collaboration has proven to be difficult for vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors and transition teachers despite research that shows its positive effect on post-school education and employment. Through data reported by VR counselors, and transition teachers, the study sought to understand the parts each played, how often they are invited to the IEP, and their satisfaction of VR counselors in the transition planning process. It sought to define the significance and practicality of collaborative efforts identified in the research literature and collected respondents’ suggestions for interagency collaboration improvements in transition.

Findings from the study suggest that transition teachers did not report seeing VR counselors playing an important role in transition. This finding is in stark contrast to the way VR counselors considered themselves. They saw themselves as playing a pivotal role in transition. Additionally, VR counselors gave discrepant reports for the frequency
with which they were involved in transition: ranging from weekly to never. Their level of collaboration differed too, showing that transition teachers only had one VR counselor to interact with and this occurred annually, while the latter reported they are in contact with schools more routinely, collaborating with teachers weekly.

Although somewhat explained by the different descriptors on the ratings scale, both groups saw collaboration practices as important, while neither groups saw the probability of those practices happening. Seeing practices as unlikely to occur suggest a lack of optimism regarding improving collaborative efforts. Moreover, this lack of optimism might be construed as a doubtful outlook for improving collaboration. It suggests that they do not perceive that the resources and funding approval needed to bring about improved collaborative efforts will occur, reiterating the importance of involving administrators and policy makers in the process of improving collaboration.

The findings from this study report that both VR counselors and transition teachers indicated having limited knowledge in each other’s duties and principle beliefs, but expressed a strong desire for training in those deficit areas. The findings suggest that both are providing transition services under two distinct systems, but recommends that providing a collaborative framework for teachers and counselors to share their hopes and learn about each other’s system and supports for effective collaborative practices, will improve collaboration for students in transition. Interacting and developing relationships are difficult and challenging when dealing with professionals from different agencies having different practices, theoretical aspects and expertise. As in the case in transition, both the transition specialist and the VR counselor lack understanding of the other’s system of transition supports. Relationships are the impetus that incentivizes
collaborative efforts, but a lack of cross agency knowledge can result in slow cultivation of relationships, unless specific time is provided for building relationships.

Taylor et al. (2016) stated that differences in ideologies, terminology, and protocol across agencies can result in slow cultivation of relationships. Additionally, preferences may lead to partiality for one’s own organization, suggesting that many transition professionals have few collaboration skills because they lack access to the collaborative framework to assist them in building relationships across agencies.

**Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0**

Supportive transition strategies include the provision of supported employment, promotion of community leisure participation, and increased collaborative interactions among multiple agencies, school staff, and families (Korbel et al., 2011). Taxonomy for Transition Programming, first developed in 1996 presented research based findings on concrete practices and effective transition programming. Revised in 2016, Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 (Taxonomy) offers a model for transition service that specifically identifies interagency collaboration as one of the elements for successful transition delivery. Taxonomy starts by addressing interagency collaboration’s 11 elements of the collaborative framework. It necessitates the creation of an interagency coordinating body that includes students, parents, educators, service providers, community agencies, postsecondary institutions, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. Its importance stems from the need to include all stakeholders when transition planning and coordinating resources and services (Butterworth et al., 2017). It addresses the criticalness of identifying lead agencies that will assume leadership over the entire group regarding specifically identified projects, tasks, and services. More
specifically, representatives of any agency that could be responsible for the delivery of transitional services are also identified (NTACT, 2019).

The designation of a transition contact person for each agency highlights the importance of having one clearly defined person who is to be contacted within the agency. Identifying one person facilitates adult agency contact with students and referrals to adult agency service providers prior to students exiting from high school (Kohler, 1996). In addressing the significance of formal interagency agreements, this element identifies the need to document the commitment of agencies to perform specific duties and agree on procedures that create smooth transition (Crane et al., 2004). It documents collaboration between adults, agencies and LEAs. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly articulated, and the parts that team members play coupled with the position team members take in the transition process (Morningstar et al., 2012; Federal Partners, 2015).

Taxonomy spells out the necessity for a shared understanding of educational and agency policy and procedures. The ability for each agency’s members to understand its policy and procedures in addition to those of partner agencies is highly critical and is not always practiced in transition (Riesen et al., 2014). In addition, Taxonomy emphasis mitigating areas where transition processes are impeded by devising strategies for minimizing systems barriers to collaboration, within the transition community. For example, services offered through DOR and regional centers can be coordinated to reduce duplication and streamline services. Efforts are made to seek opportunities to change or alter activities within an agency that could stifle its collaboration. This could
embody assisting teachers, student access and families to progress through the transition process with greater ease.

Within Taxonomy, collaborative framework reiterates the need to establish methods of communication among all service providers. This is introduced because the transition community should establish multiple methods of communication and information sharing across all agencies as a best practice for successful transition (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Kramer et al., 2017). Examples of possible methods are email, texting and the use of phones. Data being shared among agencies via established procedures (with appropriate release of information and confidentiality) looks to control the dissemination of data thereby, establishing measures that lead to the enhanced process of care and control. It encompasses plans for handling the release of information consent forms, DDS’ tracking to assess outcomes, and medical information releases, just to name a few.

All agencies should provide training specifically designed to cross train in their area of focus. They should also provide cross discipline professional development opportunities for all members to ensure that they are knowledgeable about services and eligibility criteria (NTACT, 2019). Interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures are evaluated annually as this element in Taxonomy refers to establishing a formal evaluative methodology by which team members from LEAs and adult agencies assess, on a yearly basis, their joint policy and procedures for conducting activities that improve transition (Kohler et al., 2016).

Interagency collaboration is a foundation for providing evidence-based transition programming and is recognized to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
Specifically, collaboration among agency staff has long been recognized as an approach that will improve the postsecondary outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Oertle et al., 2017). Given the significance of the role transition specialists play in designing and providing transition services, it is incumbent upon transition specialists to be well-versed in the elements of research-based transition practices that result in successful post-school outcomes.

With an emphasis on secondary transition programming, Taxonomy incorporates elements of literature regarding predictors of positive post-school outcomes, combined with exemplar practices that promote increased graduation rates, and successful movement into postsecondary endeavors for youth with disabilities. The model proposes five primary practice areas: Student-Focused Planning, Student Development, Interagency Collaboration, Family Engagement, and Program Structure (Kohler et al., 2016). See Figure 8 below showing Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 Interagency Collaboration.

Figure 8. Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 Interagency Collaboration. (Kohler et al., 2016).

For purposes of this study, identifying the specific elements of interagency collaboration found in successful LPAs requires establishing a definition of the term
interagency collaboration within the context of secondary transition. With this focus area, the primary practice category of Interagency Collaboration will serve as the working definition and standard for identifying interagency collaboration in the context of secondary transition.

Taxonomy is widely accepted in the field of secondary transition and is part of the framework that is offered by the National Technical Assistance Center for Secondary Transition (NTACT). Under the auspices of the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services Agency, the NTACT ensures that transition-age youth with disabilities receive high-quality educational services by offering to all States and United States Territories technical assistance aimed at strengthening capacity within the secondary transition community. State educational agencies, LEAs, State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and DOR offices benefit from assistance in the implementation of evidence-based and promising transition practices as they provide services to students with disabilities including those with significant disabilities (NTACT, 2017).

WorkAbility I transition specialists’ perception of preparedness and their perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs, can be identified and described using the interagency Collaborative Transition Programming of Taxonomy. Figure 9 shows the eleven elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 Interagency Collaboration for Collaborative Transition Programming.
Figure 9. Kohler’s Collaborative Framework for Interagency Collaboration (Kohler et al., 2016).

Taxonomy provides a list for checking for the presence of interagency collaboration. Although commonly used in the industry, Taxonomy is not a requirement for WAI projects. Considering the requirement to develop LPAs, using Taxonomy as a guide will assist transition specialists in identify specific areas in which they can fully engage in the creation and development of evidence-based LPAs. Transition services that are planned specifically for the individual and include collaboration between LEAs and adult agencies have been proven to provide better outcomes for students.

Summary

Students with ID/DD are in need of specific supports and services to improve their prospect of engaging in competitive integrated employment as adults. Multiple state agencies provide services to support individuals with ID/DD with opportunities to engage in competitive integrated employment, yet the employment data of individuals with ID/DD still lags behind individuals without disabilities. Through transition
programming, students receive supports needed to move into adult life. Research shows that transition programming that includes interagency collaboration is effective in bringing about positive outcomes. The intent of the LPA is to promote interagency collaboration for the purpose of improving transition services for individuals with ID/DD. On the local level, transition specialists in WAI projects are responsible for entering into LPAs. Identifying and describing transition specialists’ perception of preparedness and exploring their perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs can result in stronger, more effective LPAs that meet the transition needs of students with ID/DD as they move into adult agencies. This chapter offered a review of the literature. The next chapter outlines the methodology used for this study, including data collected and the procedures for its analysis.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter presents the methodology used to design the research study. Methodology is a theorized approach to investigating the reality related to a specific problem of a group of people (Kumar, 2019). A qualitative case study research design was used to identify and describe existing interagency collaboration components included in local partnership agreements (LPAs) as perceived by WorkAbility I (WAI) transition specialists. The chapter begins with the purpose statement and research questions studied. Additionally, the qualitative case study research design, the population to be studied, and the methodology used to determine the sample population are studied in this chapter. The chapter then details the research instruments used, the methods of data collection, and the methods of data analysis. The chapter also describes the limitations of the study and the ethical procedures used to safeguard the human subjects who voluntarily participated in the research study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the overall methodology used in the research study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, its purpose was to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs.
Research Questions

1. How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

2. How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

Research Design

The methodology used to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs responsible for interagency collaboration was a qualitative case study. A case study, as defined by Creswell (2014) is an in-depth exploration of data that supports specific cases for study in a specific time and place. “The case study stands on its own as a detailed and rich story about a person, organization, event, campaign, or program” (Patton, 2015, p. 259). Case-study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of complex issues. In addition, case-study research can extend experiences and add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize the detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case-study research methodology for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Yin (2009) defines the case-study research method as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life
context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13).

There are many advantages to the use of the case study approach to research.

- Case studies are more flexible than many other types of research and allow the researcher to discover and explore as the research develops.
- Case studies emphasize in-depth content. The researcher is able to delve into a variety of data sources to get a complete picture.
- The data is collected in a natural setting and context.
- Case studies often leads to the creation of new hypotheses that can be tested later.
- Case studies often shed new light on an established theory that results in further exploration.
- Researchers are able to study and analyze situations, events and behaviors that could be created in a laboratory setting (Creswell, 2014).

The case study was the best fit for this research as it allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the processes and understanding of interagency collaboration and the role of the transition specialists. Using three transition specialists with extensive experience in WAI and transition as a sample size for testing was appropriate because, as stated by Creswell (2007), the “types of qualitative case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether the case involves one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity” (p. 74). Qualitative case study methodology was suitable for this study as the purpose of this study was to identify the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, its
purpose was to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the WAI transition specialists’ perceptions of their preparedness regarding transition programming and their perceptions of interagency collaboration in LPAs, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interview questions consisting of open-ended questions were employed as a method of extracting as much information from the participant as possible without restricting responses. Patton (2015) states that there is a need for researchers in phenomenological studies to experience the participant in a live environment. As a result, analysis of artifacts from workshop materials, conference programs, video conference invitations, training materials, agendas, notes, flyers, emails, brochures, websites, fact sheets, Google Docs, agency forms, memorandums of understanding, and LPA documents were incorporated as part of data collection.

**Population**

The population is a group of individuals having one characteristic that distinguishes them from other groups (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The population of a research study is defined as the group of people whom the study will represent, though data will only be collected from some of the members of the group (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010). Within each WorkAbility I project, there is one contact person responsible for coordinating the WAI project site services, supports, and entering into the LPA. The project contact must be an official employee of the local educational agency.
grant recipient. Throughout WAI projects, titles vary; therefore, for purposes of this study the project contact is considered the transition specialist.

In this study, the research population of the study was 248 transition specialists working in California WorkAbility I projects who were mandated to enter into local partnership agreements. According to the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA) website (CHHSA, 2017), there are 248 WorkAbility I projects in California, the exact number of transition specialists is not available, but for purposes of this study, 248 represents the minimum number working in the WAI projects. According to the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint 2018 Annual Report (CHHSA, 2017) WAI served 25,313 students with ID/DD who participated in paid work experience and unpaid community-based vocational education in 2017-18 state fiscal year. Of those students, 6,406 students received competitive integrated employment through their participation in paid work experience.

**Target Population**

A target population of a research study is the population of participants who were included in the study by survey or interview and best address the research questions (Patton, 2015). The Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint requires all WAI projects to enter into fully developed LPAs by the year, 2022. Additionally, the California Department of Education requires all WAI projects to have initiated the process of entering into LPAs by June 30, 2019. Local partnership agreements can contain multiple WAI projects and transition specialists. According to a survey taken in October 2018 and posted on the WAI website (CDE, 2019) WAI projects were at three stages of entering into LPAs namely, finished writing, had meeting with parties involved,
and posted on the CHHSA website. At the time of this study, there were 65 WAI transition specialists in LPAs posted on the CHHSA website (CHHSA, 2017). See Table 2 for a listing of the number of WAI projects in each posted LPA.

Table 2

Local Partnership Agreements on the CHHSA Website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Partnership Agreements Posted to the CHHSA Website:</th>
<th>Number of WAI Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orange County Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alameda Contra Costa County Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monterey County and San Benito County Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sierra – Roseville Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amador, Calaveras, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura County Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inland Empire Local Partner Collaborative</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area Local Partnership Agreement Collaborative</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Mateo County Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendocino County Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burbank Unified School District-Foothill SELPA Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glendale Unified School District-Foothill SELPA Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Cañada Unified School District-Foothill SELPA Local Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 65 WAI transition specialists, the researcher identified those who were members of the WAI Advisory (Advisory). The Advisory is made up of representatives from local WAI projects located in the five WAI regions, covering 55 counties in California. The Advisory includes 23 members: 10 managers (two in each region), 10
mentors (two in each region), a chair, secretary, and technical support person. Collectively they are elected by the WAI projects and meet on a regular basis to ensure ongoing communications. Through their roles, the Advisory contributes to the practices and policies that govern the WAI projects and provide pre-employment transition services including the creation of community linkages and interagency agreements. The WAI transition specialists on Advisory are knowledgeable in transition and familiar with the requirements of the WAI program. To summarize, the target population for this study was comprised of transition specialists who

- entered into an LPA that is posted to the CHHSA website;
- served on the WAI Advisory board;
- worked in WAI projects for 5 years or more;
- held a special education instruction credential; and
- presented in transition conferences or workshops.

