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POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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DEDICATION

For Llama. Everything is for you.

Papa, I love you, I miss you, and I hope you are proud of me.



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Doctorate programs and dissertations are not a solo effort. It takes the support of so many. I am glad to have the opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me at school and at home. I will start with a huge thank you to all my professors who answered my panicked emails, talked me off ledges, and gave me feedback. I am incredibly blessed to have such an outstanding group of faculty as mentors. You all set powerful examples of teaching, mentorship, research, and service, and I hope I can live up to your example and provide my own students with the same. To my cohort, I am so glad I got to go through this program with you. I could not have chosen a better group of people. Wendy, you have been like a big sister to me. Thank you for always going first, setting an example, and giving advice. Brooki, I am so thankful to have you as a friend and an Auntie. Our road trips are some of my favorite memories in this program. Fanee, "Thank you" does not even cover it. Everyone needs a Fanee Webster in their life. No one in my life has ever been so supportive, so encouraging, so…. aggressively Pro-Courtney Tennell. Your confidence in me carried me through *many* times when I did not have confidence in myself. Mr. and Mrs. Webster and Deborah, thank you for the prayers, the advice, the support, and the fanny pack. We finished the race!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION IV

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS V

TABLE OF CONTENTS VII

LIST OF TABLES XII

LIST OF FIGURES XIII

ABSTRACT XIV

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 15

Scientifically Based Research Practices 16

Classification of Practices 19

Theoretical Framework 20

Indigenous Education in the US 20

Tribal Nation Building 22

Problem Statement 23

Purpose 24

Research Questions 24

Significance 24

Terms Used 24

Positionality 27

Organization 29

Conceptual Framework 30

CHAPTER 2: EVIDENCE-BASED FOR WHOM? 35

Taxonomy for Transition 37
National Technical Assistance Center on Transition 38
Evidence-Based Practices and Predictors 40
Connection to Evidence-Based Predictors 41
Connection to Evidence-Based Practices 44
Assessment 45
For Whom the Practices are Best 47
Indigenous Students' Underrepresentation in Transition Research 49
Rigor Is in the Eye of the Beholder 53
Discussion 55
CHAPTER 3: TRANSITION ASSESSMENT FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES 62
Transition Assessment 63
Transition Assessment for Indigenous Students with Disabilities 66
Postsecondary Transition as Tribal Nation Building 67
Purpose 68
Research Questions 68
METHOD 69
Community Engaged Research 69
Differences 70
Participants 71
Response Rate 72
Procedures 72

Questionnaire 74
Transition Assessment and Goal Generator High School- Professional Version. 75
Self-Determination Inventory: Student Report (SDI:SR). 77
Casey Life Skills American Indian/Alaska Native Assessment (CLS-AI/AN). 77
RESULTS 79
Relevance of the TAGG-HS-P 79
Relevance of the SDI:SR 80
Relevance of the CLS-AI/AN 80
Additional Areas to Consider When Working With ISWD 81
Culture 82
First Generation Students 82
Guidance/Mentorship 84
Family Involvement 85
Financial Literacy 86
Perceptions of Positive Outcomes 88
Discussion 89
Limitations 91
Implications 92
Funding 92
CHAPTER 4: POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN OKLAHOMA: FAMILY PERSPECTIVES 93
Transition 93
Family Engagement 95

Indigenous Students with Disabilities 97
Purpose of the Study 100
METHOD 101
Design 101
Participants/Setting 102
Collection 103
Analysis 104
FINDINGS 105
Hopes and Dreams 105
Research Question One: The Role of Culture in Transition Planning for ISWD 107
Research Question Two: Areas of Improvement in Transition Planning for ISWD 109
Resources 109
Higher Education Resources. 110
Disability Resources 110
Tribal Resources. 112
Employment 114
Finances 117
DISCUSSION 119
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION 123
Current Study 125
Strand One-Research 127
Strand Two-Practitioner Expertise 129

Strand Three-Family Values 130
Braiding the Strands Together 130
Interagency Collaboration 131
Family Involvement 132
Financial Literacy 132
Conclusion 133
REFERENCES 137
APPENDIX A: NTACT LEVELS OF EVIDENCE 168
APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL 1 175
APPENDIX C: SURVEY ROUND 1 182
APPENDIX D: SURVEY ROUND 2 216
APPENDIX E. TRIBAL NATIONS IN OKLAHOMA 225
APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL 2 228
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 230

LIST OF TABLES

1. Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0 38
2. Evidence-Based Predictors for Postsecondary Success Review Demographics. 50
3. Evidence-Based Practices for Postsecondary Success Review Demographics 51
4. Evidence-Based Predictors in Postsecondary Transition 58
5. Evidence-Based Practices in Postsecondary Transition 60
6. Panel Participants 72
7. Panel Results 79
8. Interview Participants 103

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Conceptual Framework 31
2. Braiding Evidence-Based Practices for ISWD 33
3. Timeline of Transition Research Since IDEA (1990) 44
4. Example Questionnaire Item Round 1 73
5. Example Questionnaire Item Round 2 74
6. Example TAGG-HS-P Item 76
7. Example SDI:SR Item 77
8. Example CLS AI/AN Item 78
9. Tribal Jurisdictions in Oklahoma Map 99
10. Braiding Evidence-Based Practices for ISWD 124

ABSTRACT

Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD) are proportionally the most represented racial demographic receiving special education services under IDEA (2004), which mandates postsecondary transition services for students with an IEP. Despite their disproportionate representation, ISWD are almost entirely absent from postsecondary transition research, resulting in a lack of evidence-based practices to support their transitions. This dissertation aims to identify evidence-based strategies to make transition planning culturally responsive for ISWD, proposing a model for braiding evidence-based practices. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on evidence-based practices and predictors, revealing that ISWD constitute less than 1% of the samples used to identify and classify these practices. In Chapter 3, a panel of Indigenous knowledge holders shares their expertise on the relevance of transition assessments for ISWD, identifying five key areas for teachers to consider: culture, first-generation students, guidance/mentorship, family involvement, and financial literacy. Chapter 4 presents a phenomenological study in which family members of ISWD discuss their experiences with transition planning and suggest improvements, including awareness of resources, employment support, and financial literacy education. Chapter 5 synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters, weaving them together to propose strategies that support ISWD in the transition process. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of areas for future research and implications for practitioners.

Keywords: Indigenous students with disabilities, Native American Students with disabilities, AI/AN students with disabilities, postsecondary transition, special education, evidence-based practice

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Education for Indigenous students is recognized as a treaty right and a federal government obligation towards sovereign Tribal Nations (Burnette, 2021; Faircloth et al., 2015; Sabzalian, 2019). However, Indigenous students continue to experience some of the lowest educational achievement and attainment rates in the country, leaving the promise of education for these students unfulfilled (Applequist, 2009; Castagono & Brayboy, 2008; Faircloth et al., 2015; Johnston-Goodstar & Ve-Lure-Roholt, 2017). Most Indigenous students attend public schools, where they account for only 1% of the population within the U.S. (Castagono & Brayboy, 2008; Faircloth et al., 2015; Irwin et al., 2022). However, Indigenous students account for a substantial 19% of the population of students receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2022). Additionally, Indigenous students are more likely than any other racial group to identify in the category of "Two or More Races" (Santos & Tachine, 2024), a demographic that makes up 15% of students served under IDEA (2004; NCES, 2022). This means the number of Indigenous students with disabilities could be even higher. Though Indigenous students are proportionally the most represented race/ethnicity in the SPED category, they are almost entirely left out of special education and transition research (Applequist et al., 2009; Blackhorn, 2020; Hibel et al., 2008; Murray &Wiley, 2017; Othman, 2018; Trainor & Bal, 2014). As a result, most special education and postsecondary transition practices touted as 'evidence-based' have not been developed or validated with Indigenous students in mind. This means there is a desperate need for evidence-based practices to support Indigenous students receiving special education services in school and through the postsecondary transition process.

Postsecondary transition services were legally mandated in the 1990 reauthorization of IDEA. They include planning and goal setting for students with disabilities in the areas of education, employment, and, when appropriate, independent living. The inclusion of transition services in legislation was a result of Congress' concern over poor postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities (SWD) (Prince et al., 2014). IDEA's codification of these services gave new energy to the field of transition research, with researchers studying outcomes, interventions, assessments, and predictors to establish best practice in providing transition planning services for SWD. Quality postsecondary transition planning is now recognized as vital to ensuring positive postsecondary outcomes for SWD. (Carter et al., 2014; Carter et al., 2021 Mazzotti et al., 2013; Prince et al., 2014; Rowe, 2015).

However, ISWD were sparsely represented in this boom of research. In addition to facing disadvantages during their time in school, the absence of a culturally sensitive postsecondary transition plan can also lead to challenges for these students after graduation (Achola & Greene, 2016; Achola, 2019; Barrio, 2021). Thus, it is imperative to identify the external validity of evidence-based practices to understand their effects for students across racial and ethnic identities.

Scientifically Based Research Practices

IDEA's (2004) reauthorization replicated the language of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), urging educators to employ scientifically grounded methods in student education (Mazzotti et al., 2013). Consequently, the realm of postsecondary transition research underwent a reassessment of its own procedures for identifying and endorsing the scientifically based practices and predictors called for in the legislation. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs provided funding for the establishment of the National Secondary Transitional Technical Assistance Center (NTACT). One of NTACT's primary

objectives was to identify evidence-based practices and evidence-based predictors of postsecondary success.

Special education researchers drew inspiration from the medical research field, looking to a three-part model popularized by Sackett et al. (1996). Sackett and colleagues' (1996) development of the evidence-based medicine movement relied on the triad of (1) scientific research, (2) patient values, and (3) clinician expertise, and served as a blueprint for special education and transition researchers. This comprehensive approach ensured that practices weren't advocated solely based on one type of evidence. For instance, it prevented the promotion of treatments aligning only with a patient's values, neglecting those supported by clinical trials, or treatments backed by strong clinical evidence but not aligning with patient values or clinician expertise in specific scenarios. By assigning equal value to each source of evidence, practitioners could be confident that practices labeled as evidence-based were identified through a holistic approach. Sackett's evidence-based practices model played a crucial role in instructing medical students on evidence-based medicine, while also shaping the approaches of special education and transition researchers in formulating guidelines for identifying evidence-based practices in postsecondary transition. However, as the field of special education and postsecondary transition research progressed, an emphasis on scientific evidence took precedence, diminishing the importance of findings based on areas aligned with clinician expertise and patient values.

In medical research, the Randomized Control Trial (RCT) has been considered a gold standard for determining the effectiveness of interventions (Bhide et al., 20018; Odom, 2021). These authors note that the RCT was originally developed for laboratory research, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the methods gave rise to the popularity of RCTs in medical research and prompted the inclusion of RCTs into the evidence-based medicine movement.

Subsequently, educational researchers adapted this method. In educational research, an RCT is a quantitative method that compares the effects of an educational practice across two, or more, randomly assigned groups. Randomization in groups is thought to promote equivalence in the characteristics of the groups on both measured and unmeasured variables as part of the experimentation process. Though randomization protects the experiment's internal validity, it does not address issues related to external validity. The field's steadfast belief in the rigor of the RCT has drawn criticism from methodologists who point out that research in the field cannot be as tightly controlled as research conducted in a laboratory, diminishing external validity, and thus should be considered in the context within which the study takes place (Joyce & Cartwright, 2020; Odom, 2021). Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) rely on the 'law of large numbers' to ensure group equivalence (Kunda & Nisbett, 1986; Odom, 2021). However, the common use of large sample sizes in randomized controlled trials (RCTs) presents significant challenges for including Indigenous populations in research. Indigenous representation in these studies is often minimal, with their data either combined into an 'other' category or marked with an asterisk due to small sample sizes (see Chapter 2). This issue is further magnified in large data sets used for educational research (Adams & Farnsworth, 2020; Brayboy & Lomawaima, 2018; Burnette, 2021; Faircloth et al., 2015; Garland, 2007; Jameson & Marley, 2018; Shotton et al., 2013). Consequently, the field's heavy reliance on RCTs coupled with the lack of Indigenous representation have several negative impacts. Firstly, the absence of ISWD affects the external validity of the studies, which results in an absence of evidence-based research for ISWD. Additionally, due to insufficient input from Indigenous educators, the field has a limited understanding of how educators' knowledge gaps affect instruction for ISWD.

Classification of Practices

To further promote scientifically-based practices, in 2013, NTACT first offered guidelines for the recognition of Effective Practices (Mazzotti, 2013). See Appendix A for complete criteria for each level of evidence. According to NTACT standards, evidence-based practices can only be substantiated through research demonstrating causality (Mazzotti, 2013). Studies using an RCT design are prime for designation as an evidence or research-based practice, however, designs that could potentially capture student/family values or practitioner expertise, such as qualitative designs, are not eligible for identifying a practice in NTACT's highest level, labeled "Evidence-Based." Instead, these studies can contribute to the evidence for levels of "Promising Practice" or "Unestablished Practice," or enhance the evidence level from studies using designs that have been deemed rigorous as evaluated by quality indicators. Using this guidance, researchers have worked to identify evidence-based practices for postsecondary transition, as well as evidence-based predictors of positive postschool outcomes for SWD (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2022; Rowe et al., 2015; Test et al., 2009a; Test et al., 2009b; Test et al., 2012)

However, ISWD have been left almost completely out of this research. A recent review of the field's leading journal, Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals (CDTEI) found that in the last decade (2010-2020), Indigenous students were represented in small numbers in only five (33%) group design studies (total studies, $N = 15$) and were completely absent from single-case design studies (total studies, $N = 19$) (Mitchell et al., 2024). It is almost unbelievable that in a decade's worth of research published in the field's flagship journal, the population most represented in receiving SPED services under IDEA (NCES, 2022) was almost entirely overlooked. More than a gap in the literature, this is a glaring oversight that may directly contribute to the problematic outcomes for ISWD. Many of these studies have been

instrumental in establishing practices as evidence-based, and the promotion of the practice, yet, ISWDs are not represented in these studies.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation is grounded in Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) (Brayboy, 2006). As explained by Brayboy, TribalCrit is an offshoot of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which evolved as a parallel to Critical Legal Studies. CRT arose to address issues related to the Civil Rights movement, and as such addresses race in terms of a black/white binary (Brayboy, 2006). This binary is evident in CRT's basic premise that racism is endemic to society and thus, does not respond to the unique political aspect of Indigenous sovereignty. In response to this, Brayboy's TribalCrit asserts that *colonization* is endemic to society, while still acknowledging the important role that race plays in systematic inequities. TribalCrit addresses the liminality faced by Native people, not only as a racial group but also as a political group who are citizens of Sovereign Nations. This liminality is a critical aspect of preparing ISWD for life after graduation, both as a racial minority in the United States and as contributors to the capacity-building of their Tribal Nations. Due to this dual identity, current postsecondary transition research focused on culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), multicultural, or racially diverse students (for reviews see Leake et al., 2006; Trainor, 2005; Wilt & Morningstar, 2018) fails to address the unique needs of ISWD. This study fills that gap by exploring the specific transition needs of ISWD as citizens of Tribal Nations, providing insights into an area that has been largely overlooked.

Indigenous Education in the US

Understanding this liminality is also essential in problematizing the overrepresentation of Native students in special education. The U.S. government has been involved with educating Native Americans since before the nation's inception, far longer than any other group (Carney, 1999). The Treaty Period between the U.S. and Tribal Nations lasted from 1778-1871, and many

of the over 400 treaties inked in that time included some provision for education for Tribal Nations' citizens (Burnette, 2021; Carney, 1999; Faircloth et al., 2016; Sabzalian, 2019). Comparatively, schooling for all children in the U.S. wouldn't become compulsory until 1918. Early efforts to educate Indigenous children focused on religious and vocational instruction. This type of instruction gave way to the Boarding School Era in the late 1800s, characterized by forced assimilation and mental and physical abuse of the children forcibly taken from their families to attend (Fear-Segal & Rose, 2016; Lomawaima,1994; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Lomawaima et al., 2018; Peterson, 2013). After Native Americans were declared American citizens in 1924, Congress commissioned a report to determine the current situation faced by this group. Among various other issues, 1928's Merriam Report detailed abuse suffered by these students in boarding schools and suggested public schools and on-reservation boarding schools as alternatives. 1934 saw the Johnson O'Malley (JOM) act passed to subsidize Native students' participation in public schools. This act was further strengthened by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; 1965) which established federal funding for local education agencies (LEAs). These pieces of legislation secured educational funding for Native students' participation in public schools, but students with disabilities of all races were still at a disadvantage until the law was amended a year later to ensure education for children with disabilities. This amendment eventually became 1975's Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA; 1975) which asserted the right to a free, appropriate public education for all students with disabilities. EAHCA has been reauthorized several times, most recently in 2004 as IDEA.

Not only are ISWD entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) with procedural safeguards under IDEA, but these students are also entitled to education under treaties

between Sovereign Nations and the U.S. government (Burnette, 2021; Carney, 1999; Faircloth et al., 2016; Sabzailian, 2019). ISWD are the only group in the US who have such protections regarding their education (Faircloth, et al., 2015). Despite this unique intersectionality, they still face significant challenges in achieving postsecondary educational and employment success. This not only affects the individuals themselves but also has a broader impact on Tribal Communities and Tribal Sovereignty. Improving postsecondary transition planning for ISWD can lead to better outcomes for individual students, ultimately benefiting their communities and supporting sovereignty.

Tribal Nation Building

Tribal Nation Building is a comprehensive and culturally relevant process for Tribal Nations that encompasses various aspects of life such as economics, healthcare, ecology, and education (Brayboy, 2021). By integrating postsecondary transition planning for Indigenous students with disabilities into the concept of Tribal Nation Building, educators can contribute to the broader goals of inclusivity, support, and development within Tribal Communities.

To ensure that the postsecondary transition planning process is culturally relevant, educators must be aware of and sensitive to the unique needs and perspectives of Indigenous students. This involves recognizing the diversity within Tribal Communities and understanding the impact of historical and systemic factors on these students. An emphasis on creating a supportive environment for Indigenous students with disabilities during their postsecondary transition planning is key. When Indigenous students with disabilities successfully transition into postsecondary settings, they enhance their individual capacities and become valuable members of their communities. Successful postsecondary transitions allow these students to become educators, medical personnel, leaders, and more, bringing their knowledge and skills back to their communities and contributing to their overall well-being. This positive feedback loop

strengthens the community and supports the goals of Tribal Nation Building. By recognizing the link between postsecondary transition planning for Indigenous students with disabilities and the broader concept of Tribal Nation Building, educators can play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive and culturally relevant educational environment that supports the holistic development of Tribal Communities.

Problem Statement

The inclusion of transition services in IDEA (1990) was intended to improve postsecondary outcomes for SWD in education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living and community participation. However, researchers have noted that one group, ISWD, face poorer postsecondary outcomes than any other group (Applequist, 2009; Castagono & Brayboy, 2008; Faircloth, 2015; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

Chadsey-Rusch et al. (1991) noted that desirable outcomes for students with disabilities had not been clearly articulated, and that common outcomes chosen for evaluation often reflect the values of schools, programs, and government agencies. Research has shown a homogeneity in demographics of educators (Basterra et al., 2011; NCES, 2023; Suk et al., 2020) which could lead to a disconnect in perceptions of desirable outcomes. The imposing of teachers' personal cultural ideas of success onto a student from a distinct culture might explain the frequently termed 'inferior' outcomes connected with Indigenous students, both those with and without disabilities.

Transition planning offers students with disabilities a route to achieve positive postsecondary outcomes. ISWD have specific transition planning needs that may be in addition to those identified in students from other cultures (Applequist et al., 2009; Blackhorn, 2020). But due to unfamiliarity with ISWD's culture, and in the absence of research or evidence-based

practices to utilize, practitioners may be failing to create transition plans that address their unique needs which can lead to poor postsecondary outcomes for ISWD.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to identify ways that transition planning can be more culturally relevant for ISWD by identifying the needs, skills, and knowledge specific to Indigenous students for successful postsecondary transition.

Research Questions

The question guiding this dissertation is "How can transition planning be more culturally appropriate for Indigenous students?" Specific research questions are included in each chapter that are linked to this broader question.

Significance

Despite ISWDs having unique protections under federal law, they still experience poorer postsecondary outcomes compared to other groups (Applequist, 2009; Castagono & Brayboy, 2008; Faircloth, 2015; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). However, there is a notable dearth of research aimed at supporting ISWDs in the postsecondary transition planning process, with ISWDs being largely overlooked in the existing literature (Blackhorn, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2024). The three studies included in this dissertation represent a significant contribution to the field of postsecondary transition by addressing the distinct needs of ISWDs within the transition planning process and collaborating with Indigenous education stakeholders to co-create knowledge on this topic.

Terms Used

Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms Indigenous, Native, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) to refer collectively to citizens of Tribal Nations within the US. It is important to note there are 574 federally recognized Tribes and many more Tribes with state recognition. Each of these Tribal Nations has thier own customs, beliefs, and cultures. Therefore, it must be

acknowledged that none of these terms does an adequate job of capturing the diversity present in the population to which it is referring. Wherever possible, I use the names of the specific Nation to which I am referring.

Other terms used in this dissertation include:

- Students with a disability/disabilities (SWD) – This refers to students in public schools who are receiving special education services under IDEA for one or more of the 13 disability categories.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – Most recently reauthorized in 2004, IDEA is the federal legislation that guarantees free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to students identified with one or more of the 13 disability categories.
- Special education – Individualized education provided to a child with a disability, without any financial burden on the parents, to address their unique needs.
- IEP – An Individualized Education Program is a written document created for each student who qualifies for special education services in the K-12 public school setting; this document outlines annual goals, objectives, and accommodations given to a student in order to aid them in their academic success.
- Postsecondary/postschool- This refers to the time after students graduate from high school and enter higher education or the work force.
- Transition – In the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), transition refers to a formal process of planning and providing services for students with disabilities as they move from school to adult life.
- Education – In the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), education is a whole range of services offered to students with disabilities to guarantee

their access to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This instruction is tailored to the student's particular needs through an Individualized instruction Program (IEP).