Of the 65 transition specialists in California, eight transition specialists met the criteria stated above and were selected as the target population for this study.

Sample

A sample is the group of participants who provide data for the study of interest (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). In this study, the sample was determined by purposeful sampling because it is a strategy best used when seeking to identify individuals or groups of individuals who are experienced and well informed about a phenomenon of interest. These individuals are able to communicate experiences and opinions in an unrestrained, open, deep, and thoughtful manner. When looking to conduct a study with efficiency and fewer resources, purposeful sampling affords the
researcher the advantage to select individuals or groups of individuals known to be available and willing to participate (Palinkas et al., 2015). In using purposeful sampling, the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study that purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2014; Patten, 2012). The researcher selected three transition specialists from the target population of eight as the sample for this study because they were available during the needed research period and were willing to engage in the study. According to Patten (2012) “When it is impractical to study an entire population researchers draw a sample, they study it and infer that what is true for the sample is probably also true of the population” (p. 43).

The sampling decided upon in this case, i.e., purposeful sampling, is consistent with the information needed by the qualitative approach used in this study and is anticipated to provide information needed to show how transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming and interagency collaboration in LPAs. Additionally, criterion sampling strategy works well for this study. Creswell (2013) states “It is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied. Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 155). As illustrated in Figure 10, a graphical representation is presented to clearly explain the relationship of population, target and sample.

The researcher began by reviewing the list of eight and contacted, by telephone if the number was available, or email, each of the eight transition specialists to invite them to participate in the study. It was explained that data collection would take place during
the 2019/2020 school year. Three WAI transition specialists indicated that they were willing to participate in the study. They are part of three distinct LPAs located in central, east bay, and southern California. The three WAI transition specialists served as the sample that would provide the needed data for the study. Sampling must be consistent with the information needed by the study (Creswell, 2014).

![Diagram showing the relationship of population, target, and sample](image)

Sample is 3 WAI transition specialists in LPAs and on Advisory

*Figure 10. A graphic representation of the relationship of population, target, and sample.*

**Instrumentation**

The researcher conducted a qualitative case study of three transition specialists working in three distinct locations in California. Qualitative case study aims at analysis of a single unit, i.e., “one person, one group, one event, one organization, and so on … that is valued as a unit that permits in-depth examination” (Saldaña, 2011, p. 8).
Inasmuch as a case study affords one the opportunity to delve into in-depth analysis, its purpose is not to use the findings as a representation of comparable cases, but to gather research on the single unit for analysis (Saldaña, 2011). The selection of cases to study can occur for various reasons, first, for its uniqueness and bountiful nature of data that only it and it alone can supply. Secondly, due to its commonality and likeness to a larger population that it represents. And finally, a case may be chosen for its simplicity and convenience to the researcher. Within the selection of cases as stated above diverse perspectives and experiences can be rendered as all cases capture different views and knowledge that only they can provide (Saldaña, 2011).

According to Patten (2012) the researcher’s findings when presented are reflected through the discussion of “trends and or themes based on words not statistics” (p. 19). As stated by Yin (2011), although a qualitative study often incorporates a measuring instrument, experimental procedure, or questionnaire, the researcher’s primary focus is to be the tool for investigation, “the field researcher in effect serves as the main research instrument for collecting data in a qualitative study” (p. 13).

Yin (2011) found that “in most situations, the researcher unavoidably serves as a research instrument because important real-world phenomena—such as the very “culture” that is a frequent topic of qualitative studies—cannot be measured by external instruments but only can be revealed by making inferences about observed behaviors and by talking to people” (p. 13).

“The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent, on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork” (Patton, 2002, p. 14).
In addition to the researcher, a semi-structured interview questionnaire adapted from Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming 2.0 (Taxonomy) was used in this study. Taxonomy is part of the framework that is offered by the National Technical Assistance Center for Secondary Transition and provides a list for checking for the presence of interagency collaboration. Two interagency collaboration components of Taxonomy are collaborative framework (with 11 elements) and collaborative service delivery (with 8 elements). The semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed by applying the 11 collaborative framework elements, because they lend themselves to eliciting the transition specialists’ responses on their preparedness of transition programming as it related to interagency collaboration.

Figure 11. Kohler’s Collaborative Framework for Interagency Collaboration

The researcher presented the draft interview protocol to two experts in the area of secondary transition. Both were selected because of their administration experiences in supervising and evaluating the work of transition specialists. Collectively, both are
credentialed teachers and have over 20 years of experience serving transition age students as special education teachers. They hold administrative services credentials and are members of several professional associations. They reviewed the interview questions independently to ensure that the questions reflected the Taxonomy and were appropriate for data collection about transition specialists. The researcher added the changes they suggested into the final draft protocol.

Semi-structured interview lends itself to an open conversational dialogue that provides for a two-way conversation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). As we compare structured to semi-structured interviews, semi-structured interviews can take advantage of the open, back and forth dialogue of the parties and follow the discussion wherever it may go. It can uncover the interviewer as one who has the skill and knowledge to delve deep and elicit additional knowledge from the participant (Brinkmann, 2013).

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) stated that semi-structured interviews afford the researcher the flexibility to explore the questioning of the participant in greater depth and by multiple ways ensuring that questions are fully understood and answered. The semi-structured interview questions were adapted from Taxonomy, by taking the statements listed in Taxonomy and constructing the statements as open ended questions, to elicit responses from participants. Taxonomy lists interagency collaboration as one of the evidence-based predictors of transition programming that result in positive school outcomes. The researcher used a question alignment table (Appendix B) to ensure that the items from the semi-structured interview protocol aligned with the study’s research questions. Interviews were scheduled during a four-week data collection period.
**Triangulation and Reliability**

Triangulation was used as a means of validating the study. Triangulation is used to offset the strength of one method with the weakness of another, this enhances the overall usefulness and quality of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The reliability of the study was augmented by multiple data collection methods allowing for enhanced triangulation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The four basic types of triangulation as documented by Patton (2002) are data triangulation, theory triangulation, investigator triangulation and methodology triangulation. Data triangulation is used in a case study because it employs multiple methods of inquiry while using a variety of data sources (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews, artifacts, and observations were used for this study.

To strengthen reliability, all interviews were audio recorded. By taking advantage of the technology of video calling the researcher was able to observe behaviors of participants when answering the interview questions. Further reliability was established by using a standard interview script. The researcher elected to forgo providing definitions of terminology because the data sought was based on the participants’ perception and the researcher did not want to influence the participants’ responses. To ensure accuracy and reliability, participants reviewed their interview transcripts for accuracy and reliability, and were given the opportunity to correct or make changes as they deemed necessary. If warranted, the researcher edited responses based on participants’ feedback.
Field Test

To ensure optimal qualitative interview questions, the protocol should be reviewed by those knowledgeable in script interviews, coupled with interview field testing and revisions where needed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The protocol was field tested to ensure questions were presented in a way that would produce the data that addressed the research question. An interview observer was present during the field test. The participant selected for the field test had the same characteristics as the sample population and the researcher interviewed the participant following the protocol direction so as to draw out the desired unbiased data. Using the protocol with fidelity, the researcher asked the interview questions in the same manner that was anticipated to be used when interviewing the sample population. After the interview, the participant provided feedback regarding the interview process and the questions. Additionally, the interview observer provided independent feedback at the conclusion of the field test. The interview process was further clarified based upon the feedback from both the interview observer and the participant.

Data Collection

After Brandman University Institution Review Board (BUIRB) approval, each participant signed an informed consent letter (see appendix C) and was given a copy of the Participants’ Bill of Rights. When opting to carry out the research study, researchers should obtain informed consent from all participants (Yip, Han, & Sng, 2016). Steps taken to obtain informed consent consist of

- letting the participants in the study know that the study will take place and
the level of commitment connected to length of time of meetings and frequency of meetings required;

- giving an understandable explanation of the study;
- reiterating to participants that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time;
- explaining confidentiality and what it encompasses;
- offering to answer any questions; and
- ensuring that no harm will come to participants while engaging in the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

Each participant verified that they were 18 years of age or older. The informed consent letter specified that participation in the study was voluntary and that at any time the participants could elect to opt out of the research study and that their results will only be published in aggregate or in anonymity with no identifiers. Each participant was given a copy of their signed informed consent letter. The signed informed consent letters, were also submitted to BUIRB. After BUIRB’s approval of the application to conduct research the researcher contacted via email the three transition specialists who had previously agreed to participate in the study. The researcher arranged through email and calendar sharing, the most convenient time to meet to conduct the research interview. Interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed upon time.

Data collection methods, as stated by Creswell (2014) could check for consistency and accomplish triangulation by conducting interviews, using audio data materials and other existing documentation. As part of the data collection, the researcher collected artifacts from workshop materials, conference programs, video conference invitations,
training materials, agendas, notes, flyers, emails, brochures, fact sheets, Google Docs, agency forms, memorandums of understanding, and LPA documents. The researcher reviewed websites of the LEAs, WAI projects, and other public agencies named in interviews. The researcher observed participants as they responded to the interview questions.

**Data Analysis**

Interview responses were audio recorded. Audio recordings were transcribed from the interviews and coded based on themes and patterns, using NVivo, qualitative analysis software. As Yin (2011) stated,

The analysis of qualitative data usually moves through five phases. The first analytic phase, compiling data into a formal database, calls for the careful and methodic organizing of the original data. The second phase, disassembling the data in the database, can involve a formal coding procedure but does not need to. The third phase reassembling, is less mechanical and benefits from a researcher’s insightfulness in seeing emerging patterns. Various ways of creating data arrays can help to reveal such patterns in this third phase. Constantly improving computer software is available to assist in the entire analysis process. However, whether researchers decide to use such software or not, all of the analytic decisions must be made by the researcher. One risk in using software is the added attention needed to follow the software’s procedures and terminology. Such attention may detract from the desired analytic thinking, energy, and decisions that are needed to carry out a strong analysis. (p. 176)
Through NVivo the researcher organized, stored, and retrieved the data. NVivo assisted the researcher to identify themes, patterns, frequencies, and repetition that helped to align it to categories, themes, concepts. The transcribed data was entered into NVivo software with the intent of guaranteeing confidentiality by assigning numerical identifiers. Using the theoretical framework of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Framework for identifying elements of interagency collaboration, in addition to the social theories, namely, social network, structuration, conflict and activity theory, served as the portal through which a greater understanding of relationships and structures were illuminated.

In applying social network, the researcher was able to see a connection between the transition specialists’ success and interagency collaboration. When viewing structuration, the researcher was provided a theoretical foundation to assess the changing of structures, norms, and rules of the collaboration members. The conflict theory examines discord as a vehicle to engage in compromises and dispute resolutions. Conceptualizing interagency collaboration was manifested through the application of activity theory, where human interaction is viewed through the use of tools and artifacts. These theories offer a lens for analysing themes and frequencies helping the researcher to develop a greater understanding of relationships and structures in the data.

To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher also engaged the services of an independent coder. According to Patton (2015), the use of multiple coders establishes “validity and reliability of pattern and theme analysis” (p. 683). Comparison of the results of the researcher’s codes for the interviews and artifacts with the independent coder’s will establish validity and reliability if they reach consensus. The researcher
determined that 10 percent of the data collected would be coded by an independent, outside researcher who holds a doctorate. The collected data’s patterns, themes and frequency counts were confirmed by the independent, outside researcher. Creswell (2014) states, “In qualitative research, reliability often refers to the stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets” (p. 253). The use of multiple coders to analyze data is critical. The researcher wants an outside verification on the interpretation of the coding transcript data.

**Limitations**

Limitations for this case study included the small sample size. The participants for the study were purposefully chosen to meet specific criterion for the study and were not randomly selected. The study only provided opportunity for a small sample size to participate and have the opportunity to voice how they feel. The skill of the researcher was limited in the area of semi-structured interviewing and may have an effect on the participants’ responses. There were differences among WAI transition specialists regarding job roles and responsibilities that they held within the districts. The sample population did not have one representative from each of the five WAI regions, therefore, there may have been more shared experiences that were undetected thereby, affecting the patterns, and themes that emerged from the research.

**Summary**

Chapter III restated the purpose statement and research questions and described the methodology used to design the research study, along with data collection and data analysis for this qualitative case study. In this chapter, as part of the research design, the researcher used in-depth questioning, audio data materials, and other existing
documentation to help to understand how transition specialists perceive their
preparedness for transition programming and interagency collaboration in LPAs using
Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0. Study limitations were described
in this chapter. Chapter IV provides the findings of the study including descriptions of
trends, and themes derived from the in-depth data that were collected.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents the data collected for the qualitative case study identifying and describing transition specialists’ perception of preparedness. The data collected in this chapter also explored the elements of interagency collaboration in local partnership agreements (LPAs) as perceived by transition specialists. Using a semi-structured interview format, the data collected from three transition specialists working in WorkAbility I (WAI) projects were reviewed for common themes and patterns. The interview protocol used to interview the participants was adapted from Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 (Taxonomy). Furthermore, to explore transition specialists’ perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs, the researcher applied social theories to provide a lens for data analysis. Additionally, the researcher examined other artifacts to establish validity of the identified themes and patterns. To enhance the explanation of the data collection and data analysis, Chapter IV includes figures and tables and will conclude with a presentation of the findings based on the themes and research questions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, it was the purpose to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs.
Research Questions

1. How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

2. How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The methodology used to identify and describe transition specialists’ preparedness for transition programming and their perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs was a qualitative case study. The utilization of a qualitative case study entails an in-depth exploration of data that supports specific cases for study in a specific time and place (Creswell, 2014). Acquiring ample data from transition specialists regarding their perception of their readiness in transition programming and interagency collaboration required drawing out their experiences through which findings that help to address the research questions are discovered. In addition to extending experiences, case-study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of complex issues.

Identifying and describing transition specialists’ perception of interagency collaboration and transition programming was most appropriately achieved through qualitative case study research as it allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the processes and understanding of interagency collaboration and the role of the transition specialists. To gain an in-depth understanding of the WAI transition specialists’ perceptions of their preparedness regarding transition programming and their perceptions
of interagency collaboration in LPAs, semi-structured interview questions consisting of
open-ended questions were employed. Using this methodology promotes the extraction
of information from the participant. For triangulation and to ensure validation, the
researcher analyzed other data such as artifacts from workshop materials, conference
programs, video conference invitations, training materials, agendas, notes, flyers, emails,
brochures, websites, fact sheets, Google Docs, agency forms, memorandums of
understanding, and LPA documents.

Population

For the purpose of this study, the population was determined to be 248 transition
specialists working in California WorkAbility I projects having the directive to be
engaged in LPAs. There are 248 WorkAbility I projects in California, as documented on
the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA) website (CHHSA, 2017).
Because the precise number of transition specialists is indeterminable presently, the
researcher chose to use 248 specialists as a conservative population number. Transition
specialists have the function of offering pre-employment services to students with
intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) in the areas of competitive
integrated employment. As stated by the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint
2018 Annual Report (CHHSA, 2017), 25,313 students were served through WAI
projects, 6,406 students with ID/DD were recipients of competitive integrated
employment, in the state fiscal year 2017–18.

Target Population

As stated by Patton (2015), a target population of a research study is defined as
the population of participants included in the study best addressing the research
questions. All WAI projects must be entered into fully developed LPAs by 2022, as mandated by the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint. Coupled with that mandate, the California Department of Education obligates all WAI projects to have started the requirement of entering into LPAs by June 30, 2019. As of October 2018, per the WAI website (WAI Central, 2019), they were in three stages of entering into LPAs namely, finished writing; had meetings with parties involved; and posted on the CHHSA website. There were 65 WAI transition specialists in LPAs as viewed on the CHHSA website (CHHSA, 2017).

Sample

These specialists are skillful in articulating their experiences in a thoughtful, and concise manner. Purposeful sampling is often successful and advantageous when conducting a study requiring efficiency with few resources, it provides the researcher the ability to select those individuals or groups of individuals willing to participate in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). When it comes to purposeful sampling, the researcher chose individuals and sites that importantly inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2014; Patten, 2012).

Three transition specialists from the target population of eight were selected as the sample, as they were accordant with participating and available during the research period. According to discussions by Patten (2012), “when it is impractical to study an entire population, researchers draw a sample, they study it and infer, what is true for the sample is probably also true for the population” (p.43). In discussing our support for using purposeful sampling, we anticipate that this method will provide the documentation needed to address the questions regarding how transition specialists perceive their
preparedness for a transition programming and interagency collaboration in LPAs. Additionally, all participants have experienced transition programming and inter-agency collaboration in LPAs, which makes criterion sampling a good fit for this study. Creswell (2013) felt that, “it is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied. Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 155).

The researcher began the selection process by contacting the entire target population (8) by telephone and, or email inviting them to participate in the study.

**Demographic Data**

Three transition specialists were purposefully selected to participate in this qualitative case study, because they had attributes that were deemed to contribute to the research project. The participants selected for the study had at least 5 years of experience working in the field of transition. Because the world of WAI and secondary transition can intersect with other agencies, on multiple occasions, the researcher attempted to mitigate issues with anonymity and confidentiality by withholding demographic data and attributes. Among the attributes that could be shared, the participants collectively possessed over ten decades of experiences in providing secondary transition programming to individuals with disabilities, ages 16 to 22 years old, in California. These transition specialists have lived both secondary transition, WorkAbility I and interagency collaboration in their daily interactions while providing services to individuals with disabilities. Table 3 shows the demographic attributes of the program specialists.
Table 3

Research Participants Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Type of Credential</th>
<th>Number of Years Worked in Secondary Transition</th>
<th>Number of Years Worked in WAI</th>
<th>Did LEA enter into LPA?</th>
<th>LPA Location</th>
<th>LEA Type?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Lifetime-special education</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Lifetime-special education</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Education specialist instruction</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Bay</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants were chosen based on similarities and longevity in the field of transition.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The findings presented in this section are the outcome of one-on-one responses collected from three participants during interviews, and artifacts from workshop materials, conference programs, video conference invitations, training materials, agendas, notes, flyers, emails, brochures, websites, fact sheets, Google Docs, agency forms, memorandums of understanding, and LPA documents. The original data source for analysis was acquired using a semi-structured protocol, from the participants during the interview process. The open-ended nature of the questions gave each participant the opportunity to tell their story regarding transition and interagency collaboration. The one-on-one interviews extended for over 30 minutes lasting 45 minutes for one participant, 75 minutes for another participant and 130 minutes for a third participant, because the participants were asked open ended questions and permitted to continue answering the questions until they were satisfied that they had provided a comprehensive
answer to the question. The first step in data analysis was to convert the audio recordings of the interviews into typed text; therefore, before data analysis could begin, the interview questions needed transcribing.

The researcher transcribed the data for 36 hours spanning 10 days. Although transcription services were available, the researcher elected to transcribe the interviews in order to enhance understanding by listening to the answers several times before writing them. Through manual transcription, the researcher felt that a greater understanding was obtained from the inflection, mood, and words chosen by the participants. Additionally, the researcher felt that manual transcription enhanced recall, which aided in pulling out themes during coding. An important step in the manual transcription process involved the researcher reading the transcription, editing for incorrect word substitutions, and missed words. When the final transcription was ready, the researcher emailed each participant the final transcription of their interview asking them to review the transcribed interviews. Each participant was given the opportunity to let the researcher know if they had any changes, additions, questions, or comments and if so they were instructed to let the researcher know by a specified date and time.

After giving the participants time to review and make changes to the transcribed interviews, the researcher began coding the transcript looking for frequently used words. In addition, the researcher paid close attention to any sections that the participants prefaced as being key or important. This methodology involved looking for concepts that relate to Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming and the social theories of social network, structuration, conflict, and activity theory. The researcher looked for statements that related to the literature review of the dissertation.
Through coding, the researcher made note of unexpected surprises that were revealed while examining the data. Additionally, through the coding process, the researcher began refining the previously created codes looking at creating and synthesizing new codes by combining or consolidating the existing codes. This led to the researcher discarding codes that had a low frequency of occurrence and the researcher felt were less important to the study. In the next steps in coding, the researcher grouped the codes together into themes looking for similarities and differences and labeling those classifications while determining the relationship between the classifications. To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher also engaged the services of an independent coder who holds a doctorate. The researcher and the intercoder reached consensus in excess of 15 percent of the results.

**Presentation of Findings**

Coding for Interview Question 1 consisted of pre-set themes aligned to the 11 elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming with emergent themes revealed from interviews. For Research Question 2, interviews were coded using pre-set themes that align with Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. The researcher used pre-set themes aligned with Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming for Research Question 2, because data analysis of interagency collaboration found in LPAs required establishing a definition of the term “interagency collaboration” within the context of secondary transition. The 11 elements in Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming listed as a collaborative framework served as the working definition and standard for identifying interagency collaboration in the context of LPAs. When
participants identified and described elements found in Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming during the interview, those mentioned elements were coded to the respective themes.

In the study’s presentation of findings and data analysis, the themes that aligned with the collaborative framework elements identified in Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming will be referred to as Kohler’s Taxonomy aligned themes and depicted with the acronym KTAT. Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programing provided an evidence-based framework for objectively identifying collaborative practices in the transition specialist’s transition program. Through this process the interview data were coded; whereby, the researcher identified concepts, finding ways in which the concepts were connected. The coded interview data were analyzed and categorized into themes.

For Research Question 1: How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming? The codes were categorized according to how they related to the KTATs and according to emergent themes that arose from analysis of the data. In Table 4 the 11 KTATs are shown with the frequencies related to Research Question 1.
### Table 4

*Frequencies for KTATs from Research Question 1 (RQ1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>RQ1 Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned about transition from other agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned language and function of other agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainings attended by regional center/DOR</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned agencies’ categories of services</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP, Transition Alliance district level trainings</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross training that was part of DOR contract</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</td>
<td>Creating Transition Partnership Program</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Paid Internship Program</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing MOUs</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELPAs keep individual LEAs going</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigating knowledge deficits of teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating of local agreements</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology /Zoom conference calls</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established methods of communication among all service providers</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers/agendas</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through Google Drive</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data shared among agencies via established procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through consent forms</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAI eligibility services</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through benefits planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For authorization of communication devices</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead agency identified</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional center took the lead</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR district office administrator forwarded document</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAI /LEA committed to contacting parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair from group’s respective of agency</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared understanding of educational and agency policy and procedures</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>About process WAI uses for referral</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At DOR contract meeting</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Through Transition Partnership Program meeting</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At WAI-regional center meeting</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>With COE special education policy handbook</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>With brochure explaining policy and guidelines</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Designated transition contact person from each agency</strong></th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional center has employment specialist</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOR supported employment liaison</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SELPA directors attending meetings</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interagency coordinating body</strong></th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WorkAbility on a state level</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CDE at the WorkAbility level</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOR coordinating person-centered planning</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Roles and responsibilities clearly articulated</strong></th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To train special education teachers</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To bring information about agency to group</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborate for DOR Services with agency partner</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Formal interagency agreement</strong></th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memorandum of Understanding</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures are evaluated annually** | 0 |

In Table 4 the 11 KTATs are shown with the frequencies related to Research Question 1: *How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?*

Applying Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming provided an evidence-based framework by which semi-structured interview questions identified and described transition specialists’ perception of their preparedness in transition.
programming. Results from analysis of data for Research Question 1 showed that themes ranged in frequency from 30 to 0. For Research Question 1, the researcher selected themes with frequencies of 10 or greater as more important themes to the study. The low frequency themes (nine and below), are interview responses that were representative of the 11 Elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming by the transition specialists, they did not come up more often, because the transition specialists already employed these elements, they were not perceived as an issue or a problem that needed addressing. Using this selection criterion, Table 4 indicates that transition specialists identified the themes of cross agency professional development provided, systems barriers to collaboration are minimized, established methods of communication among all service providers, and data shared among agencies via established procedures as more important.

Listed in Table 5 are the 11 KTATs and the frequencies related to Research Question 2: How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

Table 5

Frequencies for KTATs from Research Question 2 (RQ2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>RQ2 Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
<td>Cross trainings LPA area of focus</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invite all partners to relevant workshops</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To build capacity of agency staff</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Given to special education teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LPAs as training tools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WAI-regional center training</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contract administrator training/cross training</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WAI-regional center training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross trainings LPA area of focus</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invite all partners to relevant workshops</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To build capacity of agency staff</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Given to special education teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LPAs as training tools</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WAI-regional center training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contract administrator training/cross training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and responsibilities clearly articulated</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact representatives identified</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources/services provided by agencies identified</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency partners provide updates and follow-ups</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified by flow chart</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead agency identified</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional center identified</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead partners identified</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELPA representative</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR for Student Services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA for IEP</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR for Work Incentive Planning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE director named</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal interagency agreement</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA for LEAs with regional center</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA for LEAs with DOR</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPA written document</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and documents to assist teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching common language for student access</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR’s, regional center’s unrealistic process discussion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Community tool for enrolling students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement not to wordsmith every word</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Established methods of communication among all service providers</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoning and texting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Docs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List serves from partner agencies/LEAs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional center’s publicly accessible internet website</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR’s main internet page</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inviting non-core partners to meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data shared among agencies via established procedures</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Release of information consent forms</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment of employment related services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDS tracking methodologies to assess outcomes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical information releases</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR database for CIE outcomes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designated transition contact person from each agency</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional center</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR district administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA special education director</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared understanding of educational and agency policy and procedures</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WAI presentation explaining grant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted Employment First Policy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to share with regional center</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of person-centered plan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SharePoint site developed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interagency coordinating body</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LPA core partners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Community of Practice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOR, LEAs, regional center, and community partners focused on employment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional center, DOR, LEAs and NPS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures are evaluated annually</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 5 details the 11 KTATs and the frequencies related to Research Question 2:

*How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?*  Themes for Research Question 2 ranged in frequencies from 27 to 0. The researcher selected themes with frequencies of 10 or greater as more important themes for Research Question 2. The low frequency themes (nine and below), are interview responses that were representative of the 11 Elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming by the
transition specialists, they did not come up more often, because the transition specialists already employed these elements, they were not perceived as an issue or a problem that needed addressing. Using this selection criterion Table 5 shows that the KTATs that are more important to the study are cross agency professional development, roles and responsibilities, lead agency identified, formal interagency agreement, systems barriers to collaboration minimized, and methods of communication.

In addition to the KTATs, 3 emergent themes developed from Research Question 1 relating to the participants’ perceptions of preparedness in transition programming. These emergent themes resulted from codes that arose from the analysis of the interview of the three participants. Table 6 reveals the three emergent themes for Research Question 1 along with their codes and frequencies.

Table 6

Emergent Themes for RQ 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>RQ1 Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With partner agencies to streamline resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About regional center and DOR programs and resources with parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During meetings with flyers/trifolds/brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping teachers knowledgeable</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources in Google Drive</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With school boards/LEA fiscal</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training tool with secondary teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Along with the KTATs, three themes emerged from coding and analyzing the interview data for Research Question 1: *How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?* These emergent themes ranged in frequency from 33 to 1.