- Employment – In the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), employment is one of the primary goals of transition services for students with disabilities, preparing them for post-secondary success in the workforce.
- Independent Living – In the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), independent living refers to the skills and resources needed for students with disabilities to manage their everyday lives autonomously and with as little professional care as feasible.
- Evidence-based practice – Is a teaching method used to teach a specific skill that has been shown to be effective based on high-quality research (Cook et al., 2009; NTACT, 2022; Odom et al., 2005)
- Evidence-based predictor – In the field of postsecondary transition, evidence-based predictors are identified through correlational research and seek to identify a connection between an activity or behavior that predicts a successful outcome (Test et al., 2009)
- Transition Assessment – Every student classified as a student with disabilities (SWD) who is 16 years old or above must undergo a transition evaluation to assist them in exploring potential options for their future after completing high school.
- Transition Services – Services designed to facilitate a student’s movement from school to post-school activities, based on the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests.

- Transition Plan- A transition plan within the IEP focuses on students' post-high school life, with personalized, measurable goals derived from age-appropriate assessments in education, employment, and independent living. It includes tailored programming and services to support goal achievement, along with documented methods for progress measurement.
- Tribal Nation Building – In this dissertation, I focus on Tribal Nation Building (Brayboy, 2021) as it refers to the process through which Tribal Nations cultivate and enhance their capacities by nurturing the skills, talents, and resources within the community to address its needs.
- Transition Services – Services designed to facilitate a student's movement from school to post-school activities, based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests.

Positionality

Story time. Last year, I went to a national conference on transition with my Auntie and her cousin. We went to a committee meeting for a diversity subgroup and were making small talk with the other members. A woman came up to talk to us, asked us about our research interests, and listened while they each shared their interests. My professors had prepared us for this exact small talk at conferences; we had learned how to specifically and succinctly state our research interests, and we had even practiced with each other in class. When it was my turn, I said my well-rehearsed, "My research is in Indigenous special education, postsecondary transition, and transition assessment.". Perfect. Just like I was trained. It was succinct, it was specific, it was confident. Smile, eye contact, hair flip, teeth doing that bling thing, check, check, check, check. Dr. Kuntz would be so proud. This lady visibly flinched, like she had tasted something sour, and said "Oh. How did *you* get into that?". If her tone implied her meaning, her

facial expression shouted it. To her, I was not Native enough to be interested in this. Readers, I was *mortified.* I wanted to crawl under a table and hide. I fumbled through a response, I think I said something about being a Cherokee Nation citizen, just wanting to make things better for the kiddos. My professors did not prepare me for that follow-up question. They didn't prepare me to respond when the lady followed up that follow-up by telling us there are Native communities in her area and she goes to their casinos. Is "Well, good luck." the appropriate response? She wandered away, presumably to question someone else's identity, and me, my Auntie, and cousin looked at each other eyes wide and laughed and shook our heads. I was so thankful that the two of them were there, because if they had not made me laugh in that moment, I probably would have cried in my little blazer and name tag in front of all those fancy academics.

I have thought about this interaction many times, running through the different responses I could have given, not all of them polite. I am telling you this story because this was where I really began considering my relation to my research. Considering the question, "How did *you* get into that?", or its more genteel cousin, "How did you come to this work?" allowed me to sit with myself and reflect on how I got here. The answer I wish I had given is this: I do not remember making a conscious decision to be a part of this work; I have just always been a part of it. I am a Cherokee Nation citizen. I went to school in a rural, remote K-12 school in the Seminole Nation, where three generations of my family have gone to school. I got JOM school supplies and basketball shoes. I have a disability. My mom was a teacher and coach and she helped me get a job as a teacher's aide where I picked up extra hours in an after-school program for elementary students funded by the Muscogee Nation. When I graduated from NSU with my teaching degree, the principal of the high school where I graduated suggested I come home and teach. I did and I was grateful for the opportunity to serve the community that raised me. I was a teacher to Native

students with and without disabilities, which gave me interests that I focused on throughout my Ph.D. program. Now, I as a parent, I volunteer as the JOM IEC and Title VI Chairperson at my daughter's school. My lived experiences inform the way I relate to my work and hold me accountable to the children, families, and communities it will affect. To quote Brayboy (2021), "I am responsible *to* my ancestors and responsible *for* my descendants." (p. 100). My community worked to make things better for me, now it is my responsibility to work to make things better for my community. I didn't "get into" this. I have always been a part of it, as a student, as a teacher, as a parent, as the researched, and now, as the researcher. I am as much a part of this work as it is a part of me, I just changed roles. But good luck at the casino, lady, go get your free play.

Organization

This dissertation is structured across five chapters. Chapter One establishes a foundational introduction, providing essential background information and explaining the core problem. In this chapter, I propose a model for identifying evidence-based practices for ISWD. This initial chapter serves as a gateway, laying the groundwork for a deeper understanding of the subsequent analyses. In Chapter Two, the discourse takes the form of a position paper, delving into the critical issue of the underrepresentation of ISWD within the research landscape. This chapter illuminates the repercussions of such underrepresentation, particularly as it pertains to the creation of postsecondary transition plans that may not adequately serve the unique needs and challenges faced by ISWD. Building on the insights gained in Chapter Two, Chapter Three employs a Delphi procedure to discern nuanced ways in which transition assessment can be enhanced to better align with and address the specific requirements of ISWD. This methodological choice reflects a commitment to not only identifying issues but actively contributing to the development of practical solutions. Chapter Four takes a qualitative turn,

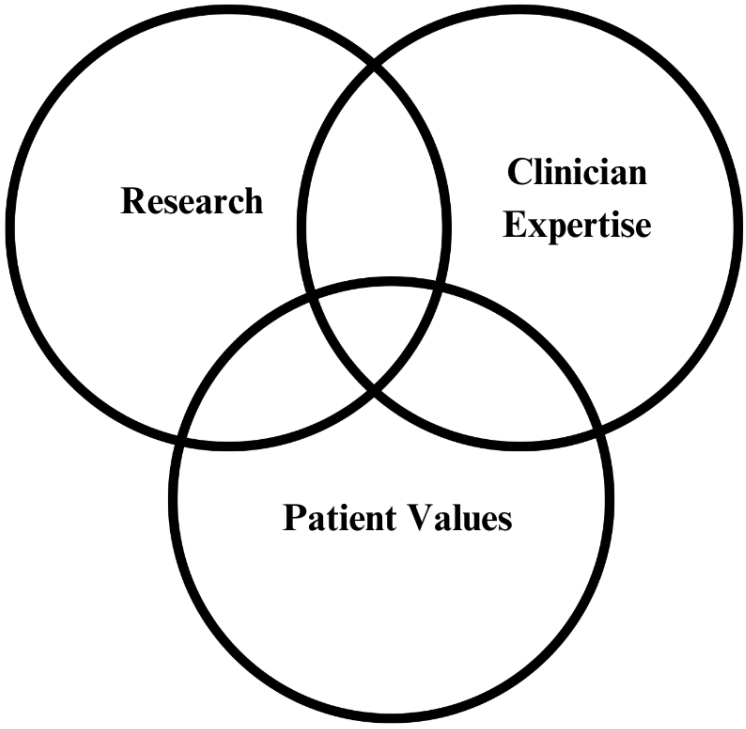
embarking on an exploration of the perceptions and lived experiences of students and family members involved in the transition planning process for ISWD. By capturing the lived experiences of those directly impacted, this chapter aims to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play, offering valuable qualitative insights. In Chapter Five the dissertation draws together its various threads to present a robust discussion of the results obtained throughout the study. This final chapter not only serves to synthesize the findings but also to suggest practical implications for both research and future planning strategies. Moreover, it provides a roadmap for future research directions, underscoring the ongoing commitment to advancing understanding and improving the practical outcomes for Indigenous Students with Disabilities.

Conceptual Framework

This dissertation adapts Sackett's (1995) model of evidence-based medicine as a conceptual framework for identifying postsecondary transition practices tailored to the distinct needs and contexts of ISWD. Figure 1 shows an adaptation of Sackett's model. As previously discussed, this model emphasizes the integration of evidence derived from research, clinician expertise, and patient values. I retain research findings as an integral part of the model, but replace clinician expertise with practitioner expertise, and patient values with family/student values. In adapting this model to address my research questions, I began reflecting on the relationship of the three components and how they support each other. To conceptualize this, I liken them to a braid, where each strand is interconnected and relies on the others to move forward.

Figure 1.

Conceptual Framework. Adapted from Sackett (1995).



To further explain my metaphor of a braid, I will share some background. Every night, I braid my daughter's hair before bed. Her hair is thick and curly, with long ringlets that get tangled as she rolls around in her sleep. I started braiding it when it grew long enough to prevent tangles and the resulting pain the next morning. Braiding her hair protects it from damage, allowing it to grow longer and healthier. This act of braiding is one of protection, undertaken with the intention to promote strength and growth. Bringing the three strands of a braid together takes time, knowledge, and vision for the future. It allows you to address small tangles in each strand to ensure the results protect in the present and promote growth for the future.

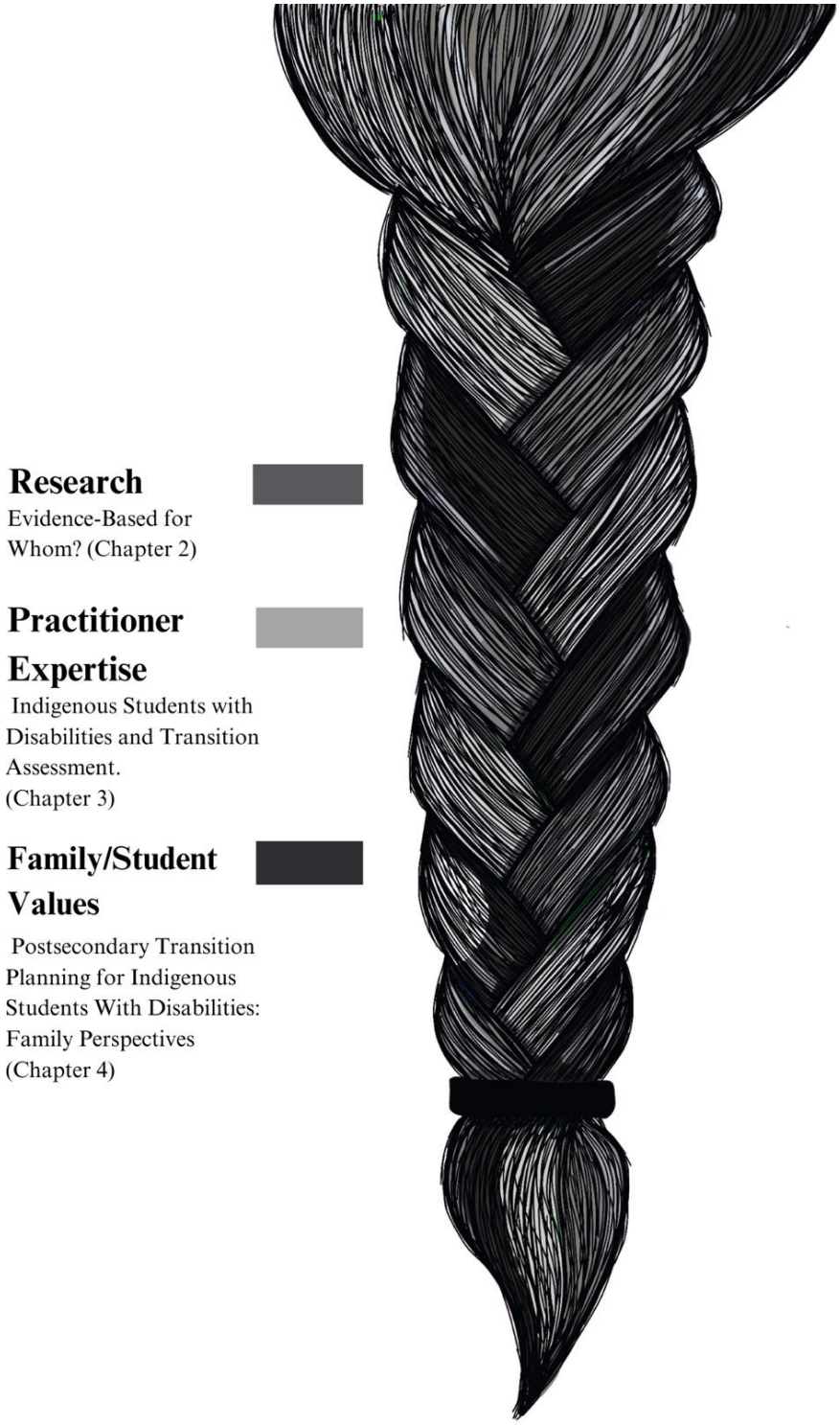
Because of this, braiding is an effective metaphor for evidence-based practices for ISWD. When braiding, each strand must be equal, or the braid will be uneven. If one strand is significantly bigger, it will waller (an academic term) out of the braid, and the smaller parts will be stretched too tightly, potentially damaging the hair. Only by ensuring that the three parts are equal will the braid hold. Sackett's model of evidence-based practices emphasizes three parts: research, practitioner expertise, and patient values. However, recently, the strand of research has been emphasized more than the others, leading to an uneven base of evidence. In a braid, no one strand is the most important; they must be equal to promote growth. Practitioner expertise and family values must be viewed as equal parts of the evidence base to strengthen the overall outcomes for ISWD, and consequently, Tribal Nations. Scholars have addressed the importance of research that is undertaken *in collaboration with* rather than *on* Indigenous peoples (Drawson et al., 2017). The Braiding model aligns with this approach by placing equal emphasis on family values, practitioner expertise, and research findings to ensure community values and Indigenous knowledge are represented. Figure 2. shows a visual representation of this model for identifying evidence-based practices for ISWD.

Figure 2. shows a visual representation of this model and situates the three articles in this dissertation within it. Addressing the scientific research component, I conduct a review of literature on the establishment of evidence-based practices in postsecondary transition and evidence-based predictors of positive postsecondary outcomes. To gain insights into practitioner expertise, I engage with a panel of Indigenous knowledge holders to explore their perspectives on existing postsecondary transition assessments and their appropriateness for ISWD. Additionally, to understand family/student values, I conduct interviews with families of ISWD to learn more about their perceptions of the transition planning process. Finally, I bring the findings

from each of these strands together. The findings from these components are synthesized in the Discussion chapter, creating a braid of evidence-based practices. This synthesis weaves and identifies relationships between strategies and practices that prove beneficial for ISWD in the context of planning for postsecondary transition

Figure 2.

Braiding Evidence-Based Practices for Indigenous Students with Disabilities



CHAPTER 2: EVIDENCE-BASED FOR WHOM?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA; 2004) guarantees special education services for students who qualify under one or more of the 13 disability categories. IDEA is the most recent reauthorization to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the federal law that addresses education for students with disabilities. The 2004 re-up mirrored language used in No Child Left Behind's 2002 reauthorization, requiring scientifically based research practices to teach students (Mazzotti et al., 2013; Yell, 2006). The inclusion of this language in the 2004 IDEA update prompted the field of special education and postsecondary transition to examine their own processes for defining and identifying scientifically based research practices.

IDEA's 1990 reauthorization added, for the first time, provisions to support students with disabilities' transition to life after high school. These transition services look at training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living upon the student's graduation from high school (IDEA, 2004). The law states that transition services should begin at age 16, or younger if deemed appropriate (IDEA, 2004). However, many believe that transition planning should begin much earlier, with some states beginning the process as young as 14 or the start of ninth-grade (Kohler, 1996; Suk et al., 2019). IDEA (2004) calls for transition services to include measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessment and transition programming to assist the student in meeting the goals. Transition services are further explained as a set of coordinated activities for the student that are designed within a results-oriented process. This process should be focused on improving academic and functional achievement to facilitate their movement to post-school activities. The transition plan should be based on the student's needs and consider their strengths, preferences, and interests (IDEA, 2004; Morningstar

& Liss, 2008). The importance of student participation in both the IEP and transition plan was affirmed in IDEA's 2004 update, and the benefits of students actively participating in the development of these plans has been noted in research (Martin et al., 2006; Rowe et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2012).

The most recent data available for students receiving special education services under IDEA is from the National Center for Education Statistic's (NCES) 44th Annual Report to Congress (2022) and looks at the 2020-2021 school year. This report shows that 7.2 million, or 15% of all public-school students were served under IDEA, with the most common disability category identified as specific learning disabilities (33%) (NCES, 2022). Of the students receiving special education services, 19% are Indigenous[1], 17% are Black, 15% are two or more races, 15% are White, 14% are Hispanic, followed by 12% Pacific Islander and 8% Asian (NCES, 2022). The report makes no mention of English learner status combined with disability. The overall heterogeneity of the special education population calls for evidence-based practices and assessments to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students with disabilities. This is especially true for Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD), who have the highest percentage of students receiving special education of all the demographic categories tracked. Despite the field's progress in defining levels of evidence, identifying evidence-based practices and predictors, and establishing quality indicators for research, ISWD are almost completely absent from the postsecondary transition research base. This means the generalizability of the studies used to establish evidence is limited due to the lack of diversity in sample and context,

[1] A note about terminology: Many terms are used to identify Indigenous people in research including Indigenous, First Nations, Native American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and others. I use the term Indigenous in this manuscript to refer to people who are citizens of Tribal Nations in what is now the United States, while acknowledging that no one term can reflect the diversity and nuances of Indigenous cultures. When possible, I use the specific name of the Indigenous Nation.

which minimizes the external validity and leaves transition practitioners without evidence-based practices to support this population of students and families.

Taxonomy for Transition

The Taxonomy for Transition (Kohler, 1996) identified five areas of practice important to successful transition: Family Involvement, Program Structures, Interagency Collaboration, Student Development, and Student Focused Planning. Within each of these categories are practices identified as predictors of successful transitions.

This model was created through a three-phase survey sent to 296 individuals identified as knowledgeable about transition (Kohler, 1996). The author does not share the race or ethnic identify of participants; however, they note that of the 201 respondents, 95% held a graduate degree. NCES data show that from 1977-2021, Indigenous people made up less than 1% of those who obtained either a master's degree or a doctorate. The author also notes that there were no respondents from Alaska, which is home to over 200 federally recognized tribes. Without racial demographic data available, it is impossible to be sure that Indigenous people were represented in the sample, however, based on what we do know about the sample and the demographics of graduate degree holders at that time, it is unlikely that Indigenous people were represented in this survey. The larger problem of the external validity of transition research begins here. Without the representation of Indigenous educators and researchers working in the space of transition, we cannot confidently assert that the Taxonomy for Transition is responsive to the diversity of Indigenous students and their contexts. Yet, the areas of taxonomy were used as a criterion for inclusion in the systematic reviews that established initial evidence-based practices and predictors for all transition students. Further, practices and predictors identified by the initial Test et al. reviews (2009a; 2009b) guided the update of the taxonomy, Taxonomy for Transition 2.0, which was released in 2016. But without Indigenous representation in the initial creation of

the taxonomy, the inclusion of only predictors and practices that are within its areas excludes practices and predictors that could benefit Indigenous students. Table 1 shows areas of Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy for Transition planning with identified practices for each area.

Table 1.

Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0 (adapted from Kohler et al., 2016). *Note:* * denotes areas added to Taxonomy 2.0.

Taxonomy Area	*Practices in Area*
Student-Focused Planning	• IEP Development • Planning Strategies • Student Preparation
Family Engagement	• Family Involvement • Family Empowerment • Family Preparation
Program Structure	• Program Characteristics • Program Evaluation • Strategic Planning • Policies & Procedures • Resource Development & Allocation • School Climate *
Interagency Collaboration	• Collaborative Framework • Collaborative Service Delivery
Student Development	• Assessment • Academic Skills • Life, Social & Emotional Skills • Employment & Occupational Skills • Student Supports * • Instructional Context *

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education programs funded the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT). One of the NTACT's initial objectives was to identify evidence-based practices for postsecondary transition so that practitioners could use the scientifically based research practices

hailed in NCLB and IDEA. To do this, special education researchers looked to the field of medical research for guidance in the identification of evidence-based practices. Models of determining evidence-based practices in the medical field typically include some combination of research evidence, practitioner expertise, and patient values (Sackett, 1995). The 3-pronged approach prevents the promotion of practices based solely on research evidence, that may not be appropriate in certain contexts, or align with some patients' values. As a way of identifying and classifying transition practices, NTACT created and operationally defined four levels of evidence. Appendix A shows criteria for NTACT's Levels of Evidence.

Under NTACT's criteria, practices are classified under one of four categories. The highest level is Evidence-Based (EBP), Research-Based (RBP), followed by Promising Practice (PP), and Unestablished (U). Practices for evaluation were to be identified by systematic reviews of transition literature (NTACT, 2013). Practices deemed evidence-based are based on group experimental, single-case, and correlational research which: (a) used rigorous research designs; (b) demonstrated a strong record of success for improving outcomes; (c) have undergone a systematic review process; and (d) adhered to quality indicators related to specific research design. Research-based practices are also based on these designs, which have used rigorous research designs, however, they must have demonstrated only a sufficient record of success for outcomes and may or may not have undergone a systematic review process and may or may not adhere to quality indicators. Promising practices are identified as based on group experimental, single-case, correlation or qualitative research which has demonstrated limited success for improving outcomes and may or may not have undergone a systematic review or adhere to quality indicators for the design. Unestablished practices are based on anecdotal evidence or

professional judgment and could include evidence from rigorous studies which demonstrate negative effects (NTACT, 2013).

Identified practices are also classified into the outcome areas of Education, Employment, and Independent Living. To ensure that studies included in the establishment of evidence-based practices were rigorous and to guide future transition research, NTACT also released quality indicators for different types of studies: Group Experimental, Single Case, Correlational, Mixed Methods, and Qualitative (NTACT, 2021). To be included in the reviews to establish evidence-based practices, studies had to meet these quality indicator (QI) guidelines.