For Research Question 1, the researcher selected themes with frequencies of 10 or greater as more important themes to the study. The low frequency themes (nine and below), are interview responses that were representative of the *11 Elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming* by the transition specialists, they did not come up more often, because the transition specialists already employed these elements, they were not perceived as an issue or a problem that needed addressing. Using this selection criterion, Table 6 shows that transition specialists identified the emergent themes of sharing information, interagency collaboration, and networking and relationship building as more important.
The four collaborative framework elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming that are not as important to the study for Research Question 1 and the five collaborative framework elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transitions Programming that are not as important for Research Question 2, are listed in Table 7. Based on the criterion of selecting themes with frequencies of 10 or greater, these frequencies were not as important to the study because they have frequencies of 9 or less. The low frequency themes (nine and below), are interview responses that were representative of the 11 Elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming by the transition specialists, they did not come up more often, because the transition specialists already employed these elements, they were not perceived as an issue or a problem that needed addressing.

It is important to note that in three instances the researcher used two different descriptors to represent the same KTAT. As they relate to Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming, these KTATs are synonymous. Table 8 lists the descriptors from both Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 showing their synonymousness.

Table 7
*The Five KTATs That Were Not as Important to The Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>RQ1 Frequency</th>
<th>RQ2 Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data shared via established procedures</td>
<td>(mi)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share educational and agency policy and procedures</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated transition contact person from each agency</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interagency coordinating body</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures are evaluated annually</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data shared via established procedures has a frequency of 10. It is more important to RQ1 and is depicted with (mi) for more important.
Table 8

**The Three Synonymous KTAT Descriptors in RQ1 and RQ2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>RQ2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional development across all agencies</td>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimized systems barriers to collaboration</td>
<td>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication methods</td>
<td>Established methods of communication among all service providers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8, presents the interchangeable KTAT descriptors in Research Question 1 and Research Question 2. The researcher felt this slight modification in descriptors was necessary to add clarity for distinguishing between Research Question 1 which addressed the transition specialists’ perception of preparedness for transition programming versus Research Question 2 which addressed the transition specialists’ perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs.

Table 9

**KTATs and Emergent Themes for RQ 1 and RQ 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>KTATs</th>
<th>Emergent</th>
<th>RQ1 Frequency</th>
<th>RQ2 Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interagency collaboration</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking and relationship building</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead agency identified</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(nai)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(nai)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal interagency agreement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(nai)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established methods of communication</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among all service providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data shared among agencies via established procedures</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Themes in RQ1 that were not as important to the study are shown with an (nai) for not as important. Themes in RQ2 that were not in the data are shown with a (nid).

Using the KTAT descriptors of cross agency professional development, systems barriers to collaboration minimized, and methods of communication, Table 9 shows the
KTATs and the emergent themes that were more important to the study. These themes were developed from the data analysis, and are presented along with the frequency of occurrences. In this study, multiple sources of artifacts were coded, thereby, corroborating the KTATs in addition to themes that emerged from the interviews. In Table 10 the KTATs and emergent themes from the participants’ interviews are listed showing how often they were authenticated by the study’s artifacts.

Table 10

*KTATs and Emergent Themes by Interviews and Artifacts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interagency collaboration</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking and relationship building</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal interagency agreement</td>
<td>(nai)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and responsibilities clearly articulated</td>
<td>(nai)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead agency identified</td>
<td>(nai)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established methods of communication among all providers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data shared among agencies via established procedures</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(nid)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The themes, cross agency professional development provided, systems barriers to collaboration are minimized, and established methods of communication among all providers, frequencies reflect aggregate data from RQ1 and RQ2. Themes in RQ1 that were not as important to the study are shown with an (nai) for not as important. Themes in RQ2 that were not in the data are shown with an (nid).

For triangulation, artifacts coding was analyzed to corroborate the data in the interviews. The KTATs and emergent themes that were determined to be more important to the study are listed in Table 10, along with the artifacts’ frequencies. The next step in coding was to classify the themes by the social theories of social network, structuration, conflict, and activity theory that were presented in the literature review chapter. Table 11 presents themes classified by social theories.
Table 11

*Themes Classified by Social Theories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Social Network</th>
<th>Structuration</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Activity Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development across agencies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimized barriers to collaboration</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interagency collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking and relationship building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal interagency agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead agency identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and responsibilities clearly articulated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established methods of communication among all service providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data shared among agencies via established procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 shows how the KTATs and emergent themes relate to the social theories. In this section, themes were developed from the data using the social theories of social network, structuration, conflict, and activity theory. Figure 12 displays the way in which the findings are presented in this section.

*Figure 12. A graphic representation of the organization of the interview data.*

The graphic depicts the KTATs and emergent themes revealed from interview data and artifacts for Research Question 1 and KTATs revealed in interview data and artifacts for Research Question 2. Themes for Research Question 1 and Research
Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked *How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler's Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?* Interview Question 1, from the semi-structured protocol, asked “Share with me your perception of your preparedness for transition programming.” Interview Question 1 included 11 prompts (a through k) for use, at the discretion of the interviewer, to assist the participant in providing a thorough answer. Table 12 shows the KTATs and emergent themes from Interview Question 1 for Research Question 1.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>KTAT</th>
<th>Emergent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development across agencies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimized barriers to collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interagency collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking and relationship building</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data shared among agencies via established procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 list the themes for Research Question 1. The themes are categorized by KTAT or emergent along with their frequencies. The frequencies range from 33 to 10.

**Theme 1: Sharing information.** The analysis revealed that one of the study’s major themes exemplified that transition specialists identified sharing information most frequently as the way they perceived themselves to be prepared for transition programming. This theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 33 and
verified from artifacts of flyers, emails, brochures, websites, conference programs, and agendas with a frequency of 20. The theme, sharing information was classified under the social network theory and its frequency is displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each participant pointed out numerous instances where sharing information with other agencies and parents was of enormous importance in the transition work they were doing. They explained that when parents are informed about available services and next steps for their transitioning children, parents are better equipped to support their children’s movement from school to the adult world. Participant 1 mentioned numerous times that parents are the first link that bridges the connection to adult agencies. By sharing information with parents, Participant 1 developed a stronger network which led to sharing of resources which helped to meet the student’s needs.

Some participants recounted the great strides their teams are undertaking to ensure that parents receive information about transition and agency partners, recognizing that transition is not fully understood by some parents. Participant 1 identified “We’re really actively trying to reach out to parents. I’ve been trying to have more parents involved in sort of what we’re doing and they really do appreciate that and I think we have parents that just don’t understand that much.” All participants stressed that sharing information involves connecting parents with community partners to supply accurate and comprehensive information. Participant 1 expressed that “I held a meeting last May with
all of my partners and parents. I held a meeting with about 40 partners from the
community, and chamber of commerce, because this impacts a lot of people.” Participant
1 further explained that sharing information involves striking a balance between sharing
information that is tailored to meet the needs of the community while accepting that some
details may not be immediately available, and recognizing that waiting can negatively
impact collaboration. Participant 1 described “I think you have to see what works within
each district but you have to share, even if you don’t have all of the information. This
makes people feel a part.” Participant 2 felt that sharing information with parents
circumvents the need for parents to start from the beginning when they move to other
agencies. “We have to make it easier for families to share what information they have
and they don’t have to then move to another organization and start from scratch”

Along with sharing information with parents, participants expressed the need to
connect with their partners from other agencies to streamline resources and decrease the
likelihood of gaps in services when the individual moves from the school system to the
adult system. Sharing information with other agencies takes into consideration legal
obligations to protect the individual’s privacy by acquiring proper consents.

Participant 1 explained,

You have to have the current releases to be able to share information with the
regional center. We have a consent to transfer information (form) the district has
that, and then the regional center and the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
also. For the regional center, we use our consent to transfer information (form)
and it has to be current, usually dated for the year. The Department of
Rehabilitation has their own forms; they are good for a year.
Participant 1 stressed sharing information to be a fundamental goal of transition programming. “I think we can teach districts and programs how to share that.”

Sharing information with parents and agencies promoted early involvement and equipped everyone with the tools needed to be successful. This point was reiterated by Participant 3 who stated “I got involved early on and it was also that whole idea of collaborating to share resources, so that we could all be successful in what we were trying to do. It’s really that collaboration has been a part of the whole process for me along the way.” Additionally, Participant 3 expressed that sharing information also included keeping teachers knowledgeable. “I can keep our teachers informed and share that information with them so that when they’re writing transition plans that they have all the information they need.”

**Theme 2: Professional development across agencies.** Another theme often presented through interviews and artifacts was professional development across agencies. Participants reiterated the integral role other agencies played in preparing them for transition programming. This theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 30 and verified from artifacts of agendas, emails, websites, conference programs, and flyers with a frequency of 14 and was classified under the activity theory. Table 14 shows the frequency of theme professional development across agencies found in the Interview Question 1.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional development across agencies</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants felt that learning the functions and language of other agencies offered invaluable training proving a firm foundation for future success. One participant expressed that “I went to training that was connected to the state and also CDE had a transition unit doing WorkAbility, those people came onboard and helped us learn about transition.” The participant went on to say, “they pointed out that training went both ways, where other agencies were committed and included in professional developments.” Another participant addressed the importance that learning each other’s vernacular played on their preparedness for transition programming when saying “we started structuring these broad regional center/WorkAbility cross trainings … we just started learning each other’s language.” The participants recalled that many trainings were attended by regional center staff and DOR staff. Participant 3 gave a personal perspective on the importance and benefits of cross training revealing that “I understand their categories of service and their functional definitions, so I feel I can … understand what they do.”

Theme 3: Minimized barriers to collaboration. Multiple barriers existed within agency systems that prevented or slowed the process of collaboration. All participants identified systemic barriers and pointed out methods to resolve them. The minimized barriers to collaboration theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 29 and verified from artifacts of agendas, emails, video conference invitations, flyers, fact sheets, and training materials with a frequency of 10. The theme was classified under the conflict theory. Table 15 displays the frequency for the theme, minimized barriers to collaboration.
Table 15

Theme 3: Frequency – Minimized Barriers to Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimized barriers to collaboration</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Each participant named the lack of a system for data sharing as a barrier to collaboration, identifying that this slows down collaboration across all agencies, and hinders their ability to assist in navigating through services. One participant noted that having a data system that is accessible for all service providers would streamline and support families and students.

We don’t have a system and I think that something is really lacking, something that we really need and if they are going to think about being student-focused, family-focused, to help them through this maze of transition, why do we not have a collaborative data system? Why would we not have some kind of a streamlined system, where we could have all the players develop it together?

This participant minimizes the lack of a data sharing system by using technology as a way of assembling service providers in planning. The participant stated that “in today’s world, my gosh, we could get everybody on a Zoom conference call.”

In addition to a data sharing system, one participant specified that a barrier that has been minimized involved building systematic ways for students in the preK-12 system to receive services from the DOR, noting that before, “our kids might accidentally have wandered into DOR on their own but there was no systematic way for that to happen and certainly not a way for it to happen prior to them leaving school.” This barrier was minimized by creating programs, such as the Transition Partnership Program.
(TPP) through DOR and the Paid Internship Program (PIP) through the regional center, that allowed schools and adult services to plan and provide transition services. The participant further explained:

That’s where the TPPs were gigantic as a model to start this conversation. Initial barriers were probably just that they were two different service areas, one was schools and the other was adult services. The regional center was somewhere in between, because they were like “don’t talk to us until they’re 21”, and yet, overtime, we’ve developed very similar proactive planning with them. We’re sharing each other’s resources and rather than us going in and fighting in meetings, our local regional centers celebrate the range of services that we have in our district. It's a very very different mode.

Participants pointed out that the absence of a referral system that provides information about services and programs that is presented in easily understandable formats, allowing teachers to stay abreast of transition services is a barrier to collaboration. Noting that mitigating knowledge deficits of teachers, minimizes system barriers to collaboration and improves the quality of transition programs, Participant 2 commented that, “I think a lot of the barriers are in communication, documenting, and knowing enough that we can share with the case carrier, so that they facilitate us in this process.”

Participants shared that often students who qualify for multiple contemporaneous agency support or who are transitioning from school to adult agencies, experience system barriers that delay or discontinue the student’s transition. One participant disclosed that
“We have a difficult time getting our students into supported employment or into the regional center.” Participants spoke of establishing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) as a way to minimize this barrier. “Our school district has a memorandum of understanding between themselves and the regional center about providing transition services,” Participant 3 shared.

**Theme 4: Interagency collaboration.** Interagency collaboration is necessary to run successful transition programming. It is integral to the functioning of the transition program because it involves all agencies which greatly increases the likelihood of a successful outcome for students when schools, agencies, and community partners team together. The interagency collaboration theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 26 and verified from artifacts of agendas and notes with a frequency of 13. The theme was classified under the social network theory. Table 16 describes the frequency of the theme, interagency collaboration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 4: Frequency – Interagency Collaboration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interagency collaboration</td>
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</table>

Participant 1 remarked, “You can’t run transition programs without inter-agency collaboration.” It adds continuity to the work of the programs as members retire or move, their knowledge is embedded in the system and remains. To be successful, interagency collaboration should be built into the operation of the agencies who mandate cooperation from the top down, sharing with new hires the expectation is to avail themselves to other agencies. One participant passionately echoed “I share with my new
people working on our current pilots that they’re expected to work with the agencies and therefore, they don’t know any different.”

Interagency collaboration is built into the fabric of effective transition programs that lead to successful transition programming. Participant 2 reportedly noted that “my initial training or background that led to student program structure or student transition planning started with working with both CDE at the WorkAbility level.” Participant 3 confidently shared, “a lot of the programs I was in were on transition and so I really got to learn the different laws as well as how it could be implemented in best practices and person driven-planning. I just really felt I had great preparation all along the way.”

**Theme 5: Networking and relationship building.** Transition programming involves knowing how to construct relationships; thereby, establishing connections to resources and services that aid families and students. Networking and relationship building emerged as a major theme because it was strongly identified as a way to effectively interact with other service providers and expeditiously negotiate connections to resources and services. The networking and relationship theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 20 and verified from artifacts of flyers, email, brochures, agendas, websites, and workshop materials with a frequency of 16. The theme was classified under the social network theory and is displayed in Table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 5</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking and relationship building</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Our agency partners are our colleagues and friends, so you treat your friends with respect and you value their opinions and discuss them”, shared Participant 1. Good
relationships are essential to networking as it allows trust to emerge which aids agency partners to solve problems on behalf of students and families. Participant 1, while adding thoughtful insight reflected:

Attending those IEP meetings, where they all knew each other and had begun that level of trust right, we weren’t going to stab a colleague and friend in the back. Many discussions and caucuses just made those meetings more doable as we were trying to keep very student-focused. Those things really helped us build those relationships.

Good networking allows for efficient application of student services by coalescing and trusting all agency players in a community environment. It allows for the negotiation of resources and services. Participant 3 posited, being involved in my community is what really helps for our students to be successful, because if we know what all the services are that are available to them that will really assist us in being able to get the right student into the right services they need to be successful in their transition.

Another Participant, while adding thoughtful insight reflected, “when you build trust and relationships with your partners, when you try something a little different or you want to push the edges a little bit, they are more willing to do that.”

**Theme 6: Communication methods.** Another theme often presented through interviews and artifacts was communication methods. Participants reiterated that communication is key to making connections and coordinating services. The communication methods theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 12 and verified from artifacts of flyers, email, brochures, agendas and a shared document on
Google Drive with a frequency of 9. The theme was classified under the structuration theory and is displayed in Table 18.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 6: Frequency – Communication Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant 3 described face-to-face meetings that takes place with partner agencies and spoke to the having the opportunity to meet on a regular basis. “We do have opportunities where we’re meeting on a regular basis as well as our director of our regional center agency and then in addition, I meet with our local One Stop Center, and our American Jobs Center.” Participant 1 noted, having had meetings with parents, partners and the impact that the meetings had on the group when disseminating new information. Participant 1 was noted as saying, “I held a meeting last May with all of my parents and about 40 partners from the community, chamber, because it’s going to impact a lot of people.” Recapping how meetings as a method of communication helped to lay down foundational infrastructure for building the transition program, Participant 2 added, We would have quarterly meetings, we were probably just sharing documents, email was obviously new, so some of the newer communications probably was from quarterly meetings they were more than quarterly in the beginning we simply did not have an infrastructure of how we were going to work together, we had to meet a lot, and kind of map out what we were going to be doing.

The participants listed other methods of communication including email, flyers, and utilization of the cloud storage service of Google Drive.
**Theme 7: Data shared among agencies via established procedures.** One of the major themes, demonstrated that transition specialists identified data shared via established procedures as being prepared for transition programming. This theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 10 and verified from artifacts of various agency forms with a frequency of 11 and was classified under the structuration theory. The theme of data shared among agencies via established procedures is displayed in Table 19.

Table 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 7</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data shared among agencies via established procedures</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant 1 recalled an experience supporting data sharing, “You have to have the current release to be able to share information with the regional center and the Department of Rehabilitation, we use the consent to transfer information (form).” Participant 2 shared, “The Department of Rehabilitation has their own forms they are good for a year, when students turn 18 you get a new one.” Participant 2 went on to note that as a result of DOR laws, those turning 18 have the right to sign their own consent form, therefore; allowing sharing via established procedures to become more efficient and expeditious.

Sharing data involved establishing procedures that made information accessible to those responsible for transition programming. “Then the data could be shared in the IEP and also we were collecting at our data system where the data was collected into our student files, it would be shared then with DOR”, Participant 2 explained. All
participants pointed out that initially, procedures for sharing data were established in
transition programming according to their needs.

Expressing that established procedures grew out of the demand for the type of
information needed, Participant 2 emphasized, “Then again, starting with very little
mandate about what kinds of data we were collecting based, on what the contract needed
then, we were starting to set up these systems and say here’s what DOR is going to need
from us in their progress reports, here is what we will be able to share with WorkAbility
for its end of the year reports or ongoing tracking of students’ progress and how that gets
put into IEP.”

Research Question 2

Question 2 asked “How do transition specialists perceive interagency
collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition
Programming?” All participants for the study were representatives of WorkAbility I
(WAI) projects in local educational agencies that have entered into LPAs. One of the
purposes of LPAs is to promote transition for individuals with ID/DD. The LPAs are not
standardized; therefore, each is designed to meet local needs. The services provided by
each LPA, the terminology used, and other differentiating details are the responsibility of
its core members.

Interview question 2 asked, “Share with me your perception of the collaboration
that exists in LPAs.” Interview question 2 included 11 prompts (a through k) for use, as
judged necessary by the interviewer, to assist the participant in providing a thorough
answer. The 11 elements listed in the collaborative framework in Kohler’s Taxonomy for
Collaborative Programming provided a checklist for the presence of interagency
collaboration and served as the working definition and standard for identifying interagency collaboration in the LPAs.

Of the 11 elements constituting a collaborative framework, as identified in Kohler's Taxonomy for Collaborative Programming and referred to as Kohler’s *Taxonomy for Collaborative Framework*, it became apparent that six elements were of greater importance in LPAs, during analysis of the participants’ responses to Research Question 2 and analysis of artifacts. Using the 11 elements listed in Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Framework as the themes for identifying interagency collaboration, the participants revealed that they viewed six of the 11 elements to be of more importance in LPAs. These themes are referred to as KTATs and are presented in Table 20.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KTATs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal interagency agreement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead agency identified</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and responsibilities clearly articulated</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established methods of communication among all service providers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20 presents the six KTATs that are found in Research Question 2. The themes’ frequencies range from 20 to 12.

**Theme 8: Cross agency professional development provided.** A KTAT theme often identified by participants through interviews and artifacts was cross agency professional development provided. Participants described how cross agency professional development in the LPAs improved knowledge, resulting in greater foundations in which to serve families and individuals. The cross agency professional
development provided theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 27 and verified from artifacts of agendas, emails, websites, conference programs, and flyers with a frequency of 10 and was classified under the structuration theory. The theme of cross agency professional development provided and its frequency is displayed in Table 21.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 8</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross agency professional development provided</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants felt their LPAs supported the notion that sharing agency operations, and future plans involving group members through trainings, to all partners, is vitally important. “We should not have a meeting or a training,” one participant remarked emphatically, “where we have not invited our partners, Department of Rehab, regional center, or family resource network.” It is believed that if trainings are relevant, participation will be high. After much pondering, Participant 1 stressed that, “I invite all partners … stakeholders to all workshops we feel would be relevant to them and I always try to have past WorkAbility students and TPP students … it doesn’t make sense to have meetings about students without students.” This further displays the awareness of the transition specialist to identify and continue to meet student needs past and present.

All participants noted that the goal of the LPA is to share knowledge through cross trainings by inviting all agency partners to relevant workshops and this should be accepted as the norm throughout the group. Participant 1 speaking to the importance of sharing information through cross training stated,
I think one of the things that we’ve done in our LPA is having all the partners come together and share what they are doing, updating what everybody is doing … We wanted our LPA to be like a training tool, that we could share with our secondary teachers.

Participant 2 supported the notion of cross training by LPA members and the benefit of cross agency training for building capacity of agency staff when stating,

That was probably one of the areas that locally we shined at. We realized right away that we needed the cross training that was part of the DOR contract. We turned it into a long range planning and feedback from the field and we started structuring these broad regional center/WorkAbility cross trainings.

The notion of cross training being of primary focus of the LPAs was reiterated by Participant 3 noting that cross agency professional development trainings have been provided to special education teachers and given through various agencies. Adding to the notion of the need to cross train, Participant 3 noted,

We were saying that in our county, in our LPA, our contract administrator did point out that some of the school districts that she had worked with didn’t really know anything about their agencies and that they were spending a lot of time having to train and cross train and really teach each other what they do.

**Theme 9: Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized.** Within interagency partnerships exist systems barriers to collaboration. Systems barriers within agency systems can hamper or dawdle interagency collaboration. All participants identified ways that the LPAs minimized systems barriers by allowing partners to engage
The theme, systems barriers to collaboration are minimized was observed from interview data with a frequency of 15 and verified from artifacts agendas, emails, video conference invitations, flyers, fact sheets, and training materials with a frequency of 14 and was classified under the conflict theory. Table 22 exhibits the interview and artifact frequency.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 9</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systems barriers to collaboration are minimized</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding how adult agencies work is difficult if one has not had formal training and experience to develop strong knowledge about them. Participant 3 agrees that this is a systems barrier to collaboration,

To some degree, I can see how somebody else might not if they’ve never had that opportunity to study them. I think that not even understanding their agencies could be a barrier, but I’ve been fortunate to say that I understand the criteria for becoming a Department of Rehabilitation client. I’ve had training on that. I know what that means. Same thing for the regional center. I understand their categories of service and their functional definitions, so for me, I feel like I can completely enter into an agreement with them and understand what they do.

A lack of understanding of the referral process, services, and resources was a barrier identified by all participants. Participant 2 affirmed, “It probably still goes to
referrals. Do we have a formal way of making sure that it’s not just the case carrier that needs to discover this?” To minimize systems barriers to collaboration, participants reported that the LPAs created comprehensive resources and documents such as brochures and handouts that assisted teachers as facilitators in IEPs. The LPAs have initiated resources intended to minimize the confusion and misunderstandings commonly associated with the referral process. Participant 2 expressed,

I know that in my district after we signed our initial LPA then we started doing our second layer. Identifying that the intention of the LPA action was to provide an additional layer of support to assist a teacher, as a facilitator, so that the teacher would be able to hand a family something thorough enough, something that was more than a telephone number.

At times, because of systems barriers, collaboration between transition specialists and adult agencies is unreliable and inadequate resulting in delays and squandered time.

Another barrier to collaboration is data sharing. All participants reported that this has been an ongoing barrier for decades, largely due to privacy protection acts and multiple laws that govern state agencies. Participant 3 declared,

When I first started in transition there was a group that was working on collaboration sharing data. I feel that this has been an ongoing issue for the past 30 years that hasn’t moved very much. I guess I would say that I’m hopeful that our LPAs can make some differences in that area, but at the same time, I think locally we can do what we should do.

As a way to minimize systems barriers to data sharing, Participant 3 added that the LPA is “looking at community pro which is a tool where we can enroll our youth or
participants you know with the proper agreements and that we would be able to share information.”

**Theme 10: Formal interagency agreement.** Analysis of interviews and artifacts showed that participants identified a formal interagency agreement in LPAs as a KTAT theme. Participants disclosed that LPAs established interagency agreements between partners whereby all partners committed to agree on actions intended to improve services and streamline resources. This theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 16 and verified from artifacts of memorandums of understanding and LPA documents with a frequency 6 and was classified under the structuration theory. Table 23 shows the theme, formal interagency agreement.

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 10</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal interagency agreement</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Participants report that the LPAs have formal interagency agreements. Having a formal documented interagency agreement in the LPAs clearly defines the level of commitment that each partner is making. Participant 2 acknowledged the importance of the interagency agreement in the LPA by explaining that as local agreements expand they create formal links to multiple partners. The LPAs document the formal connection between multiple agencies, sparking innovative courses of actions for agencies to collaboratively serve. Participant 2 emphasized, “I see them maturing by the amount of people that they connect to.”
Participants pointed out that formal interagency agreements assist when local educational agencies do not have transition programs. Having a formal interagency agreement in the LPAs helps to support transition in local educational agencies that do not have WAI projects by giving them access to transition programs offered in adult agencies. One participant reiterated that having a formal interagency agreement in LPAs streamlines the need for multiple MOUs and other agreements in that the LPA is composed of multiple local educational agencies and numerous agency partners.

**Theme 11: Lead agency identified.** The theme, lead agency identified, was a KTAT theme that participants singled out as being in LPAs when describing interagency collaboration in LPAs. In addition to the participants, this KTAT theme emerged from artifacts. Participants recounted practices in the LPAs that demonstrated that the LPAs identified lead agencies. This theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 17 and corroborated from artifacts of LPA documents, agendas, notes, and emails with a frequency of 14. The lead agency identified theme was classified under the structuration theory. Table 24 shows the interview and artifact frequencies for Theme 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 11</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead agency identified</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants noted that the core partners of the LEA, DOR, and regional center took the lead in the LPAs. They often elected the chair from the group irrespective of the agency. The lead agency was determined by having the largest impact on the group, i.e., they carried out most of the duties leading by example. Participant 1 shared that “The
regional center took the lead with their secretary to keep things going … they always sent out the notices and that kind of stuff.”

Even though lead partners are identified, the goal has been to expand the LPA membership in an attempt to augment stakeholder participation to include those who can impact the goals of the group. No specific single lead agency is identified instead as projects are undertaken, those agencies with expertise assumed the role as lead agency to complete tasks. Participant 3 stressed, “For us, we’re all sort of taking the lead in different aspects.” However, Participant 1 clarified that although not formally identified DOR in most cases assumed the role of lead agency “I would say that if there was any lead agency, I would say the department of rehabilitation their contract administrator has been the one.”

**Theme 12: Roles and responsibility clearly articulated.** Within interagency partnerships exists the need to define roles and responsibilities of the multiple partners. Clearly elucidated expectations with designated partners responsible for implementation of tasks is delineated in LPAs. The roles and responsibility clearly articulated theme was observed from interview data with a frequency of 17 and corroborated from artifacts of LPA documents, notes and emails with a frequency of 15 and was classified under the structuration theory. Table 25 displays the frequencies for Theme 12, roles and responsibilities.

Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 12</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roles and responsibility clearly articulated</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

133
Participants expressed that within the LPAs all partners are left with the onus of bringing their content area expertise to the team. Agency partners provide updates and are required to follow up with actions specific to the programs and projects unique to their agency. The Roles and responsibilities of participants are those connected to the LEAs they represent.