Evidence-Based Practices and Predictors

NTACT's evidence-based practices were established through a review of experimental research (i.e., group and single-case designs). The first reviews focused on evidence-based practices and evidence-based predictors were published in 2009 (Test et al., 2009a; Test et al., 2009b), and identified an initial set of evidence-based practices and evidence-based predictors for postsecondary success. Test et al., 2009a and Test et al., 2009b were the product of one systematic review that looked at transition literature from 1984-2008. Part one of this review aimed to identify evidence-based practices to teach specific transition-related skills (Test et al., 2012). Thus, this review included group experimental and single-case research designs that were either clearly linked to a postsecondary outcome, or aligned with the Taxonomy for Transition (Kohler, 1996). Part two of the review was aimed at measuring the impact of those skills on the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities and therefore included group-experimental, single-case, as well as correlational research designs. Studies using other research designs and studies that didn't meet the newly minted QIs were excluded from the review. The research team's initial search turned up 1,562 studies, which were whittled down to 63 experimental studies for the practice review and 22 correlational studies for the predictor review.

Examples of practices identified include specific interventions and curriculums like the *Self-Determined Learning Model of Intervention* and the *Take Charge Curriculum* (Rowe et al., 2021). Unlike evidence-based practices, evidence-based predictors are identified through correlational research and seek to identify a connection between an activity or behavior that predicts a successful outcome (Test et al., 2009). Some examples of evidence-based predictors of post-school success are social skills, technology skills, and interagency collaboration (Mazzotti et al., 2021). These literature reviews have been an ongoing process in transition research, with replications focused on either practices or predictors published almost regularly since 2009. The updates from the replications have identified new practices and predictors, operationally defined identified predictors and practices, and added evidence to determine levels of effectiveness. Tables 5 and 6 show Identified Evidence-Based Predictors and practices.

Connection to Evidence-Based Predictors

Using the same pool of articles from Test et al., 2009a, Test et al., 2009b identified correlational research to identify evidence-based in-school predictors for improving outcomes for SWD. 22 studies were included, and inclusion criteria was partially based on studies' design and quality. This review identified 16 evidence-based predictors in the areas of Career Awareness, Community Experiences, Exit exam requirements, Inclusion in General Education, Interagency Collaboration, Occupational Courses, Paid Work Experience, Parental Involvement, Program of Study, Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination, Self-Care/ Independent Living, Social Skills, Student Support, Transition Program, Vocational Education, and Work Study. The 2009b review to establish evidence-based predictors led to an update for the Taxonomy for Transition 2.0 in 2016 and continues to guide practice in transition.

To operationalize the predictors found by Test and colleagues, Rowe and her own colleagues carried out a Delphi Study in 2014. This study established operational definitions for

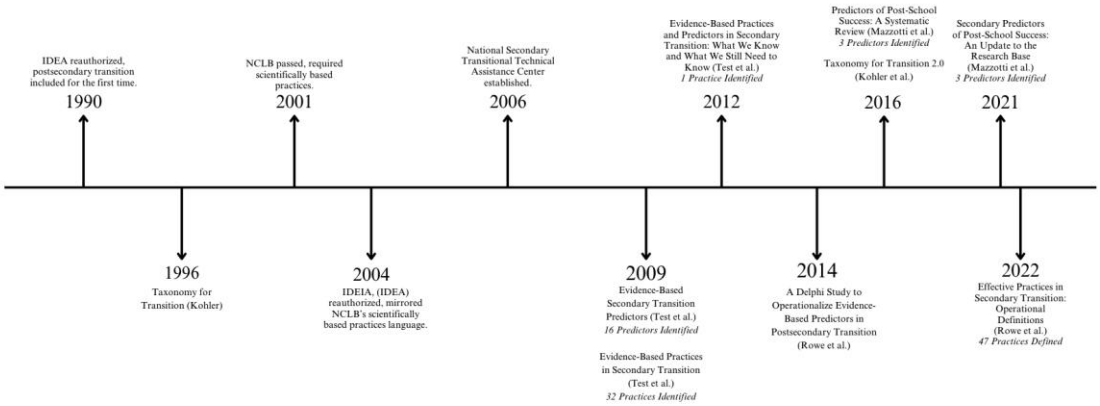
each of the predictors using input from 22 experts in the field of postsecondary transition. The demographics of the panel shared in the article include gender, years of experience with youth with disabilities, years of service or research experience in career and technical education, and peer-reviewed work status. It is unclear if any of the panel members were Indigenous. The panel also reached a consensus on a set of essential programs for each of the predictors, further supporting practitioners in implementing the 16 predictors established in Test et al., 2009b.

With predictors for postsecondary success identified and defined, Mazzotti et al. (2016) extended the findings of Test et al. (2009b) review, identifying additional evidence for previously identified predictors and new predictors for post-school success based on studies using data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS-2, 2012). The NLTS-2 was a then-recently published, federally funded study dealing with transition trends of over 11,000 youth with disabilities. This review contained 11 studies and replicated most of Test 2009b's methods, including inclusion based on study design and quality coding. Mazzotti et al. (2016) found no additional evidence for the categories of interagency collaboration, self-determination, transition program, community experiences, occupational courses, and program of study. Additional evidence for the remaining nine categories (career awareness, exit exam/high school diploma, inclusion in general education, paid employment/work experience, parent involvement, self-care/independent living skills, social skills, vocational education, work-study) was identified, as well as evidence for four new predictor categories: parent expectations, goal setting, youth autonomy/decision making, and travel skills. This study affirmed Test et al.'s (2009b) initial findings and added evidence-based areas for practitioners to consider when designing and implementing transition programming by bringing the total number of evidence-based predictors of postsecondary success up to 20.

Mazzotti and team followed this review up with a 2021 replication entitled *Secondary Predictors of Post-School Success: An Update to the Research Base.* Again, this most current review sought to add evidence to existing predictors and identify new predictors for postsecondary success. This update again replicated the methods from Test et al., 2009b and Mazzotti et al., 2016, and included 22 studies. The authors found evidence to further support the predictors vocational education (rebranded in this study as career and technical education [CTE]), exit exam/high school diploma, goal-settings, inclusion in general education, paid employment/work experience, parent expectations, program of study, self-care/independent living skills, self-determination/self-advocacy, social skills, student support, transition program, work study, and youth autonomy/decision making. Career awareness, community experiences, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, parent involvement, and travel skills saw no change in their level of evidence, aligned in this review for the first time with the NTACT's levels of evidence for research (NTACT, 2013). The review identified three new predictors: psychological empowerment, self-realization, and technology skills, bringing the total numbers of evidence-based predictors to 23. Figure 3 shows a timeline of transition research since IDEA (1990).

Figure 2.

Timeline of Transition Research Since IDEA (1990)



Connection to Evidence-Based Practices

Test and colleagues' initial literature review in 2009 laid the groundwork for evidence-based practices in secondary transition (Test et al., 2009a). Analyzing 63 group experimental and single case studies, categorized as high or acceptable quality based on quality indicators designed by the research team, the review pinpointed 32 evidence-based practices. These practices were organized under the domains of the Taxonomy for Transition: three under Student-Focused Planning, 25 under Student Development, one under Family Involvement, and three under Program Structure. Notably, no practices were identified under the category of Interagency Collaboration. An update to the 2009 review by Test et al. in 2012 introduced one additional evidence-based practice, self-care skills, categorized under Student Development. Subsequently, in 2013, NTACT released their guidance on categorizing practices as Evidence-Based, Research-Based, Promising, or Unestablished, adding layers to the classification process.

However, post-2012, tracking the evolution of these practices becomes challenging. Unlike the straightforward progression seen in tracing evidence-based predictors across reviews replicating the initial review systematic reviews identifying practices after 2012 proved elusive (Mazotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009b). In a 2020 systematic review aimed at evidence-based practices for functional skills by Rowe et al., the authors note a proliferation of systematic reviews examining practice effectiveness within specific populations and transition areas since 2012. Despite references to a comprehensive NTACT review in 2020 titled "Effective Practices and Predictors," attempts to locate it were fruitless, with links leading to defunct pages. Nonetheless, the most recent guidance comes from an article from NTACT (2022) and operationally defines the identified 47 practices, now rebranded "Effective Practices," and details evidence levels. This entry also shares the disability characteristics of student populations in the studies used to determine levels of evidence but does not share ethnicity/racial characteristics. These practices, along with the identified predictors, offer substantial support for their integration into transition programming for students with disabilities. Evaluating students' proficiency in these areas guides personalized transition plan development by pinpointing specific needs through transition assessment.

Assessment

Standardized assessments are used to make important educational determinations for students with disabilities including evaluation for initial identification, placement decisions, and transition programming needs. Transition assessment has been described as the cornerstone of transition planning (Carter et al, 2014; Williams-Diehm, 2022). The results from age-appropriate transition assessments provide the basis for creating individualized postsecondary goals and objectives for students in the areas of education, employment, and independent living when needed (Yell et al., 2006). These assessments come in many forms, including simple interest

inventories, skills checklists, informal assessments, and formal assessments. While IDEA gives little specific guidance on transition assessment, the law notes that assessments used for IEP development should be psychometrically sound and minimize bias (IDEA, C.F.R. §330.304 (c)). Research indicates that psychometrically sound assessments, when appropriately used, exhibit minimal or no bias, ensuring fair and unbiased assessment results (Christle & Yell, 2010; Ortiz, 2005). Eliminating bias is especially crucial when working with diverse populations, guaranteeing fair and accurate assessments. Best practice points to multiple transition assessments each year with at least one being formal (Carter et al., 2012; Carter et al., 2014; Landmark et al., 2010; Morningstar et al., 2018).

Formal assessments adhere to a standardized format, structure, and administration process and are supported by reliability and validity evidence. Reliability is established if the assessment consistently produces the same results under identical conditions across repeated trials. In conjunction with reliability, validity ensures that the assessment accurately measures its intended constructs, incorporating considerations of content, criteria, and constructs (American Educational Research Association (AERA), 2014; Juan, 2008; Taherdoost, 2016). Various methods, such as piloting assessments with a substantial student group and conducting statistical analyses, are employed to demonstrate reliability and validity. Reliability is typically gauged using coefficients like test-retest, evaluating consistency over time; alternate form, examining consistency across different versions of the assessment; and internal consistency, assessing the test's internal coherence (AERA, 2014). Validity evidence is established through content validity, ensuring items align with their intended measures; criterion validity, comparing results to external criteria; and construct validity, verifying alignment with theoretical constructs

(AREA, 2014). Acceptable results in these areas affirm the assessment's reliability and/or validity.

However, failure to construct a sample representative of the intended users poses a risk to the assessment's reliability and validity. A predominantly homogeneous sample may inaccurately imply the assessment's validity for individuals with diverse characteristics (Wilder et al., 2001). A growing body of researchers and practitioners have called into question the appropriateness of using existing standardized assessments with CLD students (Beach, 2020; Hill et al., 2010; Graham & Eadens, 2017; Pace et al., 2006; Trainor 2005; Yee & Butler, 2020). Consequently, standardization samples must mirror the diverse characteristics of the targeted population, including transition assessments for students with disabilities.

The outcomes of these assessments are pivotal in setting postsecondary goals and guiding the provision of transition services for students with disabilities to achieve those objectives. Educators must ensure that the selected assessment is valid for the specific student being evaluated. In the context of postsecondary transition, this involves choosing assessments based on the student's cultural background, needs, skills, and relevant knowledge. Without valid and culturally appropriate transition assessments, educators risk making decisions and providing services based on inaccurate or incomplete information, potentially resulting in ineffective or inadequate support for students with disabilities during their transition into adulthood (Sitlington & Clark, 2007).

For Whom the Practices are Best

Concerns regarding best practices for CLD students extend beyond assessments. These students are less likely to have transition plans that meet Indicator 13, the measuring stick for compliance of transition plans (Landmark & Zhang, 2012). Which could, in part, explain why they also tend to have poorer postsecondary outcomes in the areas of education and employment

than non-marginalized students with disabilities The employment landscape reveals stark disparities between individuals with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts, as evidenced by research (Carter et al., 2012; Mazzotti et al., 2021). In 2019, individuals aged 21-64 with disabilities faced a considerable gap in employment rates, with only 39.2% employed compared to a significantly higher rate of 80.7% among their non-disabled peers (Erikson et al., 2022). This trend persists across racial categories, highlighting the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. For instance, 40.4% of white individuals with disabilities are employed full-time, while their non-disabled counterparts boast an 81.5% full-time employment rate. Similarly, 32.4% of black individuals with disabilities hold full-time jobs, in contrast to 78.5% of non-disabled black peers. Among AI/AN individuals with disabilities, 33.9% are employed, a marked difference from the 72.7% employment rate observed in their non-disabled AI/AN counterparts. While we cannot be sure if these outcomes are due to employer bias in hiring or lack of transition preparedness, these differences highlight a significant disparity experienced by diverse students with disabilities in obtaining employment.

The educational landscape for students with disabilities also reflects concerning disparities when compared to their non-disabled counterparts. While the percentages of students indicating "Some college or an associate degree" remain relatively stable for both groups (31.8% for individuals with disabilities and 30.4% for non-disabled individuals), a substantial gap emerges when considering the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher (Erikson et al., 2022). Alarmingly, only 15.7% of individuals with disabilities hold a BA or higher, while 35.9% of their non-disabled peers have achieved the same level of education. This disparity underscores the significant challenges faced by students with disabilities in pursuing and attaining higher

education, suggesting markedly lower odds of obtaining a bachelor's degree compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Although specific data on the racial breakdowns in educational attainment for students with disabilities is lacking, the prevalence of Indigenous students receiving special education services under IDEA implies some entry into higher education. However, a lack of research in this domain prevents conclusive insights. The oft-reported high school dropout rates among Indigenous students (Adelman et al., 2013; Graham & Eadens, 2017; Lindsay et al., 2021) underscore the formidable challenges these students encounter in completing secondary education. The implications of these dropout rates extend beyond secondary education, significantly limiting Indigenous students' access to and success in higher education and employment.

Scholars have noted that these students are underrepresented in research (Blackhorn, 2020; Murray &Wiley, 2017; Othman, 2018; Trainor & Bal, 2014) which could contribute to the poor outcomes they are often faced with in these areas. When practices are deemed evidence or research-based, they are not specified for whom. Homogeneity in research samples could lead to promotion of practices that are not suitable for students from all socio-cultural contexts. This is especially true for Indigenous students, who despite being overrepresented in special education, are chronically underrepresented in transition research (Applequist et al., 2009; Blackhorn, 2020; Faircloth et al., 2015; Hibel et al., 2008).

Indigenous Students' Underrepresentation in Transition Research

Indigenous students account for 19% of the special education population, making them the most proportionately represented racial demographic receiving special education services under IDEA. Indigenous students are unique from other CLD students because they occupy a

liminal space as both a racial minority and a political minority as citizens of Sovereign Nations who are subject to unique protections under U.S. federal treaties (Brayboy, 2006; Lomawaima,

2004; Faircloth et al., 2015). These protections, along with the protections guaranteed to students with disabilities under IDEA necessitate EBPs created to respond to ISWD's unique needs. Despite this unique intersectionality, that there is a dearth of research devoted to promising, research, and evidence-based practices for this population. The reviews that identified evidence-based in-school predictors of post-school success and continue to shape the field of postsecondary transition are almost completely devoid of Indigenous participants (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009a; Test et al., 2009b). Combined, the three reviews contain 55 studies. Indigenous participants are identified in 7 (12.7%) of these studies. Tables 2 and 3 contain more information about the demographics, shared in these reviews.

Table 2.

Evidence-Based Predictors for Postsecondary Success Review Demographics.

Review	Studies Included	Studies with AI/AN Participants	Studies with no Ethnicity Data or "Other" Categories	Total Participants	Total Identified AI/AN Participants
Test et al., 2009	22	2	12	26,480	18, <1%
Mazzotti et al., 2016	11	1	8	21,093	50, <1%
Mazoztti et al., 2021	22	4	12	115,280	141, 1.2%
Totals	55	7	32	162,853	209, <1%

Table 3.

Evidence-Based Practices for Postsecondary Success Review Demographics. Note. Missing data are marked with an *. These studies did not share racial characteristics, therefore it is not possible to determine if Indigenous participants were included.

Review	Studies Included	Studies with AI/AN Participants	Studies with no Ethnicity Data or "Other" Categories	Total Participants	Total Identified AI/AN Participants
Test et al., 2009	63	*	*	*	*
Test et al., 2012	*	*	*	*	*
Totals	*	*	*	*	*

Test et al.'s 2009 review that established the original list of 16 predictors included 22 studies. Of these studies, only two contained Indigenous participants. The authors report the total number of participants for the studies included in the review at 26,840. 18 of those participants were identified as Indigenous, less than 1%. Similarly, Mazzotti et al.'s 2016 review of 11 studies which affirmed the initial predictors, as well as adding three more, had only one study with identified Indigenous participants. Of this review's total sample size of 21,093, only 50 were identified as Indigenous, again less than 1%. Mazzotti et al.'s 2021 follow-up reviewed 22 studies, of which 3 contained Indigenous participants. This review noted a total participant count of 115, 280, of which 141 were identified as Indigenous, making this the first of the reviews to have more than 1% of Indigenous participants, but just so at 1.2%. The combined populations of these reviews (N = 162,853) which identified 23 in-school predictors of postsecondary success contained less than 1% of Indigenous students (N = 209). The reviews identifying Effective Practices report no racial characteristics at all (Test et al, 2009a; Test et al., 2012; Rowe et al., 2019 or NTACT et al., 2022). In fact, after the initial Test et al., 2009b which included 22 studies, it is unclear how many studies were included in the updated reviews. This makes it

unclear how many Indigenous students were participants in the studies used to establish Effective Practices without reviewing each of the studies included in the reviews individually.

The actual samples of the studies included in these reviews could contain more Indigenous participants, however 11 of the predictor studies did not report racial demographics of participants. 21 of the predictor studies contained categories such as “Two or More Races”, “Multiracial”, or “Other”. These categories are often used as a parking spot for participants who do not make up a statistically significant variable on their own and Indigenous people are frequently lumped into these categories in large datasets, or represented with an asterisk to denote a demographic that is too small for statistical significance (Adams & Farnsworth, 2020; Brayboy & Lomawaima, 2018; Burnette, 2021; Faircloth et al., 2015; Garland, 2010; Jameson & Marley, 2018, Shotton et al., 2013). Reducing participants’ culture to “Other” instead of identifying them is not only demeaning, but it also gives readers little information about the characteristics of the participants in that group and thus, the generalizability of the findings.

These reviews combined have been cited over 2,400 times on Google Scholar alone and viewed or downloaded from the Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals (CDTEI) journal’s webpage over 25,000 times. In fact, CDTEI, published a position paper in 2013 promoting the evidence-based practices and predictors and calling for scholars to further promote and conduct research on the predictors identified (Mazzotti, et al., 2013). This research has shaped the field by identifying these predictors, yet it has done so without representation from the largest proportional racial demographic group receiving special education services. The branding as “Effective”, “Evidence-Based”, and “Research-Based” practices and predictors leaves educators unfamiliar with research practices without reason to question the context, and thus, the external validity, of the studies used to identify them. While NTACT and CDTEI stop

short of claiming these practices and predictors are the correct approach for every student, one can faintly hear NTACT beseeching us to pay no attention to the man behind the curtain. This presents an issue because by endorsing these predictors and practices in transition courses as universally "correct" approaches for all students with disabilities, we are equipping transition practitioners to perpetuate a cycle of planning that falls short in quality, ultimately placing Indigenous students at a disadvantage for achieving positive postsecondary outcomes. An example of this is the area of Interagency Collaboration. Interagency Collaboration is an area of the Taxonomy for Transition (Kohler, 1996; Kohler et al., 2016) and was identified as a predictor of postschool success by Test et al., 2009, but no additional evidence was found to support this predictor in Mazzotti et al.'s subsequent reviews (2016, 2021). It remains a "Promising Practice" per NTACT guidance. Similarly, Test et al.'s 2009a and 2012 practices reviews found no evidence to support practices falling under the category of Interagency Collaboration. However, ISWD are eligible for services such as funding for postsecondary education, job training and placement, internships, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, housing assistance, and food assistance through their Indigenous Nation and other organizations that serve this population. With so many supports available to these specific students, one could reasonably infer that interagency collaboration between school districts and these agencies would greatly increase ISWD's post-secondary outcomes, but their lack of representation in the research has kept this predictor in NTACT's lowest evidence level.

Rigor Is in the Eye of the Beholder

Another important issue is the exclusive view of "Rigor." The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) takes the stance that EBPs can only be established using research that infers causality (Mazzotti, et al., 2013). Following IES's lead, studies classified under NTACT's

Levels of Evidence must be based on one of three designs: group experimental, single-case, or correlational. The Randomized Control Trial (RCT), regarded by many as the gold standard for educational research, relies on a larger sample size in which participants are randomly assigned to groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the targeted practice (Bhide et al, 2018; Odom, 2021). In fact, per NTACT's Levels of Evidence (2018), two methodologically sound, group studies with random group assignments made up of 60 or more participants that show positive effects are enough to establish a practice as Evidence-Based. Given the above-mentioned issues with Indigenous representation in large datasets, these types of designs typically either don't include ISWD, or omit this population due to limited statistical significance (Faircloth et al., 2015; Jameson, 2021). Further, some researchers (Cartwright, 2007; Joyce & Cartwright, 2020; Odom, 2021) have questioned the external validity of RCTs, noting the results of these studies are bound by the context in which the study was carried out. Conditions for these studies are tightly managed to control for interference that could affect the outcomes. Any elementary teacher who has taught through a Red Ribbon Week that ends with Halloween party day will tell you these highly structured conditions are improbable in real school settings.

As a quantitative research design, single-case designs (SCDs) are a viable option for establishing evidence-based practices for ISWD. NTACT's (2018) guidelines for establishing practices as evidence-based using SCDs are more stringent than RCTs. A practice must have five methodologically sound single case studies that demonstrate positive effects across 20 participants in total, and no studies with negative effects (NTACT, 2018). An additional criterion is that the studies must be carried out by three separate research teams, a guideline that does not exist for group experimental design (NTACT, 2018). Unlike group designs, which rely on larger sample sizes to evaluate an intervention's effectiveness, SCDs are useful, among other things, for

studying the effectiveness of an intervention with a small group of participants with similar characteristics. Consequently, SCDs could be ideal for evaluating the effectiveness of practices with ISWD. However, a 10-year review of CDTEI's experimental studies showed that Indigenous students were completely absent from the single-case studies published by the journal in that time (N =19) (Mitchell et al., 2024). This means that ISWD's unique needs and contexts are not being captured in research that is considered rigorous by NTACT's standards, and consequently, not being used to add to the evidence base. Practices and predictors identified from research that uses a qualitative methodology, or an Indigenous methodology cannot be classed as evidence-based, however, NTACT (2018) notes that results from qualitative studies offer ideas that can be expanded upon using experimental research and provide context and understanding of an area or issue with little research.

NTACT's model of evidence-based practices shows preference to experimental research findings, relegating work done on student/family perspectives and professional judgement to its lowest levels of evidence. This leads to the prioritization of studies that are not reflective of the characteristics of students receiving special education services and are thus, less generalizable to this population. The field must move past "the vanity of rigor" (Cartwright, 2007, p. 18), and place equal value on designs that contextualize the findings for practitioner use.

Discussion

Individuals who hold influence in shaping transition policies and practices must actively advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples at every stage. These efforts should extend to policies specifically crafted to ensure diversity in grant funding, fostering an environment where Indigenous perspectives are considered and supported. Additionally, there should be a deliberate focus on the recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty members within educational

institutions, ensuring that their expertise and insights contribute to the development of inclusive transition practices.

Responsible collaboration with Tribal Communities is a fundamental aspect of this advocacy. Engaging in partnerships with these communities for collaborative transition research is essential. Such partnerships should be built on mutual respect, understanding, and shared goals, as well as adhere to the OCAP principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Protection of data (First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.). By involving Tribal Communities directly, it becomes possible to identify evidence-based practices and predictors for postsecondary success that are rooted in the unique cultural contexts and needs of Indigenous individuals. This collaborative approach not only enriches the research process but also ensures that the resulting policies and practices are more effective, culturally responsive, and aligned with the experiences of Indigenous peoples.

While it is essential for special education initiatives to equip ISWD for post-graduation success, these students and their families encounter obstacles throughout the special education process, hindering the attainment of such successes. The scientifically research-based practices and predictors identified by the field of postsecondary transition may be beneficial to ISWD, however, their absence from the research base used to identify the practices, coupled with the unfavorable postschool outcomes faced by this group prevents us from making such a conclusion.

These outcomes stem from a dearth of research on evidence-based practices and predictors tailored to support these students in culturally appropriate transition planning. The influence of research on practice is pivotal, shaping curriculum for teacher preparation programs and disseminating crucial information within the field. ISWD are entitled to education, as

guaranteed by federal treaty law and IDEA (2004). Tribal Nations have actively established programs offering postsecondary resources to their citizens (Tennell & Chew, 2021). Yet, while Indigenous students with disabilities are afforded unique protections and resources, unparalleled among other student groups in the U.S., these students remain underserved in the critical area of postsecondary transition. This demands immediate attention. A crucial initial stride towards rectifying this disparity is the active inclusion of Indigenous students with disabilities in comprehensive postsecondary transition research. By placing these students at the center of scholarly inquiry, we can truly address the nuanced challenges faced by this community and ensure their equitable access to successful postsecondary pathways.

Table 4.

Evidence-Based Predictors in Postsecondary Transition

Predictor	Identified by Test et al., 2009	Identified or Evidence Added by Mazzotti et al., 2016	Identified or Evidence Added by Mazzotti et al., 2021	NTACT Evidence Level-Education	NTACT Evidence Level-Employment	NTACT Evidence Level-Independent Living
Career awareness	X	X		PP	PP	
Community experiences	X				PP	
Exit exam requirements/high school diploma status	X	X	X		PP	
Inclusion in general education	X	X	X	RBP	RBP	RBP
Interagency collaboration				PP	PP	
Occupational courses	X			PP	PP	
Paid employment/work experiences	X	X	X	RBP	RBP	PP
Parental involvement	X				PP	
Program of study	X		X	RBP	RBP	
Self-advocacy/self-determination	X		X	RBP	RBP	PP
Self-care/independent living skills	X	X	X	PP	PP	RBP
Social skills	X	X	X	PP	PP	
Student support	X		X	PP	RBP	PP
Transition program	X		X	RBP	PP	

Predictor	Identified by Test et al., 2009	Identified or Evidence Added by Mazzotti et al., 2016	Identified or Evidence Added by Mazzotti et al., 2021	NTACT Evidence Level-Education	NTACT Evidence Level-Employment	NTACT Evidence Level-Independent Living
Career and Technical Education (formerly Vocational education)	X	X	X	RBP	EBP	
Work study	X	X	X		RBP	
Goal setting		X	X	RBP		
Parental expectations		X	X	PP	RBP	
Travel skills		X		PP		
Youth autonomy/decision making		X	X	RBP	RBP	PP
Psychological empowerment			X	PP	PP	PP
Self-actualization			X		PP	PP
Technology skills			X		PP	

Table 5.

Evidence-Based Practices in Transition Identified by Test et al., 2009 and Test et al., 2012 (grouped by Taxonomy for Transition Category)

Taxonomy Area	Practices Identified
Student-Focused Planning	• Involving students in the IEP process • Self-Advocacy Strategy • Self-Directed IEP
Student Development	• Teaching life skills • Teaching purchasing skills • Teaching banking skills • Teaching completing a job application • Teaching cooking skills • Teaching employment skills using community-based instruction • Teaching food preparation skills • Teaching functional math skills • Teaching functional reading skills • Teaching grocery shopping skills • Teaching home maintenance skills • Teaching leisure skills • Teaching life skills using community-based instruction • Teaching life skills using computer assisted instruction • Teaching life skills using self-management • Teaching job specific employment skills • Teaching job specific employment skills using computer assisted instruction • Teaching job purchasing using the “one more than” strategy • Teaching restaurant purchasing skills • Teaching safety skills • Teaching self-advocacy skills • Teaching self-determination skills

	• Teaching self-management for employment skills • Social skills training • Teaching job-related communication skills • Teaching self-care skills
Family Involvement	• Teaching parents and families about transition
Program Structure	• Provide community-based instruction • Structure program to extend services beyond secondary school • Implement Check & Connect program for students with disabilities
Interagency Collaboration	• None

CHAPTER 3: TRANSITION ASSESSMENT FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Transition services for students with disabilities are meant to facilitate their movement from high school to postsecondary life. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) mandates that students receiving special education services begin receiving transition services at age 16, or younger if deemed appropriate, to prepare them to meet postsecondary goals based on the student's preferences, interests, needs, and skills. Though the law specifies 16 as the age at which transition services should begin, many believe that beginning transition planning as early as possible will lead to more positive postsecondary outcomes (Kohler, 1996; Suk et al., 2019). Some states have underlined this by mandating transition services begin as young as age 14 or the start of ninth grade.

Specifically, IDEA calls for transition services to include "appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living." (IDEA, 34 CFR§300.320, 2004). By mandating that postsecondary goals are based on age-appropriate assessments, IDEA underscores the importance of using assessment to guide transition planning for students with disabilities. Transition assessments play a crucial role in the postsecondary transition process for students with disabilities. These assessments provide a comprehensive understanding of the student's areas of strengths and needs, interests, and abilities, which then serve as the basis for creating individualized postsecondary goals in areas such as education, employment, and independent living. By using assessment to guide transition planning, educators can ensure that the goals are based on the student's preferences, interests, needs, and skills, leading to more personalized and effective support. Additionally, assessments help educators identify areas

where additional support may be needed and can inform the delivery of transition services to help students achieve their objectives. Without appropriate and valid transition assessments, educators may be making decisions and providing services based on incomplete or inaccurate information, which can result in ineffective or inadequate support for students with disabilities as they transition into adulthood. While transition assessments are an important tool in guiding postsecondary transition planning for students with disabilities, it is important to acknowledge that they are not without limitations. One potential limitation is the reliance on assessments that may not fully capture the unique strengths, needs, and aspirations of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Transition Assessment

The results from transition assessments provide the basis for creating individualized postsecondary goals for students in the areas of education, employment, and independent living when needed. Transition assessments take various forms to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the student's strengths, challenges, interests, and abilities. Simple interest inventories are tools to gauge a student's preferences, likes, and dislikes. Skills checklists evaluate a student's current abilities and competencies. Informal assessments are non-standardized methods, which are often teacher or observer-driven, to gather information on a student's performance and behavior. Finally, formal assessments are standardized, structured evaluations that have established reliability and validity. Outside of noting that transition assessments should be “age-appropriate” (IDEA, 2004; Yell, 2006) the law makes no mention of the number or type of assessments required. However, researchers hold that best practice entails multiple transition assessments each year, with at least one formal assessment (Carter et al., 2012; Carter et al., 2014; Landmark et al., 2010; Morningstar et al., 2018).

Formal, or standardized assessments, are technically sound instruments that follow a consistent and predetermined format, structure, and administration process and have reliability, validity, and accuracy evidence to support their use. Reliability means an assessment produces consistent results under the same conditions in repeated trials (Messick, 1989). Validity determines if an assessment measures what it is designed to measure and involves considering content, criteria and constructs (Messick, 1989; Messick, 1993). The accuracy of an assessment ensures that it effectively captures a student's proficiency in the targeted skill domain (American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2014)). Consequently, the incorporation of reliability and validity evidence is essential for verifying the accuracy of the assessment.

There are different methods for demonstrating reliability and validity evidence, which include piloting the assessment with a reasonably large group of students to collect data, then running various statistical analyses to establish reliability and validity. Reliability is typically identified using one of three categories of coefficients: test-retest, which looks at consistency over time, alternate form, which is related to consistency across different forms of the assessment, and internal consistency, which is concerned with the consistency of the test within itself (AERA, 2014). Validity evidence is often established by evaluating the assessment's item for content validity, criterion validity, or construct validity (AREA, 2014). Content validity ensures items represent what they are intended to measure, criterion validity compares the results to external criteria, and construct validity ensures alignment to theoretical constructs. If the analyses used show acceptable results for these areas, the assessment is considered reliable and/or valid. Findings from empirical studies used to establish reliability and validity evidence are sometimes used to establish a norm group or a criterion that predicts a certain outcome. The

norms and criterion established are then used to reference students' performance on the assessments.

Norm-referenced assessments are designed to understand how students are performing on a domain or skill in comparison to a pre-defined population with similar contexts, or a norm group. This means that students' scores are ranked in comparison to the group used to establish reliability and validity evidence for the assessment. One example of a norm-referenced assessment is the weight and height percentiles commonly used by pediatricians to reference a child's growth. Alternatively, criterion-referenced assessments compare a student's proficiency of a domain or skill against a pre-determined criterion, such as a goal or level. This means that a student's score is compared against a standard rather than the scores of other students. An example of a criterion-referenced assessment is a driving test, in which a student must show their own proficiency of driving skills to pass rather than how they compare to other students learning to drive. Research has shown well-designed, constructed, and normed assessments, when used appropriately, demonstrate minimal or no signs of bias that could threaten reliability (Ortiz, 2005). Therefore, ensuring assessments are free from bias is crucial for fair, equitable, and accurate results, especially when working with diverse populations.

However, failure to construct a sample that accurately represents the intended users has the potential to undermine the accuracy of the assessment. If the sample predominantly comprises individuals with homogeneous characteristics, it may falsely suggest the assessment's accuracy for those with diverse characteristics (Wilder, et al., 2001). Therefore, standardization samples must mirror the characteristic diversity of the targeted population, including transition assessments designed for students with disabilities. The outcomes of these assessments play a pivotal role in establishing postsecondary goals and guiding the delivery of transition services for

students with disabilities to attain those objectives. Educators must ensure the chosen assessment is valid for the specific student being evaluated. In the context of postsecondary transition, this entails selecting assessments based on the student's cultural background, needs, skills, and relevant knowledge. Without valid and culturally appropriate transition assessments, educators may be basing their decisions and services on inaccurate or incomplete information, leading to ineffective or inadequate support for students with disabilities as they transition into adulthood (Sitlington & Clark, 2007). IDEA (2004) does not define appropriate assessment, however, based on the legislation's definition of appropriate education, we can infer that appropriate assessment should provide some educational benefit to the student. Culturally valid and appropriate transition assessments can help to promote equity and inclusivity in the transition planning process.

Transition Assessment for Indigenous Students with Disabilities

The significance of culturally appropriate transition assessment becomes particularly pronounced for ISWD, who not only belong to distinct cultural groups but are also citizens of Sovereign Nations (Brayboy, 2005). Recognizing the nuance of this liminality, the dual identity of being both Indigenous and a citizen of a Sovereign Nation, is crucial in adequately preparing Indigenous students with disabilities for life after high school.

Indigenous students constitute a substantial 19% of those receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (NCES, 2022), representing the largest percentage among all racial demographics proportionally. This emphasizes the urgency for evaluation samples assessing the reliability and validity of proposed transition assessments to include Indigenous students with disabilities. Unfortunately, there exists a chronic under-representation of Indigenous students with disabilities in postsecondary transition research (Blackhorn, 2020). This lack of representation poses significant challenges for educators who

may not have access to essential information and resources when working with Indigenous students with disabilities. Without research that specifically focuses on the unique needs, strengths, and aspirations of Indigenous students, educators may struggle to create postsecondary goals and provide transition services that are culturally relevant and effective. This under-representation not only denies Indigenous students with disabilities access to resources and opportunities tailored to their specific needs, but could also constitutes a denial of the free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) guaranteed by IDEA. Addressing this under-representation is crucial for fostering an inclusive and equitable transition planning process that supports the postsecondary success of Indigenous students with disabilities and contributes to the broader goals of Tribal Nation Building.

Postsecondary Transition as Tribal Nation Building

Tribal Nation Building is a comprehensive and culturally relevant process for Tribal Nations, that encompasses various aspects of life such as economics, healthcare, ecology, and education (Brayboy, 2021). By approaching postsecondary transition planning for Indigenous students with disabilities from the concept of Tribal Nation Building, educators can contribute to the broader goals of inclusivity, support, and development within Tribal Communities.

To ensure that the postsecondary transition planning process is culturally relevant, educators must be aware of and sensitive to the unique needs and perspectives of Indigenous students. This involves recognizing the diversity within Tribal Communities and understanding the impact of historical and systemic factors on these students. An emphasis on creating a supportive environment for Indigenous students with disabilities during their postsecondary education is key. When Indigenous students with disabilities successfully transition into postsecondary settings, they enhance their individual capacities and become valuable members

of their communities. They can become educators, medical personnel, leaders, and more, bringing their knowledge and skills back to their communities and contributing to their overall well-being. This positive feedback loop strengthens the community and supports the goals of Tribal Nation Building. By recognizing the link between postsecondary transition planning for Indigenous students with disabilities and the broader concept of Nation Building, educators can play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive and culturally relevant educational environment that supports the holistic development of Tribal Communities.

Choosing appropriate transition assessments is a crucial step in this process. These assessments should be designed to capture a holistic view of the student's strengths, needs, and aspirations, while also considering cultural contexts. By doing so, educators can obtain results that are more accurate and aligned with the goals and values of Indigenous students and their communities.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify strengths and areas for improvement in current transition assessments by seeking perceptions of current assessments from a panel of knowledge holders. The results of this study will guide the development of culturally appropriate transition assessment for ISWD.

Research Questions

- How do a panel of Indigenous knowledge holders in postsecondary transition rate the relevance of three current transition assessments (*Transition Assessment and Goal Generator, Self-Determination Inventory, Casey Life Skills: American Indian/Alaska Native)* to the lives of Indigenous students with disabilities?

- What do the knowledge holders on the panel identify as areas for improvement in the current transition assessments for Indigenous students with disabilities?

METHOD

To determine the relevance of existing transition assessments, this study used a design that is based on the Delphi procedure (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). This procedure solicits input from a panel of experts in a given field through an iterative process that uses a series of structured questionnaires to gain consensus (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). The Delphi procedure was developed in the 1950s as a method for gathering input from a panel of experts. It involves using structured questionnaires to gain consensus on a particular topic. In the current study, the Delphi procedure is being used to assess the relevance of existing transition assessments for Indigenous students with disabilities. The procedures have been widely adapted and applied in research areas such as medical, policy, and education (Brady, 2015; Linstone & Turoff, 2002). The procedures also have applications in community engaged research (Brady, 2015), making it a useful tool for working with Tribal Communities.

Community Engaged Research

Community-engaged research is a vital approach in addressing complex social issues and understanding the needs and perspectives of communities. The Delphi method can be an effective tool in community-engaged research, enabling researchers to gather diverse perspectives and insights from community members (Brady, 2015). This approach allows for a more participatory and inclusive research process, as it involves the active involvement of community members in shaping the research agenda and generating knowledge. Brady goes on to describe the usefulness of this method in building practice theory, or a beginning level of

theory that can be testable in subsequent quantitative studies which, in this case would be the creation and validation of a transition assessment for ISWD.

By using the Delphi method in community-engaged research, researchers can tap into the unique knowledge and needs of the community, fostering dialogue and collaboration towards localized solutions and positive social change. Research conducted about Indigenous people should be community-engaged to ensure that it addresses the needs and priorities of communities, builds their capacity, and respects their rights and cultural knowledge (Adhikari et al., 2019; Wilson, 2005). Community engagement in research with Indigenous Peoples is essential for promoting ownership, control, access, and possession of research projects and data (Drawson, et al., 2017; First Nations Governance Center, n.d.). It also ensures that Indigenous knowledge and methodologies are incorporated and that the research benefits the community in a good way. Studies have shown that community engagement leads to more meaningful and relevant research outcomes, as well as fosters trust and mutual respect between researchers and Tribal Communities (Drawson, et al., 2017).

Differences

This research study deviates from the traditional Delphi process in several ways. First, the panel of participants is deliberately small. While a typical Delphi procedure has a panel of 10 or more experts, this study only includes participants who identify as Indigenous. This decision was made to prioritize the Indigenous perspective, ensuring that the results are relevant to ISWD. Although this reduces the pool of potential participants, it was deemed necessary to achieve the study's objectives. Second, achieving consensus is not a primary focus of this study. Instead, the goal is to identify common themes identified by the panel. Given that the panel is composed of participants from different Tribal communities, it would be inappropriate to enforce a consensus. Tribal Communities exhibit vast diversity, each possessing unique cultural practices, languages,

and beliefs. Consequently, expecting unanimity regarding suitable postsecondary transition planning is unreasonable. Hence, crafting an assessment tailored to address the specific needs of all Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD) presents challenges. However, by exploring emerging themes and shared values prevalent among Tribal communities—such as accessing Tribal resources—we can identify areas of awareness for practitioners working with ISWD.

Participants

A set of inclusion criteria was developed by the authors to identify knowledge holders in the field of Indigenous special education and postsecondary transition. Because of the many demographic areas that this field affects, special care was taken to identify a diverse pool of experts, with experience in different aspects of postsecondary transition, and various Tribal affiliations and geographic regions. Because this study is focused on Indigenous students, care was taken to seek out experts who identify as Indigenous. Thus, purposive sampling (Creswell, 1998) was used with a criterion sampling strategy (Creswell, 1998) to identify participant who meet inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for this study are as follows:

- author/researcher of scholarly, peer-reviewed work relative to Indigenous postsecondary transition outcomes
- practitioner (e.g., teacher, education department personnel, vocational rehabilitation personnel, administrator) with experience serving Indigenous students with disabilities.
- Community members (e.g., Elders, Tribal leaders)

After receiving University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board approval, a list of experts was generated, and experts were invited to participate. Due to the relatively few people with expertise in this area, the initial list contained 10 individuals. Five experts consented to participate in the study. Each of the five experts were Indigenous.

Table 6.

Panel Participants

Participant	Role
Participant 1	Faculty member at University
Participant 2	Higher Education Director for Indigenous Nation
Participant 3	Transition coordinator for large urban district
Participant 4	Retired administrator of district serving primarily Indigenous students
Participant 5	Veteran teacher and parent of transition-age Indigenous students with disabilities

Response Rate

Dillman's (2007) response rate survey methods were used to promote appropriate response rates. This included sending pre-notifications and follow-up reminders to complete the questionnaires. Questionnaires were sent via online survey tool Qualtrics. Overall response rate and response rate for each phase was calculated as number of respondents by number of possible respondents and was 100% overall and each phase.

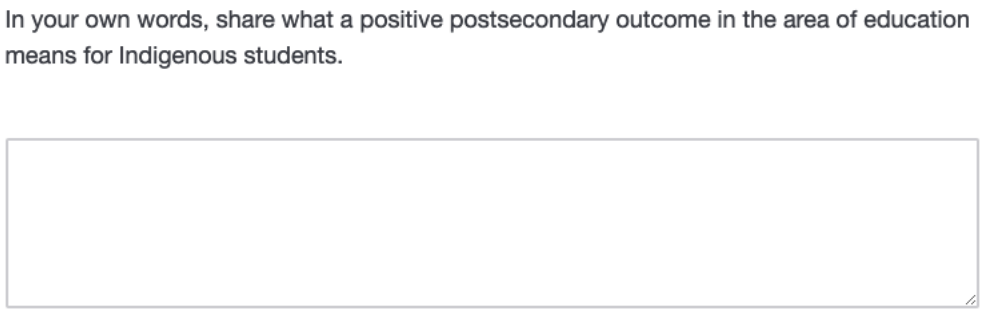
Procedures

Data collection took place using two questionnaires administered via Qualtrics. The first questionnaire asked participants to rate the relevance of three existing transition assessments to Indigenous students with disabilities using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Very Relevant,* 5 = *Very Irrelevant*). Each item of the assessments was rated, as well as the overall relevance of the assessment. Participants were then asked to share what a positive outcome for Indigenous students in the areas of education, employment, independent living, and community participation would be. Finally, participants were asked to share in their own words what needs, skills, or

knowledges specific to Indigenous students (if any) were missing from current transition assessments. See Figure 4 for an example of a questionnaire item from round one.