One participant expressed that “My role is to implement the transition programs, it is to oversee and manage our WorkAbility and our transition partnership program and the other transition programs that we participate in.” The participant went on to establish that, “My scope is pretty much in the transition programming that we bring into our district, the two grants that I oversee and in addition to those, I work with our special education team to provide training on transition planning.” Participant 2 recalled that defining roles is a basic strength of the LPA, knowledge of the roles and responsibilities was primarily absent or inaccurate until the advent of the LPAs. Participant 2 speaking to the importance of roles and responsibilities said that,

There was a flow chart that said who does that, who starts it, where it is ended, on what’s my role, what’s your role, what do we do if some of these things break down, that became much more formalized in the LPA.

LPAs listed agency partners’ roles and responsibilities for a person-centered collaboration process. They described themselves as playing a pivotal role in transition by ensuring that all service providers knew contact representatives from all partner agencies along with the resources and services they provided.
**Theme 13: Established methods of communication among all service providers.** In participants’ interview responses and corroborated in artifacts, the KTAT established methods of communication among all service providers was indicated as an interagency collaboration element that was present in LPAs. It was reported that LPAs established several procedures for dissemination of information between partners. The theme, established methods of communication among all service providers, was observed from interview data with a frequency of 12 and corroborated from artifacts of flyers, email, brochures, agendas and a shared document on Google Drive with a frequency of 9. The theme was classified under the structuration theory. Table 26 shows Theme 13.

Table 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 13</th>
<th>Interview Frequency</th>
<th>Artifact Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established methods of communication among all service providers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants 1, 2, and 3 speak to the various methods of distributing information to LPA partners, which builds a reservoir of knowledge leading to greater work, efficiency and effectiveness. Participant 3 addressed this phenomenon when saying, “our core partners meet physically quarterly and information is disseminated to their partners. We do a lot of our communication through email and we have a shared drive that we used to share information.” Participant 2 shared a similar experience in their LPA suggesting that, “We would have quarterly meetings, we were probably just sharing documents and email.” They go on to note that there were lots of interactions, emails, webinars,
meetings and check-ins with LPA members and agency partners, between teachers, employers, parents and students that are now more formalized because of the LPAs.

**Summary**

Chapter IV covered findings from interviews and artifacts relevant to the qualitative case study with the purpose of identifying and describing the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, this chapter revealed findings relating to the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs. Responses from the semi-structured interview questions that addressed the research questions were collected. The methodology included organizing the themes by the social theories of social network, structuration, conflict, and activity theory.

Key findings were that transition specialists perceived their preparedness for transition programming by utilizing most frequently two of the 11 elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Framework. Their transition programs also incorporated three emergent themes that they perceived prepared them for providing transition programming. Analysis of the data showed that transition specialists’ perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs included six elements of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Framework. Chapter V analyzes the findings while reporting on the implications and making recommendations for future research in the field. Chapter V will conclude with comments and further considerations.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) need distinct supports and services to help develop the skills that lead to successfully attaining competitive integrated employment. This need is championed by multiple state agencies, providing the pathways to engage in competitive integrated employment (CIE); however, employment data for this population dismally falls behind without accurate employment data decisions affecting their economic futures. This is where the services and supports of transition programming are illuminated, and assist students with ID/DD in their evolution into adult life.

Research has shown when transition programming and interagency collaboration are interlinked positive outcomes are the typical results. Local partnership agreements (LPAs) exist to improve transition services for individuals with ID/DD through the promotion of interagency collaboration. Locally, transition specialists in WorkAbility I (WAI) projects are responsible for entering into LPAs. Identifying and describing transition specialists’ perception of preparedness and exploring their perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs can result in stronger, more effective LPAs that meet the transition needs of students with ID/DD as they move into adult agencies.

This study is organized into five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter I is an introduction to the study. Chapter II is a review of literature regarding employment for the ID/DD population, collaborative interagency efforts to improve employment outcomes through laws, policies, secondary transition, the WAI program, and LPAs. It presented WAI transition specialist’s role in developing LPAs, using evidence-based secondary transition programming and the use of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition
Programming 2.0 (Taxonomy) for identifying the preparedness of transition specialists. Chapter III elucidates the research design and the methodology used in this study. This chapter includes the population, sample, and data gathering procedures that were used to analyze the data that were gathered. Chapter IV presents, analyzes, and provides a discussion of the findings of the study. Chapter V contains the summary of the study, beginning with a restatement of the purpose statement, research questions, methodology, population, and sample. Included in Chapter V are the major and unexpected findings resulting from analyzing the qualitative case study data. The chapter concludes with recommendations and actions for further research.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, it was the purpose to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs.

**Research Questions**

1. How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?
2. How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

**Methodology**

The methodology used to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs responsible for interagency collaboration was a
qualitative case study. To gain an in-depth understanding of the WAI transition specialists’ perceptions of their preparedness regarding transition programming and their perceptions of interagency collaboration in LPAs, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interview questions consisting of open-ended questions were employed as a method of extracting as much information from the participant as possible without restricting responses. The researcher in this study experienced the participants in their lived environments. The researcher incorporated data collected from artifacts from workshop materials, conference programs, video conference invitations, training materials, agendas, notes, flyers, emails, brochures, websites, fact sheets, Google Docs, agency forms, memorandums of understanding, and LPA documents as part of data analysis.

**Target Population**

As stated by Patton (2015), a target population of a research study is defined as the population of participants included in the study best addressing the research questions. All WAI projects must be entered into fully developed LPAs by 2022, as mandated by the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint. Coupled with that mandate, the California Department of Education obligates all WAI projects to have started the requirement of entering into LPAs by June 30, 2019. As of October 2018, per the WAI website (WAI Central, 2019), they were in three stages of entering into LPAs namely, finished writing; had meetings with parties involved; and posted on the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA) website. There were 65 WAI transition specialists in LPAs as viewed on the CHHSA website (CHHSA, 2017).
Sample

These specialists are skillful in articulating their experiences in a thoughtful, and concise manner. Purposeful sampling is often successful and advantageous when conducting a study requiring efficiency with few resources, it provides the researcher the ability to select those individuals or groups of individuals willing to participate in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). When it comes to purposeful sampling, the researcher chose individuals and sites that importantly inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2014; Patten, 2012).

Three transition specialists from the target population of eight were selected as the sample, as they were accordant with participating and available during the research period. Having a sample size of three was appropriated because as Creswell (2007) states, the “types of qualitative case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether the case involves one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity” (p. 74). According to discussions by Patten (2012), “when it is impractical to study an entire population, researchers draw a sample, they study it and infer, what is true for the sample is probably also true for the population” (p.43). In discussing our support for using purposeful sampling, we anticipate that this method will provide the documentation needed to address the questions regarding how transition specialists perceive their preparedness for a transition programming and interagency collaboration in LPAs. Additionally, all participants have experienced transition programming and interagency collaboration in LPAs, which makes criterion sampling a good fit for this study.

Creswell (2013) felt that, “it is essential that all participants have experience of the
phenomenon being studied. Criterion sampling works well when all individual studies being studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 155). The researcher began the selection process by contacting the entire target population (8) by telephone and, or email inviting them to participate in the study.

**Major Findings**

The researcher coded interview data of three participants into themes, then compared and selected themes based on their frequency. Comparison of the themes assisted the researcher in describing how they related to transition specialists’ perception of preparedness in transition programming and transition specialists’ perception of interagency collaboration in local partnership agreements. Major findings from the data are explained through the perspective of one of the four social theories namely, social network, structuration, conflict, and activity theory, based on the finding’s relevance to the social theory. The four social theories explain behaviors, activities, and relationships as they exist within the study of interagency collaboration. The major findings are organized and summarized by research questions and then classified by social theory.

**Research Question 1**

*How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?*

**Finding 1: Information received prepared transition specialists for their position.** Transition specialists prepared for the job of transition programming as a result of providing and receiving information. This sharing of information was of grave importance in many instances as it affected the likelihood of services received by children and families. Participants noted that by sharing information their networks were
bolstered, working units were better equipped to answer the needs of their recipients leading to greater service. Every student is expected to receive competitive integrated employment; therefore, it must be the goal of all California educators (Whittenburg et al., 2018). This can be accomplished by providing students and families information regarding CIE and the opportunities that exist to help students better prepare for and participate in a workplace with other adults with and without disabilities (Employment First Policy, 2013). The goal for CIE is strengthened by a strong knowledge base which is built by information sharing.

Participants described their competency in information sharing as a result of years of building information systems that supported the dissemination of information to parents, state agencies and community partners. In understanding how sharing information enhances the participants’ knowledge of services and resources available for individuals with disabilities, it is useful to consider sharing information as collaborative support given and received through social networks. The social network theory explains the connection between a transition specialist’s preparedness similar to the way Balkundi and Kilduff (2005) used it to examine the connection between a teacher’s success and their commitment to their work careers.

**Finding 2: Cross agency professional development contributes to preparedness of transition specialists.** When describing cross agency professional development, participants placed heavy emphasis on programming with a sharp focus on evidence-based transition services. Providing professional development that focuses on evidence-based transition services can help states and local districts to increase the capacity of staff as they strive to deliver transition services to students with disabilities.
Participants acknowledge that ongoing professional development and trainings prepare them to deliver services. They disclosed that having additional training about the services that adult agencies provide strengthened their confidence and the likelihood of performing transition services. Morningstar and Benitez (2013) showed in a study that there is a correlation between the frequency in which secondary special educators perform transition practices and their preparation.

One participant noted a feeling of confidence and being comfortable providing transition programming because of the formal transition training the participant received. The participant shared, “I just really felt I had a great preparation all along the way. That’s really kind of made me to where I feel very confident and comfortable providing transition programming in my district.” When carefully planned to meet the capacity building needs of the audience, cross agency professional development can be explained through activity theory. Activity theory is appropriate to analyze human interactions and their outcomes through the use of their tools and artifacts (Hashim & Jones, 2007).

Activity theory will help to conceptualize interagency collaboration activities that help to build capacity through professional learning across agencies (Warmington et al., 2004). Activity theory explains that the collaboration between the organizations influences the actors that work together and makes a direct impact on the result.

**Finding 3: The lack of interconnecting data systems across all agencies is a barrier to collaboration.** All participants recognized that there were systemic barriers that inhibited the seamless transition from preK-12 education to adult agencies and pointed out methods to resolve them. The absence of a data sharing system slows down
collaboration across all agencies, and hinders the ability to assist in navigating through services.

One participant noted that having a data system that is accessible for all service providers would streamline and support families and students:

We don’t have a system and I think that something is really lacking, something that we really need and if they are going to think about being student focused, family focused, to help them through this maze of transition, why do we not have a collaborative data system? Why would we not have some kind of a streamlined system, where we could have all the players develop it together?

This participant minimizes the lack of a data system by using technology as a way of assembling service providers in planning. The participant stated that “in today’s world, my gosh, we could get everybody on a Zoom conference call.” Conflict theory is a social theory that embraces disagreement and utilizes conflict to engage authentic discussion and promote genuine change that results in new agreements, collaborative activities and rules. Conflict theory is depicted with struggle and accompanying change (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). The application of conflict theory to this finding explains the participants’ undertaking to embrace systems barriers, setting a course of action that engaged authentic discussion regarding mechanisms and approaches to minimize barriers through change.

Finding 4: Interagency collaboration coalesces all agencies into a group of like-minded members for the benefit of members. Transition services that include interagency collaboration is one of the predictors of successful employment outcomes for
individuals with disabilities (Kohler et al., 2016). Participants noted that no successful transition program can function without interagency collaboration. Viewing interagency collaboration found in transition programming through the social network theory, serves to inform the manner in which relationships help to strengthen ties that connect transition specialists to service provider networks. As noted by Zaheer et al. (2010), organizations maintain strong interagency collaboration through relationships. The strength of the relationships has a direct effect on the strength of the collaboration and performance outcomes. Participants felt that their preparedness was closely aligned to improving the collaboration between agencies that provided services for individuals with ID/DD. Participant 1 after much consideration expressed, “I feel very strongly that you can’t run transition programs without interagency collaboration.” Through collaboration, resources and key services are leveraged across agencies (Korbel et al., 2011; Noonan et al., 2012; Plotner et al., 2017). Interagency collaboration is the framework upon which best practice transition programs are built.

**Finding 5: Networking and relationship building is the initial stimulus that creates a collaborative effort.** Responses from the three participants disclosed that good relationship building allows trust to nurture and grow. They felt that having strong relationships ushered in esprit de corps that allowed them to solve difficult problems with efficient application. Participants commented that when you have built trust with your partners, you can take a more aggressive position and your partners are more willing to acquiesce. Participant 1 spoke of the great relationships that were fostered with regional centers and the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) because of their effort to meet together during brown bag lunches where they talked and cleared up misperceptions.
Continuing the practice for years, of meeting frequently outside of a formal meeting setting, afforded participants the opportunity to develop trusting relationships with agency partners. Here Participant 1 recalled the significance of establishing a strong network and relationships,

I didn’t really have a lot of time to do that, but I knew it was important. I got to know a lot of the regional center folks that way, the director, and a lot of the supervisors. Whoever wanted to come. We had these lunches and would sort of just hash it out over lunch.

The social network theory examines networks’ functions and how their components relate, as stated by Bossche and Segers (2013), it is used to describe the relationship between individuals and groups within an agency. In this situation, it was social network theory’s application that helped to develop the relationships between the agency partners.

**Research Question 2**

*How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?*

To address Research Question 2, the participants were asked an open-ended interview question prompting them to speak about their perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs. For analysis of this data, identifying the specific elements of interagency collaboration found in LPAs requires establishing a definition of the term interagency collaboration within the context of secondary transition. With this focus area, the eleven collaborative framework elements in Taxonomy served as the working definition and standard for identifying interagency collaboration in the context of LPAs.
When participants identified and described elements found in Taxonomy during the interview, those mentioned elements were coded to respective themes. The rest of the major findings presented in this chapter are the results of data analysis for Research Question 2.