Figure 3.

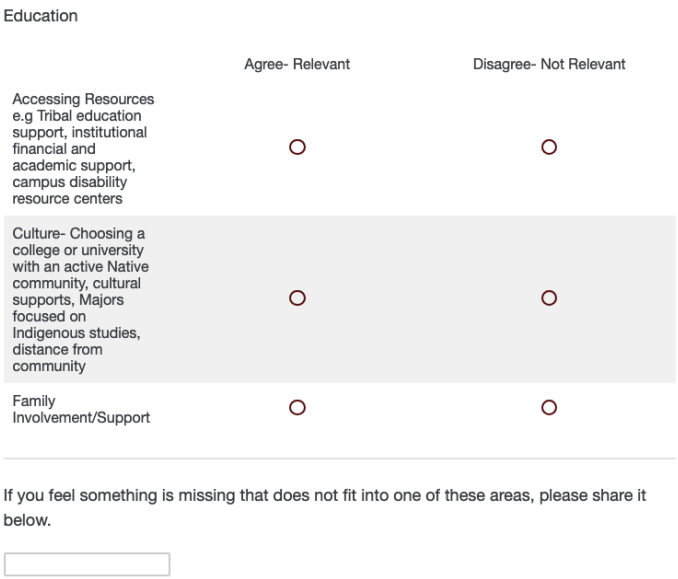
Example Questionnaire Item from Round 1



After compiling the responses to the first questionnaire, the researchers found areas that were identified as present in the existing transition assessments and relevant to Indigenous students with disabilities postsecondary transition, as well as themes that were missing from existing transition assessments and relevant to Indigenous students with disabilities postsecondary transition. The researcher also found themes related to each of the areas of postsecondary transition (i.e., education employment, independent living, and community participation) The identified areas and themes were presented with examples in the second questionnaire and the panel was asked if they agreed or disagreed with the relevance of identified areas and themes. There were also opportunities for the panel to give input on anything else they felt was missing or did not fit into one of the previously discussed areas. See Figure 5 for an example item from the second round of questionnaires**.**

Figure 4.

Example Questionnaire Item for Round 2


Education

	Agree- Relevant	Disagree- Not Relevant
Accessing Resources e.g Tribal education support, institutional financial and academic support, campus disability resource centers	○	○
Culture- Choosing a college or university with an active Native community, cultural supports, Majors focused on Indigenous studies, distance from community	○	○
Family Involvement/Support	○	○

If you feel something is missing that does not fit into one of these areas, please share it below.

Questionnaire

Participants were asked to rate the relevance of individual assessment items and the overall relevance of the assessment of three existing transition assessments: *Transition Assessment and Goal Generator High School- Professional Version (TAGG-HS-P), Self-Determination Inventory: Student Report (SDI:SR),* and the *Casey Life Skills American Indian/Alaska Native Assessment CLS-AI/AN).* The TAGG-HS-P measures non-academic skills that are known to predict positive postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. This assessment was chosen because of its focus on non-academic skills such as support community and persistence, which have been discussed in research related to Indigenous students' success in higher education (Lopez, 2018; Shotton, 2007). The SDI:SR is based on Causal Agency Theory, which defines self-determination as "a dispositional characteristic manifested as being the causal

agent in one's life" (Shogren et al., 2015, p. 258). Casual Agency Theory differs from approaches to Self-Determination that are more behavioral. Furthermore, these approaches differ from self-determination theories associated with Tribal Nations in the United States. In the context of special education, self-determination refers to the promotion of autonomy, decision-making, and goal-setting skills among students with disabilities. The self-determination of Tribal Nations encompasses broader socio-political and human rights aspects and historical dimensions related to Indigenous rights and sovereignty (Castagano & Brayboy, 2008; Lomawaima, 2004; RedCorn, 2020). These distinct conceptualizations of self-determination underscore the need to recognize and address the unique complexities and implications associated with each context. It is possible for differing views of self-determination to coexist in relation to Indigenous students with disabilities, however, the field of special education does not have a consensus on the concept of self-determination. This means while some may view self-determination as an individualistic concept, others may view it as a collective effort that involves the community as a whole. Both perspectives can be valuable in supporting Indigenous students with disabilities in their postsecondary transition planning and contribute to the work of Nation Building (Brayboy, 2005). The CLS-AI/AN Assessment is the only transition assessment created for Indigenous students; therefore, it was necessary to include it in this study. Detailed descriptions and reliability and validity information for each assessment are discussed below.

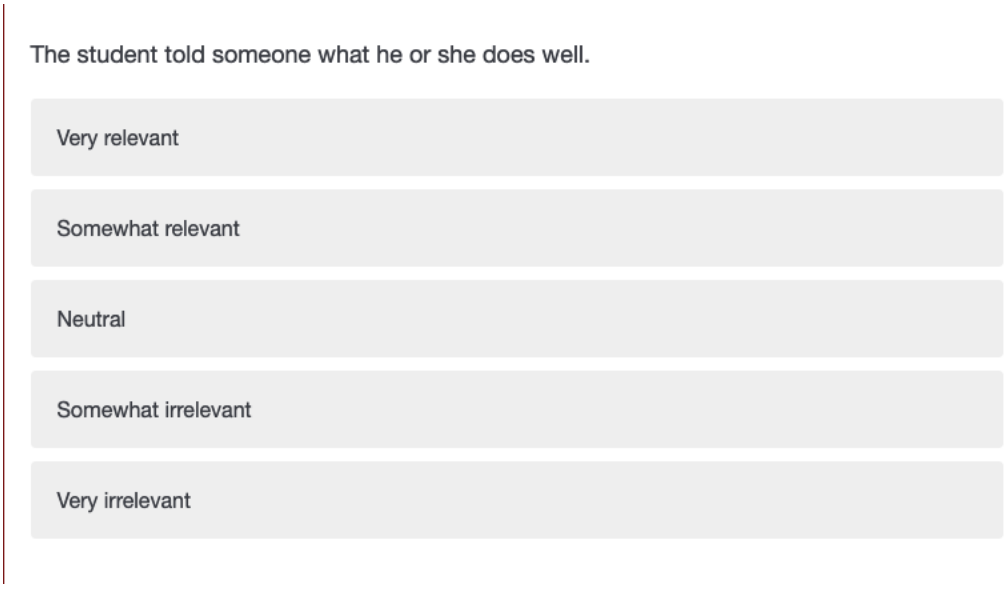
Transition Assessment and Goal Generator High School- Professional Version. The TAGG-HS-P is an online transition assessment that looks at non-academic skills across eight constructs that predict positive postsecondary outcomes. There is a student, family, and professional version and results from each version are compiled to produce a composite score. The assessment can be printed in a paper and pencil version; however, the results must be

recorded on the TAGG website (tagg.ou.edu) to receive the composite score. The TAGG-HS-P begins with 11 questions related to the professional's demographics and 10 questions related to the student's demographic information. The assessment consists of 31 Likert-type questions with five response options each (1 = *Rarely,* 5 = *Often)*, and 3 Yes/No questions. Reliability and validity evidence for the TAGG-HS-P has been established in numerous studies (Hennessey et al., 2018; Hennessey et al., 2020; Martin, et al., 2015; McConnell et al., 2015; McConnell et al., 2016). Initial studies conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the TAGG contained Indigenous participants in the Professional, Family, and Student versions in Phase I (2.6%, 3.0%, 4.0%, respectively) and Phase II (8.8%, 10.9%, 13.4%, respectively) (Martin et al., 2015).

In the questionnaires used for this study, each of the assessment items on the TAGG-HS-P were written just as they appear on the TAGG-HS-P website. Professional and student demographic items were not included. See Figure 6 for an example of a TAGG-HS-P questionnaire item**.**

Figure 5.

Example TAGG-HS-P Questionnaire Item



Self-Determination Inventory: Student Report (SDI:SR). The SDI:SR is an assessment that measures the self-determination of students aged 13-22 with and without disabilities. (Raley et al., 2020; Shogren et al., 2015). Like the TAGG-HS-P, this assessment has both an online and a paper pencil version, however, the paper pencil version consists of Likert-type questions while the online version uses a visual analog scale, or a slider scale with anchors of *Disagree* (0) and *Agree* (99) (Raley et al., 2020). The assessment consists of 21 assessment items and 12 questions related to demographic information. The SDI:SR has evidence to support its reliability and validity (Raley et al., 2020; Shogren et al., 2015). Indigenous students made up 2.6% of the total sample used to establish initial preliminary validity and reliability of the assessment (Shogren at al., 2015). In the questionnaires used for this study, each of the assessment items on the SDI:SR were written just as they appear on the SDI:SR website (sdiprdwb.ku.edu). Student demographic items were not included. See Figure 7 for an example of an SDI:SR questionnaire item**.**

Figure 6.

Example SDI:SR Questionnaire Item

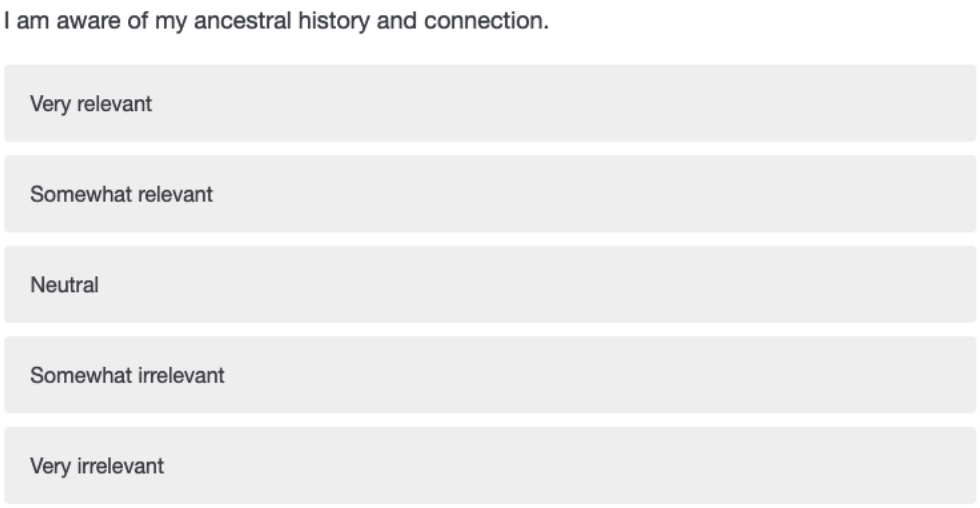


Casey Life Skills American Indian/Alaska Native Assessment (CLS-AI/AN). The CLS-AI/AN assessment is an informal transition questionnaire, meaning there is no reliability or

validity evidence to support its use. However, Casey Life Skills notes that the assessment was created with collaboration with tribal elders, community leaders, and parents and youth from Tribes across the US. The CLS-AI/AN is a paper-pencil assessment consisting of 22 Likert-type items (1 = *Yes*, 5 = *No*) that cover topics including religious and spiritual beliefs, resources and trust, Tribal Affiliation, family and community values, and living in two worlds. The CLS-AI/AN is a self-report questionnaire that is designed to promote conversation between the student and trusted adults (Casey Family Programs, n.d.). In the questionnaires used for this study, each of the assessment items on the CLS-AI/AN were written just as they appear in the CLS-AI/AN PDF (available at: www.ou.edu/education/zarrow/resources/assessments). Student demographic items were not included. See Figure 8 for an Example CLS-AI/AN questionnaire item.

Figure 7.

Example CLS-AI/AN Questionnaire Item



RESULTS

Table 7.

Panel Results

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
TAGG-HS-P	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Completely Relevant
SDI:SR	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Completely Relevant
CLS-AI/AN	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Completely Relevant

Relevance of the TAGG-HS-P

The majority of the panel assessed the TAGG-HS-P as Somewhat Relevant for ISWD. One panel member identified by the TAGG-HS-P as Completely Relevant to ISWD, while suggesting additional considerations for working with these students. Another panelist highlighted a limitation of the TAGG-HS-P in its recognition of gender, noting its exclusion of students identifying as Two-Spirit, a term rooted in Indigenous cultures to denote non-binary individuals (Thomas et al., 2022). Since the panel's evaluation, updates have been made to the TAGG, now offering Male, Female, Non-Binary, and “Other” options for gender selection (K.L. Williams-Diehm, personal communication, March 27, 2024).

Furthermore, one panelist raised concerns regarding the relevance of questions related to students sharing their strengths, disclosing special education status, and seeking assistance. This panelist emphasized that some ISWD might feel reluctant to seek help or disclose their circumstances due to a history of mistrust towards organizations, governmental bodies, and non-Native individuals. The panelist underscored how these students may develop coping mechanisms to avoid standing out or being stigmatized as "different." These insights underscore

the importance of building strong relationships between special educators and their students, as well as the need for culturally valid transition assessments.

Relevance of the SDI:SR

The individual components of the SDI:SR were largely deemed relevant to ISWD, with the panel unanimously agreeing that aspects such as the student's perseverance in striving towards goals and their ability to find solutions to challenges were highly relevant to this population. However, the panel also observed that the assessment lacked specificity in its focus on ISWD. Notably, the panel highlighted the absence of considerations for traditions, culture, and family within the SDI:SR, reflecting the differing perspectives on self-determination as discussed in previous research (Castagano & Brayboy, 2008; Lomawaima, 2004; RedCorn, 2020; Young, 2019). It is important to note that the SDI:SR is grounded in a theory of self-determination emphasizing individual empowerment (Shogren et al., 2018), rather than self-determination theories associated with Tribal Communities. Despite these differences, the majority of the panel still assessed the relevance of the SDI:SR as moderately applicable to ISWD. Similarly to the TAGG-HS-P evaluation, one participant perceived all aspects covered by the assessment as pertinent to ISWD, while also suggesting additional areas for consideration.

Relevance of the CLS-AI/AN

The CLS-AI/AN stands out as the sole assessment the panel evaluated that was developed specifically with Indigenous students in mind. The panel collectively evaluated the assessment as Somewhat Relevant to ISWD, with one member finding it Completely Relevant. One panelist notably emphasized the significance of cultural awareness and support for students, stating that " being able to know and support your culture is important" for students.

However, several panelists voiced concerns regarding certain items within the assessment, deeming them as reinforcing stereotypes. Particularly, there was contention

surrounding the assumption that all Indigenous individuals live or aspire to live in a state of balance or harmony with nature. Additionally, multiple panelists took issue with the item that stated, “I know my Indian or spiritual name.”. One noted that it is stereotypical to assume that all Native peoples have “Indian” names, while another shared that the effects of colonization and historical trauma from boarding schools have led to a loss of culture for some students. As a result, these students may not have “Indian” or spiritual names. The panelists emphasized the importance of considering contextual factors when employing this assessment. For instance, students from traditional backgrounds might resonate with certain items, whereas those from more assimilated environments might feel a sense of inadequacy or intimidation when lacking certain cultural markers. Moreover, distinctions between rural and urban Tribal Communities are crucial. Despite a higher likelihood of attending rural schools (Adams & Farnsworth, 2020; Faircloth, 2009), a large percentage of Indigenous youth reside in urban areas, where they often grapple with identity-related stressors like racism, potentially leading to disconnection from their cultural roots and feelings of ostracization (Brown et al., 2016; D’Amico et al., 2020). Considering these complexities, educators must understand the diversity of Indigenous cultures and their students' ties to their Tribal communities in order to navigate cultural nuances sensitively (Lomawaima, 2004).

Additional Areas to Consider When Working With ISWD

After reviewing the transition assessments, the panel provided insight into areas that were relevant to ISWD but missing in the assessments reviewed. The panel indicated the areas of culture, first-generation students, and guidance/mentorship, family involvement, and financial literacy are important to consider when developing postsecondary goals for ISWD. These areas are discussed below.

Culture

The panel felt that Culture was not adequately addressed in the assessments reviewed. The role of culture in education for Indigenous students has been widely recognized by researchers. It has been argued that incorporating Indigenous culture into educational programs can lead to improved outcomes for Indigenous students and increased cultural competence for all students (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Castagano & Brayboy, 2008; Jin, 2021). This is particularly important in Indigenous settings, where relationships to the physical and cultural environment have special significance (Prest & Goble, 2021; Wilson, 2008). Educational programs that integrate Indigenous knowledge with Western science have been shown to be culturally responsive and relevant, aiming to support the educational success of Indigenous students in STEM education (Alexiades et al., 2021). Furthermore, the incorporation of local Indigenous knowledge, pedagogy, and cultural practices into music classes has been found to foster students' cross-cultural understanding and respect (Van Bewer et al., 2021). It is, therefore, understandable that incorporating culture into the postsecondary transition process could lead to positive postsecondary outcomes for ISWD. Educators can learn more about a student's cultural involvement through informal discussions with the student and their family, asking about their participation in cultural gatherings, ceremonies, and dances, as well as learning more about the student's involvement in their community. It is also helpful to inquire if the student and their family are language speakers and offer resources to continue learning their Indigenous language. This information can then be taken into consideration when creating postsecondary transition goals that align with the student's cultural identity and aspirations.

First Generation Students

Another consideration the panel noted was that of being a first-generation student. A first-generation student is the first in their family to go to college. One panel member noted that many Indigenous students are “first-generation cycle breakers”. First-generation students often struggle with under-preparedness, financial constraints, and feelings of otherness (Long, 2021). Research has shown that these students may have difficulty understanding academic terms and articulating the skills they have acquired (Kahu, 2013). Similarly, Indigenous scholars have highlighted the institutional and emotional aspects of these issues, emphasizing the need for Indigenous-focused learning, research, and practice (Mowatt et al., 2020). They have also stressed the impact of colonization on the well-being of Indigenous students and the need to incorporate Indigenous culture into curricula to improve educational outcomes (Forsyth et al., 2022; Louie et al., 2017). Furthermore, the experiences of Indigenous students within higher education have been examined, revealing the need to challenge Eurocentric academic disciplines and policies and to recognize the existing colonial projects that negatively impact Indigenous students' academic development (Steinman & Sánchez, 2023; Thunig & Jones, 2020). Institutional support and cultural competence are crucial for the success of both first-generation and Indigenous students. Indigenous students often face invisibility in higher education institutions, and there are major discrepancies among the Indigenous programs, policies, and student services offered at different institutions (Fong et al., 2023; Tamtik, 2023). Moreover, the emotional well-being of Indigenous students has been compromised by the impacts of colonization on processes and content in contemporary education systems (Grantham-Campbell, 1998; Lomawaima, 2004; Louie et al., 2017). Secondary educators need to understand these issues and how they may affect their students when developing the transition plan and creating

postsecondary goals related to education. These issues must also be taken into consideration when developing transition assessments for this population.

Guidance/Mentorship

The panel emphasized the importance of guidance and mentorship for ISWD to successful postsecondary outcomes. This aligns with a body of research that demonstrates the positive impact of mentorship programs on the retention and graduation rates of Indigenous students in higher education. A panel member affirmed this, sharing, "Indigenous students have an extremely hard time transitioning into college where there's no one to guide them in the directions they need to take." Research by Brayboy and Maughan (2009) supports the notion that mentorship programs play a crucial role in the success of Indigenous students in higher education. The study found that mentorship programs not only improve retention rates but also contribute to higher graduation rates among Indigenous students. The presence of mentors who understand the unique challenges faced by Indigenous students can provide the necessary support and guidance to navigate the complexities of postsecondary education (Mosholder & Goslin, 2013). Additionally, the work of Jackson et al. (2003) and Gloria & Robinson (2001) emphasizes the positive impact of mentorship on Indigenous student persistence in higher education. Their research highlights the importance of culturally relevant mentorship programs that take into account the specific needs and experiences of Indigenous students. By incorporating cultural knowledge and traditions into mentorship initiatives, institutions can create a supportive environment that fosters the academic and personal growth of Indigenous students. In addition to academic research, the testimonies of Indigenous students themselves further underscore the significance of mentorship in their postsecondary journey. A study by Smith (2017) interviewed Indigenous students about their experiences in higher education and consistently found that

mentorship and guidance were crucial factors in their ability to navigate the challenges of college life.

One effective way that schools can assist ISWD is by implementing mentorship programs that pair them with knowledgeable mentors. These mentors can be instrumental in offering valuable guidance and support throughout major life transitions, such as navigating higher education, entering the workforce, or pursuing vocational programs backed by Tribal Nations. To establish such programs, schools can collaborate with Tribal Nations in the vicinity and campus organizations that focus on serving Indigenous students.

Family Involvement

The panel expressed their concern that the assessments reviewed lacked a focus on family involvement. Panel members observed that the assessments did not mention the family's goals for the student or the role of extended family members, such as grandparents, in establishing the family's values. Educators must understand that Indigenous families may not conform to the Western idea of a nuclear family (Beach, 2020; Black et al., 2003; RedCorn, 2020), and that what they see as “extended” family members may play a more significant role in planning for a student's life after high school. These families may have different cultural values, beliefs, and expectations about education, employment, and social functioning (Greene, 2001; Trainor, 2005). It is also important to understand the family's support for the student, not only in terms of financial assistance but also as emotional support and as a connection to their culture. Educators should be familiar with the barriers that Indigenous families face that may prevent them from fully engaging in the transition planning process. These barriers can include limited access to information and resources, discrimination and bias within the education system, and a lack of culturally responsive and inclusive practices (Geenen et al., 2001). Some Indigenous families

may not have access to the necessary resources and supports needed for effective transition planning due to financial limitations, lack of transportation, limited access to technology, and a scarcity of culturally appropriate services and programs.

Additionally, historical trauma and intergenerational effects can also impact Indigenous families' involvement in transition planning. These barriers can result in the exclusion of Indigenous families from the decision-making process, leading to a lack of representation and consideration of their unique cultural and individual needs. Educators and professionals can involve families by actively engaging them in the transition planning process. This can include inviting families to participate in meetings, workshops, and training sessions that provide information on postsecondary options, resources, and support services. Additionally, educators can collaborate with families to develop postsecondary goals that align with the student's aspirations and cultural values. Regular communication between educators and families can help ensure that the transition plan is responsive to the student's needs and involves the family's goals for their child's education. It is crucial to provide ongoing training and professional development for educators and service providers to increase their cultural competence and understanding of the unique needs of Indigenous families. Investing in community partnerships and collaborations to provide additional resources and support for Indigenous families is an excellent way to create a safe and welcoming environment for families to express their needs, concerns, and cultural values. By actively involving families in the postsecondary transition process, educators can create a collaborative and supportive environment that enhances the success and well-being of Indigenous students with disabilities.

Financial Literacy

Financial literacy is an important skill for all students transitioning from high school to adult life. Financial literacy is defined as the ability to understand, analyze, manage, and communicate personal finance matters. Financial literacy is especially important for students with disabilities as they may face unique challenges in managing their finances (Merry et al., 2022; Rajan et al., 2021). However, it is important to recognize that Indigenous students with disabilities may face unique challenges in developing financial literacy skills. For example, some Tribal Communities may have limited access to financial education resources or may have different cultural perspectives on money and finance. Additionally, historical and ongoing systemic barriers may contribute to lower financial literacy rates among Indigenous populations.

Students with disabilities may require additional financial resources for medical expenses or assistive technology. Indigenous students may be eligible for healthcare through the Indian Health Service (IHS) which operates hospitals and clinics across the United States, however, navigating this system and receiving appropriate services can be confusing (Shoutout to Contract Health). Additionally, they may face barriers to employment or have limited income-earning opportunities if they live in rural or remote areas (Lucas et al., 2024; Rowe et al., 2020), which is the case for many Indigenous students (Adams & Farnworth, 2020; Faircloth, 2009; Irvin et al., 2016). Another financial consideration specific to Indigenous students is individuals-per capita payments. Certain Indigenous students may belong to Tribal Nations that receive a payment per person. These payments, commonly known as per capita or per cap payments, vary in amount and payment frequency depending on the specific Nation. Students who receive these payments need to understand how they impact their finances, including budgeting for income and expenses. Furthermore, how these payments are generated should be taken into account when preparing income tax filings, as per IRS guidelines (n.d.). Again, the financial consideration of

per cap does not apply to all Indigenous students, however, practitioners working with this population should be familiar with the communities they are serving in order to promote financial literacy in their students. This specific consideration highlights the nuances of working with diverse Tribal Communities and emphasizes the importance of educators recognizing those nuances (Lomawaima, 2004). Financial literacy is an essential tool for all students with disabilities to gain independence, achieve their financial goals, and navigate the complexities of personal finance (Merry et al., 2021), but Indigenous students with disabilities have additional considerations concerning financial literacy. Therefore, it is crucial for educators and policymakers to consider these challenges and develop culturally responsive approaches to financial education for Indigenous students with disabilities.

Perceptions of Positive Outcomes

The panel was also asked to share, in their own words, what a positive postsecondary outcome would be in the areas of education, employment, independent living, and community participation for Indigenous students. While it was noted that what constitutes a positive outcome for each area would "vary depending on the individual student and their abilities, goals, dreams, and resources", the panel shared their insight into what positive outcomes in these areas might be. In education, the panel indicated that attending and graduating from college would be a "major accomplishment" for some students, especially if they were first-generation students. They added that being aware of how to obtain assistance through Tribal resources for whatever educational path the student chooses and finding ways to fulfill emotional and cultural needs while away from home would help students succeed.

In terms of employment outcomes, the panel emphasized Tribal resources and family contribution. Again, knowing how to obtain assistance and training with Tribal resources was a

suggestion, however, one panel member suggested Tribal resources as part of a "wrap-around approach" for students to gain experience and soft skills. Recognizing the value of family support for a chosen career path is crucial for educators. Other panel members stressed the postsecondary employment phase of a student's life as a time when they begin contributing financially to the family and achieving a level of independence.

The panel's perceptions of positive postsecondary outcomes in independent living and community participation had many similarities. Responses focused on students feeling fulfilled in their lives by meeting their own daily needs, but also by "not missing or longing for any part of their culture, traditions, or language." One panel member shared that a positive outcome for the area of community participation would be the student "Becoming more visible as a person, helping when needed." This focus on students' community contribution was summed up another panel member who shared, "Positive postsecondary outcomes in Indigenous students would be that they possess the self-reliance that brings strength to the family and tribe as a whole." Panel members' focus on outcomes that benefit not only the individual student, but the larger community supports postsecondary transition planning as a vital part of Nation Building (Brayboy, 2021). Positive postsecondary outcomes for ISWD are not just important for the individuals themselves, but also for the Tribal Nations they belong to. Therefore, investing in the education and success of Indigenous students is crucial for the empowerment and advancement of Tribal Communities as a whole.

Discussion

Results from transition assessments play a pivotal role in shaping transition plans and postsecondary goals for students with disabilities. This includes ISWD, who have unique educational protections as citizens of Sovereign Tribal Nations, in addition to the protections associated with students with disabilities (Brayboy, 2006; Faircloth, 2010). However, in the

absence of assessments that have been developed and validated specifically for ISWD, educators must not rely solely on the results of these assessments when creating postsecondary goals. The knowledge holders comprising the panel noted that while the assessments they reviewed were somewhat relevant to ISWD, practitioners should also take into consideration a student's culture, first-generation status, guidance/mentorship, family involvement, and financial literacy when creating postsecondary transition plans. The areas identified by the panel intersect research aimed at supporting Indigenous students in education (Castagono & Brayboy, 2008; Lomawaima, 2004; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; RedCorn, 2020) and research focused on promoting positive outcomes for students with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009a; Test et al., 2009b).

The panel underscored the significance of accessing Tribal resources as a crucial skill for ISWD in multiple areas of transition. Many Tribal Nations offer an array of postsecondary resources to Tribal citizens, including scholarships, job training and placement services, and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs (Tennell & Chew, 2021). Special education practitioners must cultivate collaborative relationships with these agencies to facilitate a seamless transition for students into postsecondary life, equipped with the necessary resources for success. Research within the realm of postsecondary transition has consistently highlighted interagency collaboration as a predictor of positive outcomes for students with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021;Test et al., 2009). However, due to a lack of qualifying research under NTACT's guidelines, interagency collaboration remains at the entity's lowest rung of evidence, Promising Practice. Given the unique resources and supports that Tribal Nations have developed to aid citizens in transition, it follows that fostering collaboration with the agencies administering these resources would prove beneficial for ISWD. Through

harnessing these collaborative efforts, special education practitioners can better ensure that ISWD have access to the specialized support they require to thrive in their postsecondary endeavors. An effective strategy for collaboration is for educators to establish relationships with local Tribal Nations and programs that serve Indigenous students with disabilities. This can involve reaching out to Tribal administration, attending community events, or welcoming Indigenous organizations into the school for professional development. By developing these relationships, educators can gain a better understanding of the students' cultures, traditions, and needs, and can tailor their support accordingly. This approach facilitates respectful engagement with family members and establishes connections for ISWD with relevant education and employment resources.

Another collaborative strategy involves organizing family night events and inviting programs that serve Indigenous students to set up booths and make presentations for Indigenous families over dinner. The panel stressed the importance of family engagement in creating transition plans that support ISWD's culture which aligns with transition research that identified parent training in transition as an Evidence-Based Practice per NTACT guidelines (NTACT, 2022). Such trainings would allow families to gain knowledge about the available resources and provide a platform for successful transition stories to be shared. By actively engaging with Tribal Nations, programs, and families, educators can create a supportive network and enhance the postsecondary transition outcomes of Indigenous students with disabilities, which will in turn lead to positive outcomes for Tribal Nations.

Limitations

When considering these findings, it is important to take the limitations of this study into consideration. Firstly, the small sample of participants represented only a small portion of the

diversity of Indigenous peoples in the US, and therefore, there are many Indigenous voices that are not represented here. Therefore, these results cannot be generalized to other Indigenous knowledge holders, or to Indigenous people as a whole. Additionally, I chose only three existing transition assessments as it would not be possible to have participants evaluate every existing transition assessment. Therefore, the areas and themes identified by the panel of knowledge holders may be present in transition assessments not evaluated by the panel. Finally, though Delphi procedures are flexible and can be adapted to various research topics (Brady, 2015) this study did not follow the traditional Delphi procedures and therefore may lack the reliability and validity typically associated with this design.

Implications

This study is the first time a panel of all Indigenous knowledge holders has been assembled to explore the relevance of existing transition assessments. Centering Indigenous voices in research dealing with Indigenous students with disabilities is imperative to making transition planning culturally responsive to Indigenous students. The panel agreed that the areas addressed in existing transition assessments of education, employment, independent living, and community participation are relevant to Indigenous students with disabilities' postsecondary transition. This speaks to the need for a transition assessment developed specifically for Indigenous students with disabilities. Further research is needed to develop and validate such an assessment.

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CHAPTER 4: POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN OKLAHOMA: FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

The Individuals with disabilities education improvement act (IDEA, 2004) guarantees a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) through special education services for students identified under one or more of the 13 disabilities categories. To facilitate these students' transition from high school to postsecondary life, IDEA mandates transition services as part of the Individualized education plan (IEP). IDEA outlines that transition services should encompass "appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living" (IDEA, 34 CFR§300.320, 2004). While the law stipulates the onset of transition services at age 16, there is a prevailing belief that initiating transition planning at an earlier stage can yield more favorable postsecondary outcomes (Kohler, 1996; Suk et al., 2019). To underscore this perspective, some states have mandated the initiation of transition services as early as age 14 or the commencement of ninth grade. Oklahoma special education policy mandates that IEPs include transition services are in effect "prior to the beginning of the student's ninth grade year or upon turning 16 years of age, whichever comes first", unless the IEP team determines that transition services should begin earlier for the student (OSDE, 2021).

Transition

Under IDEA (2004), transition services encompass a coordinated series of activities customized for children with disabilities, aimed at facilitating their transition from school to post-school endeavors. These activities operate within a results-oriented framework, emphasizing improvements in both academic and functional accomplishments (IDEA, 2004; Morningstar & Liss, 2008). The overarching objective is to assist the child's transition to various post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated

employment, continuing education, adult services, independent living, or community engagement. These services are personalized to cater to the unique needs, strengths, preferences, and interests of each child. They encompass a diverse range of components, such as instructional support, related services, community-based experiences, development of employment and post-school adult living objectives, and, if applicable, provision of daily living skills and functional vocational assessments. As an integral part of the transition plan, postsecondary goals related to education, employment, and independent living should be included. These goals should be informed by results from age-appropriate transition assessments and consider the student's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs (Carter et al., 2012; Carter et al., 2014; Landmark et al., 2010; Morningstar et al., 2018).

Recent literature underscores the critical importance of quality postsecondary transition planning in securing positive outcomes for students with disabilities (SWD) (Carter et al., 2021; Carter et al., 2014; Mazzotti et al., 2013; Prince et al., 2021; Rowe, 2014). Planning to support students with disabilities in their post-high school endeavors holds significant importance due to their comparatively poorer postsecondary outcomes in education and employment when compared to their non-disabled peers. In 2019, the employment rate among individuals aged 21-64 with disabilities stood at 39.2%, starkly contrasting with the 80.7% employment rate observed among their non-disabled counterparts (Erikson et al., 2022). Similarly, statistics concerning educational attainment beyond high school present a concerning disparity for individuals with disabilities compared to those without disabilities. While the proportions of individuals reporting "Some college or an associate degree" remain relatively consistent among both groups (31.8% for individuals with disabilities and 30.4% for those without), a notable gap emerges when considering the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher (Erikson et al., 2022). Only 15.7% of

individuals with disabilities have achieved a BA or higher, in stark contrast to the 35.9% of non-disabled individuals. These findings underscore the significant hurdles faced by students with disabilities in postsecondary life and underscore the critical role of postsecondary transition planning for this demographic.

Research endeavors have been dedicated to identifying practices that foster more positive outcomes for students with disabilities. To equip educators with tools for better supporting their students in the transition process, researchers have identified and advocated for promising practices and evidence-based predictors of positive postsecondary outcomes (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2022; Rowe et al., 2014; Rowe et al., 2022; Test et al., 2009a; Test et al., 2009b; Test et al., 2012). One important concept highlighted by these researchers is family engagement in transition planning (Landmark et al., 2010; Test et al., 2009)

Family Engagement

In addition to involvement in the development of the IEP, parents or guardians of students with disabilities also have a right to collaborate as equal members of the transition planning team (Rossetti et al., 2020). The evidence underscores the importance of family involvement in effective transition planning, as it influences career aspirations, values, and practical living arrangements for students with disabilities (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Test et al., 2009). However, previous research has indicated that the majority of students and parents report barriers to meaningful involvement in IEP planning (Cavendish & Connor, 2017). Specifically, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parents have reported experiencing significant barriers to full and effective participation in IEP and transition planning (Kim & Morningstar, 2005).

Barriers to family engagement in transition planning in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process are multifaceted and can stem from various sources. School practices such as the use of professionalized language, deficit-based discourse, and logistical issues like short meeting times can hinder family engagement (Geenen et al., 2001; Greene, 2001; Morris, 2017; Rossetti et al., 2018). Additionally, the lack of resources allocated for transition programs and the absence of real-life instructional contexts for students with IEPs can act as significant barriers (Brown, 2023). Furthermore, CLD families may face additional challenges, including the use of special education jargon inhibiting their participation and the need for more support to become equal partners in the IEP process (Chang et al., 2022; Landmark et al., 2007; Morris, 2017).

Research indicates that parents of students facing disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion are less likely to express satisfaction with their involvement in IEP/transition planning meetings (Wagner et al., 2012), and CLD students are more likely to receive such penalties (Whitford et al., 2019), exacerbating this issue. Persistence of logistic, informational, psychological, attitudinal, and cultural obstacles in IEP school-focused planning indicates that intentional efforts are required to ensure meaningful engagement of CLD families in transition planning (Boone, 1992). Recognizing the barriers experienced by CLD families underscores the necessity for person-family centered transition planning to enhance post-school outcomes for diverse youth and families (Achola & Greene, 2016).

Achola & Greene's person-family centered planning approach could prove beneficial for Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD). Morris (2017) notes that IDEA's emphasis on individual orientation may not align with the values and beliefs of many Tribal Communities. Understanding the cultural context of Native American students with disabilities is crucial for

developing tailored transition plans that address their specific needs and goals (Mosholder & Goslin, 2013). Educators must recognize that Indigenous families may not adhere to the Western nuclear family model (Beach, 2020; Black et al., 2003; RedCorn, 2020), and extended family members may play a significant role in planning for a student's post-high school life. These families may hold different cultural values, beliefs, and expectations regarding education, employment, and social functioning (Greene, 2001; Trainor, 2005). Understanding the family's support for the student, encompassing emotional support and connection to their culture beyond financial assistance, is crucial. Educators should familiarize themselves with the barriers faced by Indigenous families to facilitate their full engagement in the transition planning process.

Indigenous Students with Disabilities

Indigenous students, also identified in research as Native American, American Indian/Alaska Native, or First Nations are students who are citizens of Tribal Nations in what is now the US. Nationwide, Indigenous students represent around two percent of the student body in public education (NCES, 2022). However, ISWD constitute a substantial 19% of students receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (NCES, 2022). Contrarily, in Oklahoma, Indigenous students make up a more significant 12% of the overall student population. According to Child Count Data from the Oklahoma State Department of Education in 2022, Indigenous students constitute 13% of students served under IDEA ages 6-21, a figure more representative of their statewide presence. Moreover, Indigenous students account for the same 13% of transition-age (14-21) students served under IDEA. However, it's important to note that students identified as Two or More Races also comprise an equal percentage of students in Special Education. Research indicates that Indigenous students are more likely to identify as Two or More Races (Santos & Tachine, 2024), a trend likely

prevalent in Oklahoma, which is home to 39 Tribal Nations, with 38 Federally Recognized Tribes and one State Recognized Tribe (See Appendix E for a complete list of Tribal Nations in Oklahoma and Figure 9 for a map for Tribal jurisdiction in Oklahoma.).

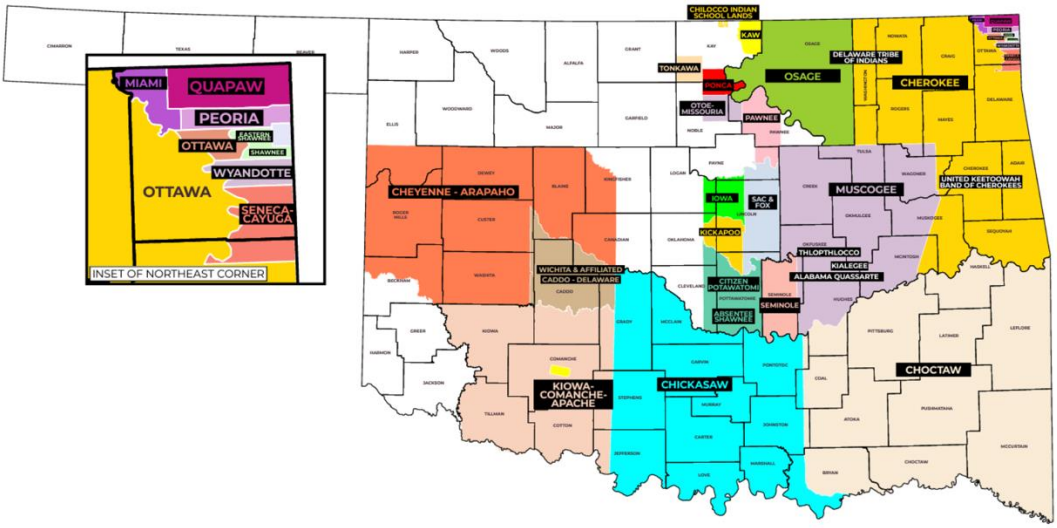
The historical context of Oklahoma adds layers to the educational landscape. In the mid-1800s, the US government forcibly relocated many Tribal Nations to Indian Territory, despite the land being occupied by Tribal Communities like the Caddo, Wichita, Apache, Comanche, Osage, Kiowa, and others. The US government promised large swaths of land to Nations living in the Southeastern US. In particular, the Five Tribes, the Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and Seminole Nation were promised large reservations within the area. Initially promised reservations to Tribal governments were gradually reduced, and instead, land allotments were distributed to Tribal citizens, deviating from the original agreements. This process was compounded by events like the "Land Runs," which further fragmented Tribal lands. The 1899 Land Rush opened millions of acres previously held by Tribes to white settlers, marking a significant shift. In 1906, Oklahoma was admitted to the Union, replacing the former Indian Territory. Because of the change from reservations in favor of allotments to Tribal citizens, unlike other states, Oklahoma lacks isolated reservations with Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools commonly associated with Tribal Communities. Today, the BIE operates only one school within the state, with four more schools identified by the BIE as Tribally-Controlled (BIE, 2024). Indigenous students attend public schools across the state, and at any public school, students from the 39 Nations may be represented.

In 2020's *McGirt v. Oklahoma* the Supreme Court ruled that numerous Tribal Nations' reservations within the state had never been officially disestablished by Congress, rendering much of Eastern Oklahoma still considered Indian Country. This ruling carries significant

implications for politics, finances, and Indigenous Sovereignty, as Tribal Nations continue to influence Oklahoma's culture and economy. The Oklahoma Native Impact study (Dean, 2022) demonstrated that the state's 38 Federally Recognized Tribes contributed $15.6 billion to the economy and $1.8 billion to education since 2006, supporting over 113,442 jobs for both Native and Non-Native employees. Tribal Nations in Oklahoma prioritize capacity building through education and employment, offering resources like vocational training, job placement services, scholarships, and support for higher education pursuits, underscoring their commitment to their citizens' well-being (Tennell & Chew, 2021). Therefore, Tribal Nations within Oklahoma are poised to play a crucial role as allies in the transition planning process for ISWD, rendering the state a distinctive and invaluable setting for deepening our understanding of transition planning for this demographic. By fostering partnerships with families and Tribal Communities, educators can establish a supportive environment that recognizes and respects the cultural values and aspirations of ISWD (Suk et al., 2019).

Figure 8.

Tribal Jurisdictions in Oklahoma Map (OSDE, 2021)



Purpose of the Study

Despite constituting the most proportionately represented racial demographic among students receiving special education services under IDEA, Indigenous students remain chronically underrepresented in postsecondary transition research (Applequist et al., 2009; Blackhorn, 2020; Faircloth et al., 2015; Hibel et al., 2008; See Chapter 2). Moreover, these students consistently experience poorer postsecondary outcomes compared to other groups (Applequist, 2009; Castagono & Brayboy, 2008; Faircloth, 2015; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the perspectives of parents/guardians of Indigenous students with disabilities regarding the role of culture in the transition planning process for these students. While research has highlighted the benefits of culturally responsive education practices for Indigenous students (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Castagano &

Brayboy, 2008; Jin, 2021), the relationship between culturally responsive transition practices for ISWD remains unexplored. This study is guided by the following research questions:

- How do parents/guardians of Indigenous students with disabilities perceive the influence of culture on the transition planning segment of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting?
- What are the perceived areas for improvement in transition planning for Indigenous students with disabilities, as identified by parents/guardians?

METHOD

Design

Using phenomenology as a qualitative design in this study offers a robust approach to exploring the role of Indigenous students' culture in the transition planning portion of the IEP. Phenomenology delves into the essence of human experiences, seeking to understand phenomena from the perspectives of those who have lived through them (Brantlinger, 2005; Creswell, 1998; Neubauer et al., 2019; Siedman, 2006). In the context of this study, it allows for a deep exploration of how families of Indigenous students with disabilities perceive and engage with the transition planning process within the IEP framework. By capturing their subjective experiences, the present study gives a nuanced understanding of the cultural factors at play in shaping these experiences. Indigenous cultures often have unique perspectives, values, and approaches to education and family involvement (Beach, 2020; Black et al., 2003; RedCorn, 2020). Phenomenology is particularly well-suited to capture the nuances of these cultural aspects. By centering the voices of Indigenous parents through interviews, the study can uncover culturally specific beliefs, practices, and challenges related to transition planning. This approach fosters cultural sensitivity and ensures that the research findings are contextually grounded.