Finding 6: Cross agency professional development is a critical element of LPAs. Participants believe that their LPAs share knowledge through cross trainings recognizing it as a major method of building the skill capacity of core members and agency staff. Learning the operations, language and needs of fellow members enhances the symbiotic relationship of the group which adds trust to the collaborative effort. With numerous programs provided from multiple partner agencies, structuration theory supplies the theoretical framework for designing professional development that builds the skill and knowledge base of staff across agencies. It offers a theoretical foundation from which to analyze interagency collaborations as social systems that transform due to changes in structures, norms, resources, cultural values, and rules of the collaboration members’ organizations (Kramer et al., 2017). After reflecting on whether the LPA considered cross agency professional development to be essential, Participant 2 stated, “That was probably one of the areas that locally we shined at. We realized right away that we needed cross training.” Another participant addressed the importance of providing cross agency professional development by stating,

That should just be a requirement, some kind of action item. We need to get people when you send out the initial invitation. So now, I will hold three slots for regional center and for DOR. I just told them, I’m setting up something, not as an afterthought. You need to get people to say, “I’m
going to hold slots for our agency partners”. Now, when we’re doing something, they’ll come to me and ask how many are we holding for partners. If we have 25 let’s save five for them. You just got to put that into people's consciousness. It just has to be a regular thing. Because I’ve been guilty of that, I said, we need to agree as an LPA that this needs to be a goal of all of ours.

It is beneficial to use structuration theory to view and study the ways in which continuous communication helps to manage the incompatibility between participation and efficiency (Kramer et al., 2017). In this case, tailored professional development that informs all agencies’ staff bridges the knowledge gap thereby creating greater efficiency.

**Finding 7: Local partnership agreements are critical to identifying lead agencies and establishing roles and responsibilities.** All participants expressed that the person-centered approach of assuring that the LPA referenced, within the agreement, the intent to instruct core members, and to establish agencies critical to supporting individuals toward future employment. In these agreements, the consistent thread running through all of them was the need for collaboration from all agency members. The roles and responsibilities of various agencies were communicated and the skills of members were augmented to achieve the best return on services for the benefit of youth with disabilities (Leadership Workgroup, 2018). One participant recalled that identifying the lead agency for projects, along with explaining member’s roles and responsibilities offered resources of support to help with planning and developing decisions for individuals. It was anticipated that delineating roles and responsibilities also serves to educate the three core partners about their agencies’ roles. As pointed out by Riesen et
al. (2014), many agencies, while understanding their roles and responsibilities, often neglect to comprehend the similar roles of other transition team members.

Structuration theory explains the individuals' behaviors in the LPAs based on their roles and responsibilities. Here, already existing structures from partner agencies help the LPA to establish processes for interagency collaboration within the LPA. According to structuration theory, there is duality when thinking about the structure of a group. Through supporting structures, such as resources, and constraining structures, such as rules, individual behavior is explained. The structure of a group can limit and/or empower the actions of its members (Scott & Myers, 2010). Participants pointed out the importance of assigning members to roles, including lead agencies and giving them responsibilities for specific projects based upon their agencies’ resources along with their agencies’ constraints.

**Finding 8: Using several methods of communication to disperse information among service providers is important.** For purposes of understanding the importance of establishing methods of communication between all service providers, it is beneficial to use structuration theory to view and study the ways in which collaboration members’ continuous communication helps to manage the incompatibility between participation and efficiency (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Kramer et al., 2017). All participants list various methods of circulating information to LPA group members, knowing that the methods of communication are a pivotal function when spreading information is vitally important. Participant 3 responded to methods of communication by saying that the core members meet face to face quarterly to share knowledge. Much of their communication is executed through emails, texts, phone, mail, and a shared drive. Participant 2 noted
similarly that they have quarterly meetings and shared documents through emails. They go on to say that interaction is ongoing through webinars, meeting informally, emails, and check ins with LPA members, agency partners, teachers, parents, and various stakeholders. As a result of utilizing various methods of communication the LPA communication chain has become more standardized, rapid, readily available, and dependable.

**Unexpected Findings**

The researcher discovered four unexpected findings through the analysis of data obtained from participant interviews and associated artifacts. These findings related to, minimization of systems barriers to collaboration on a local level, evidence of improved services and streamlined resources, student inclusion, and the lack of a formal evaluation process of the LPAs.

**Unexpected Finding 1: Systems Barriers to Collaboration Were Minimized on a Local Level**

This finding speaks to the value of relationships and interagency collaboration in transition programming. This is supported by data received in this study by a participant who said. “The regional center, Department of Rehabilitation, and Family Resource Networks are our friends, I can call them anytime to join in on a meeting, we have that much respect for each other.” The systems barrier of data sharing is difficult to alleviate on a state level. However, on a local level, because of long term cultivated relationships, transition specialists have found a way to bring success to this process. Participants supported data obtained in this study when stating that by building trust and relationships
with your collaborative members, they are apt to see and agree with your needs and points of view.

**Unexpected Finding 2: Interagency Collaboration, Produced Anecdotal Data**

**Corroborating Positive Outcomes**

The LPAs have only existed since May 2017, after the posting of the *Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint*; therefore, no quantitative data are available. There is, however, documented evidence of improved services and streamlined resources resulting from interagency collaboration of the LPAs. One participant noted, “You can use your agency partners and your WorkAbility friends to help move through the process. I’ve got a great relationship with DDS, now. I just reach out to them.”

Participants expressed the need to connect with their partners from other agencies as a way of streamlining resources and lowering the possibility that when students move from the school system to the adult system, services will maintain their continuity. One participant relates an incident addressing interagency collaboration over the years with various contacts in the state, they were able to secure money to operate unfunded programs, the participant recalled that, “WorkAbility was a grassroots movement, you knew lots of people in the state. I reached out to a contact, who happened to have TPP money to fund my program.” This exemplifies improving services and funding programs through interagency collaboration.

**Unexpected Finding 3: Transition Specialists Providing Transition Programming**

**Include Students in the Process**

Kohler et al. (2016) states that school staff, counselors, and service provider engage in planning meetings with students and families. Each transition specialist, since
the onset of their careers saw the significance of including students when planning their transition. In referring to the inclusion of students, one transition specialist said, “nothing about me, without me.” Today there is a person-centered focus in transition programming. However, this was not always the case.

**Unexpected Finding 4: No Evidence Was Provided to Verify That LPAs Evaluated Their Interdisciplinary and Interagency Policy and Procedures Annually**

According to Participant 1, they do not evaluate the LPA’s policy and procedures annually. However, Participant 1 stated, “I try to do a year in review with data numbers.” Participant 1 further explains that these data numbers are presented to the school board as proof of outcomes. Annual evaluation of interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures are integral in the framework of interagency collaboration. Listed as the 11th collaborative framework element in Taxonomy, according to Kohler et al. (2016) this policy assists in evaluating the efficiency of an interagency group. When non-existent, opportunities to improve the collaboration of group members may be lessened. Lack of an annual evaluation of interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures may result in missed opportunities to improve upon or make changes to the collaborative mechanisms of the group. This element continues the process of on-going evaluation used to determine efficiencies of the interagency group.
Conclusions

The conclusions obtained from the findings of the research and connected to the literature review reveal the following:

**Conclusion 1: When Transition Specialists Are Not Provided Professional Development, Participation in Programs with Adult Agency Partners Will Not Succeed**

Through the interviews, it was disclosed that participants received formal education through universities and each possessed teaching credentials. The goal of transition specialists’ education is to lead to employment in the field of transition programming. Participants remarked how formal training from their education programs and school districts on IDEA and transition did not prepare them for the level of transition programming that leads to employment. Transition specialists must endeavor to form relationships with adult agency partners that are incorporated into their professional development and their WAI grant requirements.

**Conclusion 2: Local Partnership Agreements Are Critical to Sharing of Information and Resources**

Federal Partners (2015) noted that no single agency can address all of the transition needs of youth. Therefore, consistent service delivery is best achieved through partnerships across agencies. Recognizing that no single agency can provide transition, the transition specialists report that there has been a huge shift and willingness to join the collaborative effort to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. They noted that since the LPAs, they have seen more community partners engaged in discussions regarding transition and most importantly, creating early pathways to
employment. The LPAs meet on a regular basis with LPA partners to discuss best practice for providing supports and services to mutual clients. It is during this time, that authentic discussion transpires regarding how to serve through the creation of innovative programs and delivery services. Much was added about making connections during this time. Transition specialists expressed that the LPAs formalized interagency collaboration by putting into place what they had initiated, individually, without much school district support. Now, with the inception of LPAs, they perceive interagency collaboration is taking place in the increase of information sharing about events, and services for families, parents, and businesses. If this continues, the expected implications are, more efficient use of resources related to the referral process, minimizing duplication of services, and reducing the likelihood of a termination in services as the individual leaves one system and moves to the next.

**Conclusion 3: Transition Specialists Who Lack Knowledge of Education and Education Laws Will Fail at Transition Programming**

Being prepared for transition programming involves extending one’s skills beyond those that are provided through formal education. It is well proven that connections to other agencies provides opportunities to expand transition through coaching supports, work-based learning, work experience, etc. for students with disabilities. Evidence-based transition programming models that incorporate collaboration has proven to be a predictor of positive post-school outcomes in both education and employment (Flowers et al., 2018; Plotner et al., 2017). Transition specialists recalled that connecting with others, and building trusting relationships are pivotal to transition programming; therefore, it is imperative that transition preparedness
include the establishment of trust. Through open conversations and recognizing that personal relationships help support one’s professional success, trust is built.

**Conclusion 4: Transition Programming Resulting in Successful Employment Outcomes Must Connect with Adult Agency Providers**

Transition services using the efforts of agency service providers and cross collaborative efforts lead to positive transition outcomes, (NTACT, 2017). Data from the study supports the research that states successful transition programs can only exist with interagency collaboration. It is incumbent upon decision makers in transition programming to ensure that the environment for interagency collaboration is responsive, live, and well. To do less, would adversely affect the future success for individuals with ID/DD.

**Conclusion 5: Agreements Between Local Partnerships That Lack Formal Agreements That Distinguish Roles and Responsibilities of the Partnership Will Fail**

The lack of informing agency partners about the roles and responsibilities of other members causes a disconnect in the sharing of knowledge (Riesen et al., 2014). When agreements fully communicate roles and responsibilities of various agencies, many of the benefits of collaboration are exposed. According to Leadership Workgroup (2018), once roles and responsibilities are made know to members, the group finds itself on the road to enhanced benefits, particularly, the core members and to a lesser degree, the members at large.
Implications for Action

The conclusions offer the following suggestions for implication for action. These recommendations having been based on the results of this qualitative case study expose specific actions that should be taken as suggestions to enhance the awareness of transition programming and interagency collaboration.

Implication 1: Create an Evaluation Tool for Collecting Quantitative Data of the Effectiveness of LPAs

Evaluation is a proven means of accessing the effectiveness of a program while improving accountability. However, it is useful for analysis of a program, allowing for easier comparisons, increasing the likelihood of accomplishing the goals of the LPA, determining the cost benefit of related services, and identifying what works and what doesn’t work. As of now, there are several options to achieving this goal, first, the National Technical Assistance Center for Secondary Transition (NTACT) offers an evaluation tool kit whose purpose is to add assistance to service providers, administrators, and transition specialists in the areas of program and service improvement. They presently offer an evaluation tool kit to use as a way of measuring outcomes determined by the user which is then reported and circulated (NTACT, 2017). The Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint leadership will contact the NTACT and propose a partnership for evaluating LPAs. By taking the existing NTACT toolkit and tailoring it for LPA evaluative purpose, this evaluation tool will measure effectiveness of LPAs in addition to provide valuable data to help drive improvement of existing practices.

Evaluate the effectiveness of LPAs by forming a workgroup comprised of statewide representatives from LPAs. The goal of the workgroup will be to make
recommendations regarding data collection and an evaluation tool that leads to improved
student outcomes. This will be accomplished by the workgroup determining how to
monitor and document the effectiveness of the LPAs. The workgroup will decide on
measures for the outcome evaluation by determining the description of the measurements
desired and listing questions designed to evaluate the LPAs. LPAs will use the
evaluation tool to measure their effectiveness on improving employment outcomes for
individuals with ID/DD. The data collected will influence policy, programs, and
professional development. Using the evaluation data to identify exemplar LPAs will lead
to replication of their practices. The data will be used to improve existing or future
LPAs; thereby, leading to improved employment outcomes.

Implication 2: Create A State Level Certification Requirement for Transition
Specialists in the Prek-12 System

By collaborating with educational and political leaders to develop regulations to
ensure that staff working directly with students in transition complete coursework
designed to provide foundational understanding of transition practices as a minimum
requirement for providing service. This certification will be housed in a state level data
base and accessed by the public. The individualized education program is the vehicle
through which students receive free and appropriate public education. It requires
transition planning for students 16 years or younger if determined to be appropriate by
the IEP team. Transition specialists are responsible for transition programming for
students with transition plans, however no state level mechanism exists for verifying the
qualifications of those providing services. Provision of a state level certificate will
ensure continuity of transition plans, as transition specialists utilize their skills to write quality transition plans.

**Implication 3: Data Collected from LPAs Must Track the Successful Transition of Individuals from Special Education to Adult Competitive Integrated Employment**

State Post-School Outcomes: Indicator 14, tracks the percent of youth who have left secondary education with an IEP and reports their status after leaving school. The data from Indicator 14 is reported to the United States Office of Special Education Programs and measures how well states perform annually. Data collected from LPAs will measure the degree to which students with ID/DD are successfully engaged in competitive integrated employment and thereby, used for accountability and reporting purposes. It will influence the State’s performance plan and the annual performance report. The adult partner agencies will provide information on individuals who have left the pre-K educational system. Local educational agencies with LPAs will collect outcome data from their partner agencies and report this data with Indicator 14 data.