Phenomenological interviews, conducted over multiple sessions and in a qualitative manner, allow for in-depth exploration and rich data collection (Seidman, 2006). In this study, I engaged in five one-hour interviews with parents of Indigenous students. This approach provides ample opportunity to delve into the complexities of their experiences with transition planning. This depth of exploration is crucial for uncovering the underlying meanings, motivations, and challenges associated with the phenomenon under study. As highlighted by Seidman (2006), interviews are particularly valuable when the aim is to understand the meaning individuals attribute to their experiences. In the context of education, where transition planning plays a critical role in students' postsecondary trajectories, understanding the meaning that Indigenous parents ascribe to this process is essential. Phenomenology facilitates this exploration by allowing participants to articulate their perspectives, beliefs, and interpretations in their own words. Utilizing a phenomenological design aligns with a participant-centered approach to research, wherein participants are active collaborators in the co-construction of knowledge. By giving voice to Indigenous parents and valuing their perspectives, the study honors their expertise and insights. This approach not only enhances the trustworthiness and authenticity of the findings but also promotes empowerment and agency among participants, contributing to more inclusive and culturally responsive education practices.

Participants/Setting

Participants in this study are parents or guardians of transition-age Indigenous students with disabilities. Because I am looking specifically at the experiences and perceptions of Indigenous families involved in the transition planning process, I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 1998; Peterson, 2019) to identify participants that meet inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria for this study include being a parent or guardian of a transition-age student on an IEP in

Oklahoma. After receiving OU IRB approval, recruitment for this study took place on social media and by contacting potential participants directly. Snowball sampling (Creswell, 1998) was also used as participants shared my information with other possible participants. Informed consent was obtained before each interview. Participants received a $50 Amazon gift card as a thank-you for sharing their time and experiences. In accordance with IRB approval, to ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to family members and students. Four participants agreed to interview. Participants' information is listed in Table 5. See Appendix F for IRB approval.

Table 8.

Interview Participants

Parent Pseudonym	*Student Pseudonym*	*Student Age*	*Geographic Context*
Shelly	Kyle	21	Rural
Laura	David	21	Rural
Robert	Anna	20	Rural
Jimmy	Sarah	16	Suburban

Collection

Data was collected through four one-hour interviews during the Spring 2024 semester. These interviews were semi-structured and took place on Zoom or via phone. Semi-structured interviews are less formal than structured interviews and use a set of guiding questions to gather responses. This format can be more comfortable for some participants than formal interviewing and allow for a deeper exploration of themes brought up by participants (Rusin et al., 2022). Interviews questions were organized into three sections: background, experiences with transition planning, and reflections on the transition planning process. An interview protocol is included in

Appendix G. Interviews were recorded, stored on a secure online server, and transcribed using an online service called DataGain.

Analysis

To analyze the transcripts, I used qualitative interview software NVIVO to employ an inductive process as outlined by Seidman (2006), aiming to identify significant passages and themes. The decision to opt for an inductive analysis, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data rather than imposing predetermined themes, presented a choice. While I could have adopted a priori themes rooted in existing postsecondary transition research or those delineated by the panel of knowledge holders in Chapter 3, I chose to explore whether family members identified distinct or parallel themes to those identified through existing research or by the panel. This approach resonates with my overarching framework, which integrates evidence from research, practitioner expertise, and family values.

Deidentified interview transcripts were uploaded to NVivo for analysis. Initially, each transcript was read thoroughly, with notes taken to capture initial impressions. Subsequently, the transcripts were re-read to identify and code emerging themes. This initial coding resulted in 14 themes. Passages within these initial themes were then reviewed to identify areas that shared a common idea or concept, which were grouped together to form subthemes under broader themes.

For example, the theme of "resources" emerged during the coding process. Family members discussed a variety of services available to students, including Tribal higher education grants, disability and accommodation services at colleges and universities, and agencies that support individuals with disabilities. Each of these was initially coded as a separate theme. However, upon reviewing the passages associated with these themes, it became evident that they all represented different types of resources available to ISWD. Consequently, the overarching theme of "resources" was established, with the subthemes of higher education, disability, and

Tribal resources. Finally, the themes were organized and grouped according to the research questions to provide coherent answers to the study's objectives. This methodical approach facilitated a structured analysis that directly addressed the core research inquiries.

Findings

The transition planning experiences of family members were unique and varied. Most of the students attended remote, rural schools, while one student attended a large suburban district. Two students were identified with mild to moderate disabilities, while the other two had more significant needs in transition planning. To ensure anonymity, I have not disclosed the Tribal affiliations of the participants. However, two of the students were citizens of the same Tribal Nation, while the other two belonged to different Tribal Nations.

Despite their varied experiences, common themes emerged within the family members interviews. Their hopes and dreams for their students showed similarities in goals and concerns for the students' futures. Additionally, themes emerged that addressed the research questions. For the first research question, which focused on the role of culture in the transition planning process, common themes included a lack of cultural awareness and the importance of family for ISWD. For the second research question, which focused on areas for improvement, themes included access to resources (with subthemes of higher education, disability, and Tribal resources), employment supports, and financial considerations. Each of these themes and subthemes is discussed below.

Hopes and Dreams

The initial section of questions focused on gathering background information about the student from their family members. Family members were first asked to describe their student with as much detail as they felt comfortable sharing. Many of these descriptions highlighted the student's strengths and positive personality traits rather than their disabilities. When disabilities

were mentioned, it was usually in terms of how they affected the student's life, with phrases like "has some troubles", "needs some extra support in some things", and “was on her own path”. After describing the student, the family members were asked to share their goals, hopes, or dreams for the student, and what they would consider to be a good life for their student after high school. Participants expressed a desire for their student to be as self-sufficient as possible and not reliant on others for basic needs. Some also mentioned the wish for their student to contribute to others. For instance, Shelly described a good life for her son as being able to "take care of his family, help out the siblings when needed." Shelly's hope for her son to not only take care of himself but also contribute to family members exemplifies her view of him as an integral part of a larger community, emphasizing a collective well-being over individual success.

Family members of students requiring more significant support often expressed apprehension about their student's future independence. Jimmy remarked about his daughter, Sarah, “She probably will always be with us, whether it's with me or her older siblings.” Laura shared, “I'm not gonna be around forever and there is his grandma, but I know [Aunt] would help take care of him. But, you know, he's even said to himself that he doesn't want to have to rely on anybody to take care of him. He wants to be able to try to do it for himself.” Parents' concerns about the futures of their children with disabilities, especially regarding their children's lives after the parents' deaths, have been a significant focus in research (Keesler, 2015). Studies have highlighted various aspects of this concern, including stress and resilience factors for parents of children with disabilities (Peer & Hillman, 2014; Yoshioka-Maeda et al., 2022). Additionally, families of children with mental illnesses express worries about their children's independent living in the community after the parents' demise (Chen et al., 2020). When appropriate, these considerations should be included in transition planning to address and alleviate these concerns.

Research Question One: The Role of Culture in Transition Planning for ISWD

Research question one asked, "How do parents/guardians of Indigenous students with disabilities perceive the influence of culture on the transition planning segment of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting?" Each of the family members interviewed indicated that they didn't feel their culture was taken into account in the development of their student's transition plan. Jimmy answered, "I don't think so. I think basically to me it's just a plan that they use for all the students in the class." Robert agreed, emphasizing the need for more cultural awareness among teachers through activities such as professional development to learn about Indigenous cultures. He noted, "A lot of them have no idea about the culture of the students.". Laura echoed this sentiment, suggesting that increased cultural knowledge among teachers would help students adapt to various situations more easily.

Shelly emphasized the importance of not disregarding any cultural aspects of a student's life, particularly when transition planning includes a college or university away from home. She stressed the significance of understanding whether the student can handle being away from home, sharing that "the hardest thing for Native kids right now is being away from home." She highlighted the importance of cultural connections on campus, such as Native student organizations (NSOs) and clubs, as well as supports for homesick students, including transportation to and from home for both students and their parents. This aligns with research showing that NSOs play a crucial role in supporting Native students in higher education by providing culturally relevant resources, fostering a sense of community, and promoting academic success (Rodriguez et al., 2018; Springer, 2015; Tachine et al., 2016). Therefore, teachers of ISWD should consider these factors when creating postsecondary education goals. College exploration activities should include information about NSOs and available supports, and teachers can facilitate contact between students and these organizations through email.

Additionally, some Tribal Nations offer transportation services for citizens within Tribal boundaries or specific communities, which could alleviate anxiety about being away from home by enabling visits whenever possible.

Another cultural consideration is family involvement, which may look different in Indigenous families. Educators must understand that Indigenous families may not conform to the Western idea of a nuclear family (Beach, 2020; Black et al., 2003; RedCorn, 2020), and that what is seen as "extended" family may play a more significant role in planning for a student's life after high school. These families may have different cultural values, beliefs, and expectations about education, employment, and social functioning (Greene, 2001; Trainor, 2005). This underscores the importance of building respectful relationships with students and families and genuinely getting to know them before making assumptions. Shelly urged educators to get to know their students, emphasizing that making decisions about a student's post-high school success depends on understanding the student.

Robert is the grandparent of Anna, who was adopted and he now acts as her guardian. He stressed the importance of understanding the student's family context, as well as their background and challenges, including socio-economic status (SES) and the student's guardianship situation. He said, "It's hard sometimes [for the student] to go home and explain to grandma and grandpa, or whoever they're being raised by, if it's not the mom and dad, what's happening at school." He agreed with other parents, suggesting that teachers need to understand where students belong and their backgrounds, sharing that teachers need to "look at the student and see exactly where they belong, and where they came from" He noted that in the early days of education, "nobody cared" about students' cultural or individual backgrounds. However, he stressed the importance of teachers knowing these situations, "You have to look at it if they're

coming from a poor background, or a traditional home. All that plays a part." Understanding individual students' backgrounds and traditions can help prevent teachers from relying on broad generalizations about Indigenous students. Teachers must remember that Tribal Nations are diverse, with varied cultural traditions, and that students' involvement in these traditions may vary. As Jimmy noted, "We're Native American, but Native American tribes are all different. We are [Specific Tribe], our tribe doesn't do the powwows. We do the stomp dances. We were raised through the traditional Christian church. We spoke our native language through there." Building relationships with students, families, and local Tribal Nations can help teachers learn more about the backgrounds of the students they serve, enabling them to develop transition plans that effectively support ISWD and their cultures.

Research Question Two: Areas of Improvement in Transition Planning for ISWD

Research question two asked, "What are the perceived areas for improvement in transition planning for Indigenous students with disabilities, as identified by parents/guardians?" Family members interviewed shared that they would like to know more about resources available to their student, more support in helping students obtain employment after graduation, and teaching students financial skills for life after graduation.

Resources

The families interviewed all stressed the importance of the availability of resources for students with disabilities. Several of the participants noted a lack of awareness about resources available to their students. The three main types of resources brought up by family members were higher education resources, disability resources, and Tribal resources. These resources often overlap, due to the many programs available to both Tribal citizens and people with disabilities. However, each of these areas presents an important consideration in transition planning for ISWD.

Higher Education Resources. Higher education resources for students with disabilities include scholarships and grants, inclusion-focused programs and policies, and various support services. Attending college or postsecondary vocational programs significantly increases the likelihood of employment, workplace success, and higher earning potential for individuals with disabilities (Beckers & Klein-Ezell, 2021). However, parents often noted a lack of awareness regarding these resources.

Laura shared about her son, David, “He wanted to go to school so bad after he graduated but I was like, I don't know if they have places, even like Vo-Tech, somewhere he could learn a trade. He might have been able to get a job in that. But, I don't know if they had places for him to go to do that.” Shelly mentioned that although she was aware Kyle would qualify for support services in college, they didn’t know “who to go talk to or where to go,” emphasizing, “Those kids that need that help don't know where to go get it.”

Students with disabilities in higher education require a range of support services to ensure their success. Disability support services play a crucial role in helping these students access and remain in higher education (Collins & Mowbray, 2005). Studies have shown that effective transition planning significantly influences the receipt of postsecondary accommodations and disability-specific services (Newman et al., 2016; Newman & Madaus, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial that transition planning includes establishing a connection between the student and the office that facilitates accessibility or disability services at the college, university, or vo-tech they will attend.

Disability Resources. This refers to resources that are available to people with disabilities. This theme was identified in parents’ responses about 18+ programs, community organizations, and government programs.

Another example of a resource for people with disabilities is Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The SSI program is administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and provides monthly payments to people who are elderly or disabled and have little or no income or resources (SSA, n.d.). Applying for SSI can be a complex process, especially for individuals with disabilities. Family members, service coordinators, and specialized training programs play crucial roles as support systems for individuals with disabilities, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), in navigating the SSI application process. These support systems help ensure that individuals with disabilities can access the benefits they are entitled to and receive the necessary assistance throughout the application process (Keesler, 2015). However, parents of students identified with IDD have related challenges in identifying services their student is eligible for and understanding a myriad of services, procedures, and adults service agencies (Burke et al., 2016). This was evidenced as Laura related David's struggle to obtain SSI benefits, recounting multiple visits to the agency to submit paperwork and check stubs and David's worry about if he would remain eligible for SSI if he were to find employment. Their experiences show the need for comprehensive education for parents throughout the transition process about services and resources that are available to their students after graduation.

Parents also emphasized the importance of community programs for people with disabilities, such as the Down Syndrome Association of Central Oklahoma (DASCO) and opportunities to participate in athletics through the Special Olympics or community gyms and teams. Every student whose family members were interviewed participates in sports, even those who have graduated high school. Sarah has been involved with Special Olympics basketball and plays on community softball teams. Her father explained that their family is athletic, with her

older siblings all playing sports, and he believes that being active is beneficial for his daughter. Laura echoed this sentiment, expressing happiness that David has recently started going back to the gym each day to play basketball. Sports programs offer numerous benefits for adults with disabilities, enhancing their physical and mental well-being, social inclusion, and overall quality of life. Research has shown that participation in organized sports can lead to increased activity levels, improved social participation, and enhanced quality of life for individuals with disabilities (Sahlin & Lexell, 2015). Additionally, engaging in sports activities can contribute to decreased depression and anxiety and increased life satisfaction for adults with disabilities. When developing plans for postsecondary life, teachers should consider the positive impact of sports and look for ways to support ISWD in continuing to engage in athletic activities.

Tribal Resources. Tribal resources refers to resources and services through Tribal Nations that are available to Tribal citizens. Tribal resources can include higher education, employment, and financial resources. Indigenous students who are enrolled members of federally recognized tribes are eligible for educational resources through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). In addition, many Tribal Nations in Oklahoma offer resources to their citizens that can support students' transition to postsecondary life (Tennell & Chew, 2021). Rodriguez et al. (2018) found that access to tangible resources from Tribal Nations such as scholarships and grants, technology expenses, and living allowances were a major factor in Indigenous students' decision to attend college. Higher education support is available to students in the form of scholarships and grants, as well as through access to Tribally controlled institutions such as the College of the Muscogee Nation and the Chickasaw Institute of Technology (CIT). Tribal Nations within Oklahoma have also partnered with universities across the state to offer programs aimed at increasing Indigenous professionals across various fields such as the Choctaw Nation's

Teach 2 Reach program and the Cherokee Nation's partnership with Oklahoma State University to establish the nation's only Tribally Affiliated Medical School. Shelly shared that her son, Kyle, had just graduated from the CIT's HVAC program and noted the support from the Chickasaw Nation he received throughout the duration program contributed greatly to his success. Tribal Nations' numerous resources to support their citizens' higher education exemplify a commitment to building community capacity. The positive impacts of this support underscores the importance for educators to be aware of such opportunities for their ISWD.

In addition to higher education resources, many Tribal Nations within Oklahoma offer job training and placement services. One notable example is the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation (AIVR) program, which provides culturally appropriate services to Tribal citizens with disabilities to help them find employment (Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services [OKDRS], 2020). Clients eligible for AIVR can also work with OKDRS during the rehabilitation process. Unlike higher education resources, where applications are made through an individual's own Tribe or Nation, AIVR coverage is determined by the county in which clients reside. The program is supported by ten Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Council Members: the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, the Chickasaw Nation, the Choctaw Nation, the Comanche Nation, the Delaware Nation, the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, providing services across designated coverage areas.

Laura shared that she learned of the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program through her niece, who encouraged her to apply for David, who had been struggling to find a job. She described David's uncertainty about how the program might affect his eligibility for SSI, which he had just managed to secure. Keesler (2015) highlights the complex relationships between

agencies that support adults with disabilities and the unique role parents play as advocates to ensure their child receives appropriate services. This underscores the need for transition education for parents of students with disabilities that addresses these relationships and highlights the importance of interagency collaboration (Test et al., 2009b). According to Test et al., interagency collaboration "includes having a collaborative framework and a collaborative service delivery system to involve community agencies, businesses, and organizations." (p. 24). Interagency collaboration has been identified as a promising practice in postsecondary transition, and the availability of resources to Tribal citizens as well as resources available to people with disabilities make it especially important for ISWD. Schools should seek collaborations with agencies such as Tribal education departments and Tribal vocational programs, as well as service providers for adults with disabilities to ensure ISWD are not only informed of all the resources available to them, but also know how to apply for these resources and understand how they coordinate with each other.

Employment

Employment was mentioned by each of the family members interviewed. Some family members saw future employment as a pathway to financial independence and stability for their student. Shelly noted that she hoped that Kyle "gets just a better job than probably what I have, make more money to make ends meet a lot easier than me.". Jimmy shared, "I just feel she's going to probably be one of those students that when she graduates, she probably could be self-dependent to where maybe she can get a light job." This reflects a parent's goal that aligns with their student's abilities and context, illustrating Jimmy's realistic and supportive expectations for his daughter's future employment.

Shelly emphasized the importance of equipping students with the skills to fill out job applications and create resumes. She also recommended teachers incorporate explicit instruction

on how and where to look for jobs online, saying, "I know everything's internet-based, technology-based, most of them can do it, but if they don't know where to go look, and some websites get tricky, then they don't know if there's a job available for them." Online job searches and applications can be challenging for students with limited access to technology and internet service. Indigenous students are more likely to live in rural areas, which often lack the necessary infrastructure for optimal internet use, such as broadband or high-speed service (Adams & Farnsworth, 2020; Faircloth, 2009; Rowe et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2011). This disparity results in lower reported internet use among rural residents compared to their urban counterparts. Additionally, Korostelina and Barrett (2023) highlight the growing need for high-speed internet and broadband access on Native American reservations, underscoring the significant barriers to deploying broadband infrastructure in these communities.

In light of these challenges, the parent noted the need for schools in these areas to support students who have graduated and are looking for jobs. Shelly suggested, "As simple as that, hey, you need help on that application or a computer, come back and ask the secretary for help, somebody will help you here." Rowe et al. (2020) notes that rural communities benefit from strong networks of relationships, which can positively impact postsecondary transition for students with disabilities. Shelly affirmed this notion sharing, "I feel like most administration, most secretaries, most teachers, if a student they had come back and needs help filling out an application because they don't have a computer, I don't feel like anyone's gonna really turn them away, especially in your small schools."

Other parents recounted their students' experiences with learning job skills while in school. Jimmy expressed satisfaction with the practice his daughter received at a store her class operated within the school. The class participated in managing the store, including tasks like

inventory, purchasing, and sales. He shared that due to her disability, his daughter would not be able to work independently at a full-time job after high school however, he felt the experience helped her build job skills that she could use after graduation. This aligns with research by Fields & Demchak (2018) that found microenterprises, such as student-run stores or coffee shops are effective in developing transferable vocational skills in students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, underscoring the value of practical vocational training.

Laura shared that her son had participated in his Nation's program that provided summer employment to Indigenous youth aged 16-21. This program, offered in various locations across the Nation's jurisdiction, allows students to gain job skills within their community. Many school districts within the Nation's jurisdiction take part in this program. She initially felt apprehensive about David's participation, saying, "I didn't think he would be able to or remember how to use a lawn mower or weed eater." However, his growth in the program and the encouragement from his supervisor gave her confidence that he would be able to find postsecondary employment. Research shows that job skills instruction in high school positively impacts the ability of students with disabilities to obtain postsecondary employment (Test et al., 2009a).

Despite the program's benefits, Laura expressed frustration with Davids's job search after the program's end. Although several family members had helped him fill out applications, he had not received any calls. She speculated that this might be due to his answers about disability status on the applications, saying, "He was trying to apply for jobs and when it came to if you have a disability part, it was just like nobody ever called." Their experience highlights two important needs for students with disabilities: support in job placement and understanding their rights regarding disclosing disabilities in job applications. While realistically schools cannot act as employment agencies for students with disabilities after they leave school, interagency

collaboration with Tribal agencies and vocational departments can be instrumental in helping ISWD obtain postsecondary employment. These collaborations can prepare students by identifying potential employers and providing training and support throughout the job search. This is especially important in rural areas where employment opportunities are limited (Rowe, 2020).

Moreover, job application instruction should include guidance on self-identifying disabilities during the application process and information about the rights of people with disabilities to reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) and the Rehabilitation Act. Although disclosing a disability during the application process is not mandatory, reasonable workplace accommodations are only accessible if the disability is disclosed (Office of Disability Employment Policy, n.d.). It's crucial for students with disabilities to be aware of their workplace rights so they can effectively advocate for themselves.

Shelly also explained the need for Indigenous students to be able to self-advocate in the workplace for specific needs such as time off to participate in cultural activities like ceremonies. She related that in her experience, once employers understand the reason for the request, they are supportive, but warns that she has also known of situations where employees miss multiple days and are terminated as a result of these absences. She acknowledges that it may be hard to talk to other people who do not understand your culture but says that it is necessary to explain why you may be unable to work certain days, noting that this kind of absence is a reasonable accommodation for religious beliefs, which are protected in the workplace under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1946.