**Implication 4: Changes in Policies and Procedures Must Be Brought About Through Stakeholder Involvement and Local Level Movement**

The perception of preparedness in transition programming is heavily focused on how best to serve students, within the confines of current policies and procedures. With such a demand to provide services in all aspects of a student’s life, there is little attention given to the changing of these policies and procedures. This will happen by creating a taskforce made up of local and state level participants, whose purpose is to create recommendations to take to state legislators, outlining where change is needed. The taskforce will draft a policy brief identifying current barriers and suggesting actions for
change. Using the policy brief and recommendations of the taskforce, state legislators will become aware of the need for change which will lead to mandates affecting the policies and procedures that address how we will best serve students.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the findings, conclusions and limitations of this study, the researcher suggests the following recommendations be considered for further examination.

**Recommendation 1**

It is recommended that a mixed method study be conducted that includes a sample from all regions, to identify the perceived preparedness of paraprofessionals, as it relates to transition programming. The benefit of studying this population is this group is intimately involved with the hands on services received by individuals with ID/DD.

**Recommendation 2**

It is recommended that a mixed method study be conducted that includes qualitative and quantitative data that can be contrasted and compared. In this mixed methods study the perception by participants of interagency collaboration can be examined with a quantitative component that will randomize the collection process.

**Recommendation 3**

It is recommended that a qualitative case study be conducted to explore the local educational agency administrators’ perception of transition program preparedness on a district level to examine the viewpoint of those in charge of funding and transition program planning decisions.
**Recommendation 4**

It is recommended that a qualitative case study be conducted that investigates California service professionals from adult agencies such as the Department of Rehabilitation and Department of Developmental Services regional centers, looking to assess their perception of transition programming preparedness. This study will focus on the non-educational group whose primary purpose is competitive integrated employment outcomes.

**Recommendation 5**

It is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted which tracks those students receiving resources and services through agencies that are part of LPAs for sustained competitive integrated employment. The advantage of such a study will inform the long term employment benefits of LPAs on individuals with ID/DD.

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

My research afforded me the opportunity to hear these transition specialist’s lived experiences. Hearing their metamorphosis into capable, competent, and knowledgeable transition program providers made me aware of the level of commitment required to deliver a successful transition program. Well beyond the formal educational requirements, these transition specialists sought to focus on the students’ future by making the connection between strong interagency collaboration and better employment outcomes. Having been part of this research study has inspired me to think beyond what is in place today and to look to innovative ways of providing services that can pave the way to long lasting and proven effective change.
What I’ve come to realize from my research is that a few decades ago, transition for individuals with ID/DD designed to lead to employment was a radical idea believed by just a few and practiced by even fewer. Today, as a result of the relentless vision, effort, and commitment of individuals like the transition specialists of whom I was fortunate enough to interview, there are now initiatives such as the Employment First Policy, the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint and the LPAs specifically created to provide the opportunity for employment for individuals with disabilities, including those with ID/DD.

This work has changed me personally, in giving me the confidence to attack any obstacle, knowing that over time, with the right determination, commitment, focus and joint effort of others, I can solve the problem. For me, nothing in life has ever been so long enduring, as my research journey. I understand what research means and how significant it is to growth in any subject. As a result of having gone on this journey, I think clearer as I look at the big picture, but also have an enhanced ability to think in specifics with great details.

Through my research, I was provided an unexpected window into the problems, joys, conflicts, and needs of transition specialists. This group does think ‘children first’ they truly care about families of individuals with ID/DD. All of the transition specialists in this study were ‘lifers’ and performed their functions, not for money, but for passion. I felt proud to have selected them for my study, as well as knowing from their perspective, the job of transition programming was in good hands.

As I think of the transition specialists, after having completed their transcriptions, I heard a voice whispering. It said “heart of a specialist committed for life.” So often I
see those working in special education bring a care and helping attitude to the job. They are aware that if not them then who? Their impact is direct and meaningful, they change the day to day lives of children and families and more importantly, they do it with compassion.

I felt passionate about doing a qualitative study because I wanted to gain insight into the working understanding of transition specialists. I felt that if I was going to change, I would need to see the human experience, what was their motivation, how they viewed the job, and the lives of those they touched. I wasn’t disappointed.
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## APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

Alignment Table

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<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Analytical Technique</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How do transition specialists perceive their preparedness for transition</td>
<td>1. Share with me your perception of your preparedness for transition programming?</td>
<td>Information presented in tables, charts, and figures.</td>
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<td>programming using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?</td>
<td>a. Tell me about the interagency coordinating body?</td>
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<td>d. Tell me about a formal interagency agreement?</td>
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<td>e. Tell me about your roles and responsibilities?</td>
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<td>f. How do you share educational and agency policy procedures?</td>
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<td>g. Tell me about the systems barriers to collaboration? How are they minimized?</td>
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<td>i. How is data shared among agencies via established</td>
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procedures (with appropriate release of information and confidentiality)?

j. Tell me about cross agency professional development provided?

k. How are Interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures evaluated?

2. How do transition specialists perceive interagency collaboration in LPAs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming?

a. Tell me about the interagency coordinating body? How are relevant stakeholders included?

b. Tell me about the lead agency?

c. Tell me about a designated transition contact person for each agency?

d. Tell me about a formal interagency agreement?

e. Tell me about your roles and responsibilities?

f. How do you share educational and agency policy procedures?

g. Tell me about the systems barriers to collaboration? How are they minimized?

h. Tell me about the
methods of communication with all service providers?

i. How is data shared among agencies via established procedures (with appropriate release of information and confidentiality)?

j. Tell me about cross agency professional development provided?

k. How are Interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures evaluated?
APPENDIX C

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Study: Interagency Collaboration in LPAs: A Qualitative Case Study identifying and describing the perception of preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice
Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMATION ABOUT: Interagency Collaboration in LPAs: A Qualitative Case Study identifying and describing the perception of preparedness of transition specialists working in WAI programs using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Barbara Boyd

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Barbara Boyd, a doctoral candidate in the area of Organizational Leadership at Brandman University. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WorkAbility I (WAI) projects as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, it is the purpose to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in LPAs. The results of this study may help to improve transition programming and will help to develop cohesive LPAs across all areas by identifying components of interagency collaboration included in LPAs.

By participating in this study, I agree to participate in an individual interview. The interview(s) will last approximately 30 – 90 minutes and will be conducted by in person, phone, video calling, or web conferencing.

I understand that:
a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

b) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings will be destroyed.

c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding transition programming and the impact interagency collaboration has on the development of local partnership agreements. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and may provide new insights about the preparedness of transition specialists for collaborative transition programming and regarding interagency collaboration in local partnership agreements. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Barbara Boyd at boyd5703@mail.brandman.edu; or Dr. Keith Larick (Advisor) at larick@brandman.edu.

e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate
or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

______________________________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

______________________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

______________________________________________
Date
APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Hello and thank you for agreeing to interview with me. My name is Barbara Boyd and I am a doctoral candidate in the area of Organizational Leadership at Brandman University and I will conduct the study interview with you. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WorkAbility I (WAI) projects as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. In addition, it is the purpose to explore the perceptions of transition specialists regarding interagency collaboration in local partnership agreements (LPAs).

I am conducting interviews with two other WorkAbility I transition specialists. I’ll read you the questions from my interview template, to ensure that all interviews are conducted using the same protocol. I will take notes during this interview; therefore, to help in its accuracy, the interview will be recorded for transcription later. The transcription will be sent to you to review for accuracy. You have the opportunity to correct or make changes as you deem necessary.

I anticipate that this interview will take 30-90 minutes, but if you find that you wish to continue our interview past 90 minutes, please feel free to do so. The time anticipated is strictly an approximation and is not intended to limit your responses. Let me know if at any time I ask a question that needs clarification, and I will be more than happy to clarify. The information you and the other two participants provide will help to improve transition programming and will help to develop cohesive LPAs across all areas by identifying components of interagency collaboration included in LPAs.

As a reminder, your responses to the interview questions will be confidential in that your identity will be anonymous. Also, your participation is voluntary and at any time you can chose not to answer a question or terminate your participation. You were sent an Informed Consent Form and a copy of the Brandman Bill of Rights. I received your signed Informed Consent Form by email. Do you need another copy of the Brandman Bill of Rights? Do you have any questions? Very good, then let’s begin. I will begin with some demographic questions before leading to the interview questions.

[Begin to ask questions]

Demographic Information:
Participant Number
What type of teaching credential do you hold?
How long have you worked in secondary transition?
  o 1-2 years
  o 2-5 years
  o 5-7 years
  o 7-10 years
  o 10 + years
How many years have you worked in WorkAbility I?

- 5-7 years
- 8-10 years
- 10 + years

Has your WorkAbility I project entered into a local partnership agreement?

In what geographical location is the local partnership agreement that you belong?

- Northern California
- Southern California
- Bay Area of California
- Central California

In your opinion, would you say that the local educational agency that you work in would be described as (choose all that apply).

- Rural
- Urban
- Large
- Small
- Other _____________________________ (describe)

Interview Questions

Question 1: This question focuses on the individual’s role, knowledge of, background in, and participation in interagency collaboration as an educator who provides transition services and designs transition programming for individuals with disabilities.

1) **As a transition specialist, you are expected to provide evidence-based practices that provides for interagency collaboration in your transition programming. Share with me your perception of your preparedness for transition programming?**

   *Questions a-k are additional probing questions intended to offer an opportunity for the participant to list elements found in Kohler’s Collaborative Framework for interagency collaboration.*

   a. Tell me how you collaborate with different agencies. Relate an experience when you were most successful/ not successful in collaborating with other agencies. How prepared are you for this kind of collaboration? How are relevant stakeholders included?

   b. In your experience in transition programming, who are the participating agencies? Who would you consider as the lead agency? Why?

   c. When you developed a transition program, was there a contact person for each agency? How was this person designated?

   d. Describe your participation in your formal interagency agreement? A
formal Interagency Agreement (IA) is a document that defines the policies and/or procedures agencies will use to create a coordinated system of educational and adult services at the local level for students with disabilities to facilitate a smooth transition from secondary education to postsecondary employment-related activities and competitive integrated employment.

e. As a transition specialist, tell me about your roles and responsibilities in transition programming?

f. How do you ensure that there is a shared understanding of education and agency policy procedures?

g. Describe an experience/s when collaboration was difficult due to some systems barriers. Describe how you have minimized them?

h. How do you communicate with the different agencies? What form of communication is well established/maintained? Why?

i. Relate an experience/s when you had to share student data with various agencies in the transition programming. How was data shared? Is there an established procedure for sharing data? How did you arrive at establishing this procedure?

j. Have you participated in cross agency professional development? If so, what was your participation like? If you have not participated, why so?

k. Do you participate in interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures evaluation? (If so, what was your participation? If no, why not?)

Question 2: Having been tasked with entering into LPAs, the LPA that is developed should incorporate collaborative effort.

2) **Share with me your perception of the collaboration that exists in the LPA?**

Questions a-k are additional probing questions intended to offer an opportunity for the participant to list elements found in Kohler’s Collaborative Framework for interagency collaboration.

(Pre-requisite questions: Do you know what is an LPA? If so, tell me what you know about it. Has your school entered into the local partnership agreement?)

a. Tell me your experience/s coordinating with various agencies involved in the LPA. What was the coordination like? Please share with me how prepared you were in working with these agencies?

b. Were you aware of a lead agency in the LPA? Why do you think this is the lead agency?

c. Tell me about a designated transition contact person for each agency?

d. Based on your participation in the LPA, how is this interagency agreement evident?

e. How does your role as a transition specialist apply when working with agencies in the LPA?

f. How do you share educational and agency policy procedures? (Give
g. Have you experienced feeling frustrated when collaborating due to challenges in the system? What was the experience? How are they minimized?

h. Tell me about the methods of communication with all service providers?

i. How is data shared among agencies via established procedures (with appropriate release of information and confidentiality)?

j. Tell me about cross agency professional development provided?

k. How are interdisciplinary and interagency policy and procedures evaluated?

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experience in transition programming, interagency collaboration, and local partnership agreements? This concludes the interview questions. Thank you for participating in this interview.
Dear Study Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate in the area of Organizational Leadership at Brandman University, who is conducting a study on collaborative framework of interagency collaboration in transition programming and interagency collaboration regarding local partnership agreements. This study will identify and describe transition specialists’ awareness of being prepared for transition programming and explore interagency collaboration in local partnership agreements. I am asking your assistance in the study by participating in an interview which will take from 30 to 90 minutes and will be set up at a time convenient for you. If you agree to participate in an interview, you may be assured that it will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the interview. All information will remain in locked files accessible only to the researcher, Barbara Boyd. No employer, supervisor, or agency will have access to the interview information. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

Your participation would be greatly valued.
Sincerely,

Barbara Boyd
Doctoral Candidate
Brandman University
Dear Study Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my qualitative research study to be used in the completion of my doctorate in the area of Organizational Leadership, from Brandman University. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify and describe the preparedness of transition specialists working in WorkAbility I (WAI) projects as perceived by transition specialists using Kohler’s Taxonomy for Collaborative Transition Programming. This study will explore the transition specialists’ perception of interagency collaboration in LPAs.

Although your job title may differ from transition specialist, for purpose of the study, you meet the criteria of a transition specialist. Participation involves 1 or 2 interview sessions in which you respond to questions that I’ve designed. It should take between 30-90 minutes to fully discuss the questions. The interview(s) will be conducted by in-person, phone, video calling, or web conferencing. You can be assured that this study is completely confidential and no names will be attached to the interview notes or reported in the dissertation. Additionally, no employer will have access to the interview responses.

The information you provide will help to improve transition programming and will help to develop cohesive LPAs across all areas by identifying components of interagency collaboration included in LPAs. Results from this study will be summarized in a doctoral dissertation.

Your participation is voluntary and at any time you can chose not to answer a question or terminate your participation. Attached to this email is the Informed Consent Form and the Brandman University Institutional Bill of Rights.

Sincerely,

Barbara Boyd
Doctoral Candidate
Brandman University