Finances

Each family member interviewed emphasized the importance of financial considerations in transition planning, particularly focusing on financial independence and financial literacy.

While some parents were satisfied with the financial skills their student was learning, other parents strongly believed their students' school was not doing enough to prepare them to manage their finances after high school, identifying this as an area for improvement. Parents expressed a desire for stability for their students, with one parent hoping their child "gets a better job than probably what I have, make more money, and make ends meet a lot easier than me." Other parents shared the hope that their students would be able to be as independent as possible financially.

Merry et al. (2022) describe financial literacy as a combination of knowledge about finances and financial behaviors. Researchers have also highlighted the importance of practicing personal financial literacy skills before graduation for students with disabilities (Merry et al., 2014; Rowe et al., 2011). Indigenous people worldwide are more likely to experience low socio-economic status (Blue, 2016), and in the US, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian families are more likely than Caucasian and Asian families to live in poverty (Faircloth et al., 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Participants emphasized the need for teachers to understand the challenges associated with a low socio-economic status background, particularly if they are not from one.

Shelly, who is a teacher, expressed frustration that her college-aged student did not know how to budget money, saying, "He didn't know what a budget was. So, how can you do a budget if you don't know what a budget is?" She shared her belief that as teachers, "We don't push those aspects." She stressed the importance of ensuring students have the resources to manage their money, especially during financial hardships. She warned,

> "We're in inflation time right now where everything's more expensive; rent is more expensive, electric is more expensive, groceries are more expensive. So, how do you make sure you have food on the table and pay the bills at the same time? Do I

> pay my bills? Do I not eat? That's a hard decision sometimes for kids when they don't realize that $1000 doesn't get you very far."

Money-handling skills were a concern for multiple parents interviewed, echoing the worries of many parents of students with disabilities (Cappellino, 2014). Teaching students with disabilities to handle personal financial transactions is crucial for their independence within the community (Cappellino, 2014; Rowe et al., 2011). Researchers have explored ways to improve instruction for this skill across various settings (Barczak, 2019; Bouck et al., 2024; Chiak & Grim, 2008; Rowe et al., 2011). Jimmy noted satisfaction with the practice Sarah received at the school's store, where students could choose what they wanted and pay with their own money. He appreciated that her class participated in running the store, doing inventory, purchasing, and sales, which helped her build job skills and practice counting money. Laura shared that one of David's transition goals focused on being able to count money. She explained that this goal was based on her input and her desire to ensure that he could handle money transactions independently and not be taken advantage of. She noted David's positive progress towards this goal and his satisfaction, saying, "He would bring it home and he would say, 'this is what I learned today' and he'd be happy with counting the money and stuff like that." This feedback underscores the importance of practical financial education and the positive impact it has on students' confidence and independence.

DISCUSSION

The results from this study show that there are additional considerations educators must make when developing transition plans for ISWD. While many of the areas discussed by parents pertained to all students with disabilities, such as financial literacy and daily life skills instruction, considerations such as Indigenous culture-focused professional development for

teachers, as eligibility for Tribal services and programs, and transition education for Indigenous families are unique to ISWD. These areas must be taken into consideration when developing postsecondary transition plans for this population.

Each family member felt that their culture was not considered when their students' transition plans were created. Some suggested that teachers should receive more training related to working with ISWD. This recommendation aligns with research highlighting the positive impact of professional development focused on Indigenous cultures, which includes improved relationships with Indigenous students and families, better academic outcomes, and enhanced school engagement (Gay, 2002; Khalifa et al., 2016; Vincent et al., 2017). Understanding the cultural context of ISWD is crucial for developing tailored transition plans that address their specific needs and goals (Mosholder & Goslin, 2013). Therefore, the professional development suggested by the family members could equip educators with the knowledge needed to create culturally responsive transition plans for ISWD.

The most common area for improvement noted by families was more information about postsecondary resources that were available to their student. Each of the parents indicated that they had not received information about postsecondary resources available to Indigenous students during the transition process. The reason for this may be as simple as the teachers' themselves do not know about these resources. However, each of the 38 Federally Recognized Tribes in Oklahoma has a website that contains information about services for citizens and instructions on how to apply for these services. Furthermore, many of the Nations have pages on social media that share updates including applications and deadlines for scholarships and other resources. It is literally as simple as Googling "Nation's Name" of Oklahoma. Professional development, as discussed above, can provide educators with the opportunity to learn more about

the services available to their students and establish collaborations with Tribal agencies that could benefit Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD).

Another suggestion came from Robert who voiced an idea for a "Tribal liason" position that coordinated with Indigenous families and their Nation to provide support for ISWD. This suggestion is an example of interagency collaboration, which has been identified as a predictor of positive postsecondary outcomes in a review by Test et al. (2009a). Despite replications of Test et al.'s initial review (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021), interagency collaboration remains at NTACT's lowest level of evidence, classified as Promising Practice in education, employment, and independent living (NTACT, 2022). Given the numerous programs supporting postsecondary transitions available to ISWD as Tribal citizens and as people with disabilities, it can be reasonably assumed that collaborations between school districts and representatives of these agencies could promote more positive postsecondary outcomes for ISWD. However, in the three reviews mentioned, ISWD accounted for less than 1% of the sample, indicating that collaborations with Tribal agencies were not considered in this research. Therefore, research is needed to explore interagency collaboration that includes Tribal agencies providing postsecondary resources. Findings from such research could enhance the evidence base for interagency collaboration and offer culturally responsive practices to better support ISWD in their postsecondary transitions.

Similarly, Test et al. (2009b and 2012) identified teaching families about transition as an evidence-based practice in postsecondary transition. Rowe et al. (2021) define parent training as "instruction that occurs between educators or service providers and parents where parents study about a single topic or a small section of a broad topic for a given period of time." (pp 33-36). Boone (1992) found that parent training that included aspects of cultural interaction can

contribute to positive participation outcomes, while Rowe et al. (2010) found that computer-based instruction could improve parent knowledge of postsecondary transition including goals, services, and transition providers. This type of education for parents could address some of the areas of concern identified by families, such as the issues Laura expressed with coordinating services for David. Computer-based training could provide access to many topics identified by families within a school district, including the need for a resource, or "guide", as Robert described, that would explain "the steps they need to take before they go to school." Developing resources or videos for parent trainings also presents an area for interagency collaboration between schools and Tribal agencies.

The experiences and recommendations of the family members regarding postsecondary transition planning for ISWD in Oklahoma highlight critical areas for future research and practical advice for teachers in the state. The 39 Tribal Nations within Oklahoma can be essential allies in promoting positive postsecondary outcomes for ISWD. Building respectful relationships with these Nations can facilitate the creation of culturally responsive professional development for teachers, parent training, education in postsecondary transition, and interagency collaboration. These efforts will significantly benefit ISWD by ensuring that transition plans comprehensively address their strengths and needs, both as students with disabilities and as citizens of Sovereign Nations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

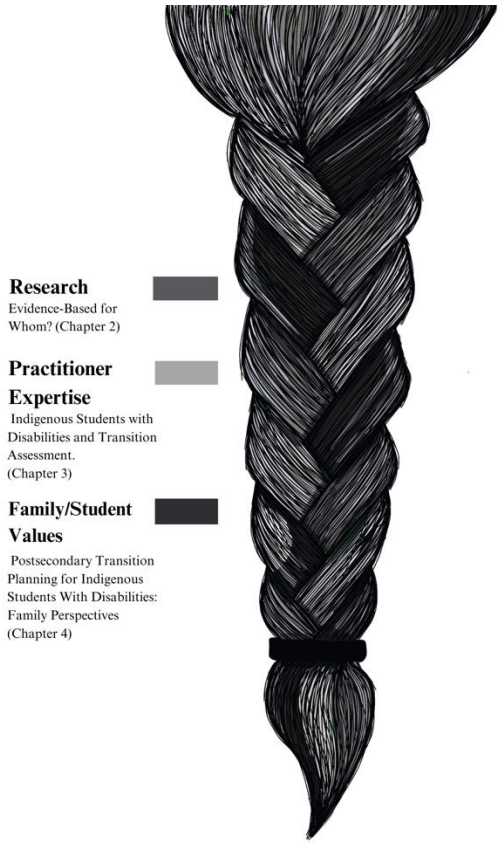
Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson writes, “I've been taught that harmony is when things are together—they are linked. Making a connection in this way allows for growth and positive change to take place” (2008, p. 109). He explains that this type of harmony in Indigenous research forms a relationship that pulls things together, and understanding the importance of this harmony or balance allows us to focus on the positive, moving us forward. This is the attitude we must adopt for postsecondary transition planning for ISWD: moving students forward by balancing their unique strengths and contexts with culturally appropriate evidence-based practices that address their needs. However, research aimed at evidence-based practices for transition planning for ISWD is scarce, and current trends in identifying such practices for all students with disabilities are decidedly unbalanced.

In Chapter 1, I proposed a model for identifying evidence-based practices for ISWD that adapted the work of Sackett (1995). Sackett’s model aligns with my own work because of its emphasis on a balance of research results, clinician expertise, and patient values. I conceptualized this model as a braid, made up of three equal strands. Figure 11 shows the braiding evidence-based practices model introduced in Chapter 1. Like Sackett’s original model, the first strand of the braid is research findings. In the absence of evidence-based practices in transition research specifically focused on ISWD, I considered the body of effective practices research in postsecondary transition. I then reimagined clinician expertise as practitioner expertise to encompass the knowledge and professional judgment of Indigenous teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, Tribal education department personnel, and researchers who have valuable practical experience in working with ISWD. Finally, I adapted patient values to family/student values to capture the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous families and

students who are currently or have recently engaged in the transition planning process. Findings from all three areas are braided together, with none taking precedence over the others. Bringing the findings from each strand by placing an equal emphasis on the expertise of practitioners and the values of families and students, can grow our understanding of evidence-based practices in transition planning for ISWD. In this way, we are creating a "braid" of evidence-based practice, consisting of three equal strands—research, practitioner expertise, and family values—that continually grows longer and strengthens our understanding of the relationships among the three parts

Figure 9.

Braiding Evidence-Based Practices for ISWD



Current Study

Evidence-based practices are critical for promoting positive postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2013). This includes ISWD, who exist as both a racial and a political minority as citizens of Sovereign Nations (Brayboy, 2006; Brayboy, 2021). It is due to this unique intersectionality that existing transition research focused on students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) fails to address the specific needs of ISWD. Because of educational rights guaranteed under treaties with the US government (Burnette, 2021; Carney, 1999; Faircloth et al., 2016; Sabzailian, 2019) coupled with legislation addressing education for students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004), no other group of students in the US are entitled to the unique protections afforded to ISWD (Brayboy et al., 2015; Hibel et al., 2008). Yet despite these exceptionalities, Indigenous students are proportionately the most represented racial or ethnic group receiving special education services and experience poorer postsecondary outcomes than almost any other group (Applequist, 2009; Castagono & Brayboy, 2008; Faircloth, 2015; Hibel et al., 2008; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Therefore, evidence-based practice research that addresses the unique contexts and strengths of ISWD in transition planning is desperately needed. Such practices would support ISWD through positive postsecondary transitions and consequently, contribute to Tribal Nation Building (Brayboy, 2021).

Though Brayboy's (2021) conceptualization of Tribal Nation Building primarily focuses on higher education, it can also inform our understanding of postsecondary transition planning for ISWD. In his essay, Brayboy cautions against viewing Tribal Nation Building solely as a process of building and strengthening capacity, emphasizing instead the "enormous amount of talent" present in Tribal Nations and communities that should be nurtured and developed (p. 106). This perspective suggests that postsecondary transition planning for ISWD is inherently linked to Tribal Nation Building. Transition plans that focus on ISWD's strengths and talents, as

well as their needs to fully develop these strengths and talents, can lead to positive postsecondary outcomes. When Indigenous students with disabilities successfully transition into postsecondary settings, they not only enhance their individual capacities but also become valuable members of their communities. This positive feedback loop—where positive outcomes for individuals lead to positive outcomes for communities—strengthens the community and supports the broader goal of Tribal Nation Building. This resonates with the observation from a panelist in Chapter 3, who defined a positive outcome for ISWD as "possessing the self-reliance that brings strength to the family and tribe as a whole." Faircloth and Tippeconic (2010) affirm this notion, noting that positive educational outcomes for Indigenous youth are key to the social, economic, and cultural survival of Indigenous people in the US. Researchers and educators must recognize the link between postsecondary transition planning for ISWD and the broader concept of Tribal Nation Building. Identifying evidence-based practices for ISWD can play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive and culturally relevant educational environment that supports the holistic development of Tribal Communities.

This dissertation begins the work of identifying evidence-based practices for ISWD by braiding together findings from existing research, expertise from Indigenous practitioners in transition, and findings from interviews with families of ISWD about their experiences in transition planning. The articles in this dissertation significantly contribute to the field of postsecondary transition. This study marks the first effort to address transition assessment for ISWD through the insights of Indigenous education experts. The findings from both the panel and the families of ISWD interviewed highlight specific areas for further research, practical application, and the development of transition assessments. Moreover, by centering the voices of Indigenous participants, this research ensures that the results genuinely reflect the relevant needs

and priorities of ISWD. This approach not only fills critical gaps in the literature but also paves the way for research that addresses inclusive and culturally responsive practices in transition planning.

Strand One-Research

The first article in this dissertation reviewed existing postsecondary transition research. Examining existing literature in this field was essential to understand established best practices for students with disabilities (SWD), identify gaps in this research, and highlight aspects pertinent to Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD), including how researchers and practitioners conceptualize transition planning, trends in research, and the identification of best practices. Specifically, I focused on literature used to identify the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition's (NTACT) evidence-based predictors and effective practices in postsecondary transition. The predictors and practices were identified and clustered around areas in the Taxonomy for Transition (Kohler, 1996; Kohler, 2012) which includes: Student-Focused Planning, Student Development, Family involvement, Program Structure, and Interagency Collaboration. Identification and further classification of levels of evidence occurred through systematic literature reviews conducted periodically by researchers associated with NTACT.

Three comprehensive reviews (Test et al., 2009a; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021) analyzed a total of 55 studies, encompassing 162,853 participants, and identified 23 predictors of positive postsecondary outcomes in areas such as education, employment, and independent living. However, a closer examination of the demographic information from these reviews reveals a significant underrepresentation of ISWD, with only seven of the 55 studies including Indigenous individuals. This represents less than 1% (N=209) of the total population used to identify evidence-based predictors for students with disabilities. Two major reviews (Test et al., 2009b; Test et al., 2012) identified 32 effective practices in postsecondary transition.

Additionally, in 2022, NTACT released operational definitions for 47 effective practices, including details about the disability categories of participants. However, these reviews did not report race or ethnicity data for the participants, making it impossible to determine the representation of Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD) in this body of research.

It is important to note that the initial reviews were conducted by the same team and drew from the same pool of articles, separated by methodologies (correlational vs. experimental group and single-case) (Test et al., 2009a; Test et al., 2009b). Given the demographic data shared in the reviews for predictors, it is likely that the participants in the studies used for effective practices had similar characteristics to those in the studies used for evidence-based predictors. This implies that despite Indigenous students constituting 19% of those receiving special education services under IDEA—the largest proportional group—they account for less than 1% of the population used to identify effective practices and evidence-based predictors of positive post-school outcomes.

Another issue concerning these reviews is that, frankly, they are confusing. It is difficult to follow the timeline of research dealing with evidence-based practices due to the sheer number of evidence-based practice articles by the authors, some dealing with differing subgroups, some identifying practices in specific areas, some classifying practices, some operationally defining practices. NTACT's guidance on practices and Levels of Evidence for Effective Practices also proves frustrating when trying to trace the life cycle of a practice or predictor from its a) initial identification, through b) classification of evidence level, and c) operational definition. Reader, if you are confused by Test et al., 2009a, Test et al., 2009b, evidence-based predictors, evidence-based practices, research-based practices, promising practices, unestablished practices, and effective practices, I assure you that I am too. I have been scrutinizing these articles for almost a

year and I am still relying on an extensive sticky note system to keep track. A detailed retrospective of research related to NTACT's Effective Practices, preferably with comprehensive visual aids, would be helpful in fully understanding these practices and predictors.

Strand Two-Practitioner Expertise

To address the area of practitioner expertise, I conducted a Delphi-type study focused on Indigenous practitioners' expertise in postsecondary transition. Specifically, this study focused on the relevance of existing postsecondary transition assessments for ISWD. Transition assessment is mandated by IDEA (2004) and helps guide the development of the transition plan by identifying students' preferences, interests, challenges, and strengths. However, many formal standardized assessments that have reliability and validity data to support their use relied on norming samples that were not inclusive of CLD, an issue with formal assessments in psychological settings that has been addressed by numerous researchers (Beach, 2020; Hill et al., 2010; Graham & Eadens, 2017; Pace et al., 2006; Trainor 2005; Yee & Butler, 2020). Therefore, due to the concerns addressed by these researchers, coupled with the above-mentioned lack of representation of ISWD in postsecondary transition research, we can bet that ISWD were not included in norming samples for postsecondary transition assessment.

To address the relevance of three existing postsecondary transition assessments (*Transition Assessment and Goal Generator, Self-Determination Inventory, Casey Life Skills: American Indian/Alaska Native)*, I assembled a panel of five Indigenous knowledge holders. These knowledge holders represented higher education faculty, teachers, administrators, Tribal agencies, and parents of ISWD. The panel of knowledge-holders largely found the three assessments *Somewhat Relevant* to ISWD. The panel also identified areas for consideration when developing transition plans for ISWD that were not addressed by the assessments they reviewed. These areas are: Culture, First Generation Students, Guidance/Mentorship, Family Involvement,

and Financial Literacy. Additionally, the panel stressed the importance of students being aware of and knowing how to access Tribal resources that support their postsecondary goals.

Strand Three-Family Values

I addressed Family Values through a qualitative study that focused on family members' perceptions of culture in the postsecondary transition planning process for ISWD in Oklahoma. In this study, I interviewed four family members of transition-age ISWD who were either currently involved in or had recently completed the transition planning process with their students. Each participant expressed that their culture was not adequately addressed in the development of their students' transition plans. Some family members suggested that educators need more training in working with Indigenous students, while others emphasized the importance of incorporating family involvement into ISWD transition plans.

The family members identified several areas for improvement in transition planning for ISWD. They highlighted the need for more information about available resources, including higher education, disability services, and Tribal resources. Additionally, they stressed the importance of support for finding employment and enhancing financial literacy for their students. These insights suggest that a more culturally responsive approach to transition planning is necessary to better support the unique needs and values of Indigenous students with disabilities and their families. By integrating these perspectives, educators and policymakers can create more effective and inclusive transition plans that honor the cultural heritage and strengths of ISWD.

Braiding the Strands Together

Each of the three articles in this dissertation present significant findings as standalone pieces. However, in integrating the distinct parts of this dissertation, we can uncover areas of connection and start braiding the findings together. The absence of ISWD in existing transition research highlights gaps in the literature that can be addressed using insights from the panel of

Indigenous knowledge holders and family members. By combining these perspectives, we can begin to fill these gaps and weave a more comprehensive understanding of the transition needs of ISWD.

Interagency Collaboration

The absence of ISWD in postsecondary transition research prevents adding to evidence levels for some identified predictors and practices, such as Interagency Collaboration. One panel member described the importance of students accessing Tribal services as a "wrap-around" approach to support their transitions. This concept aligns with the Taxonomy for Transition's (Kohler et al., 2012) focus on interagency collaboration, where multiple agencies coordinate to provide services and support for SWD. Family members interviewed for this study emphasized the critical role of resources for ISWD, pointing out the insufficient sharing of available resources as a significant area for improvement in transition planning.

Despite interagency collaboration being a recognized area in the Taxonomy for Transition and identified as a predictor of positive postsecondary outcomes in employment and education (Test et al., 2009a), subsequent reviews (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021) have found no additional studies to elevate the evidence level for this predictor. As a result, it remains classified as a Promising Practice according to NTACT guidelines, both as a predictor and a practice (NTACT, 2022). However, both the panel of Indigenous knowledge holders and parents of ISWD highlighted the importance of resources from Tribal agencies in achieving positive postsecondary outcomes for ISWD. This underscores the potential for interagency collaboration to become an evidence-based practice specifically for ISWD. Future research should explore correlations between accessing these Tribal resources and positive outcomes, and to explore specific models of coordination between agencies that can effectively support ISWD.

Family Involvement

Like interagency collaboration, family involvement is a key area in the Taxonomy for Transition (Kohler et al., 2012). Practices under this area include involving families in the transition process (Test et al., 2009b), educating parents about transition issues (Test et al., 2012), and teaching parents and families about transition, which NTACT operationally defined in 2022. Teaching parents and families about transition is classified as an Evidence-Based Practice for employment. Predictors related to family involvement include parental expectations (Test et al., 2009a), which is classified as a Promising Practice, the lowest level of evidence, in the area of employment.

While existing research has focused on involving families in transition planning and educating parents about transition, insights from the panel and family member interviews highlighted the importance of relationship building and understanding the cultural context of ISWD families. Their feedback indicated that family involvement could play a much more significant role for ISWD. The panel expressed concern that the assessments they reviewed did not mention the family's goals for the student or the role of extended family members, such as grandparents, in establishing the family's values. Family members interviewed also emphasized the critical importance of family in ISWD transition planning, noting that educators must understand the student's background to create a transition plan that fully supports their postsecondary goals. Some family members suggested additional professional development for educators, focusing on respectfully engaging with Indigenous families to better support ISWD in their transitions.

Financial Literacy

Finances were highlighted as a critical area in transition planning for Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD) by both panel members and family members. Although financial

literacy is not explicitly addressed in the Taxonomy for Transition (Kohler et al., 2012), related practices such as banking skills, financial management, and counting money fall under the Taxonomy area of Student Development (Mazzotti et al., 2014). However, there are no predictors that directly address financial literacy. Despite this gap, both panel and family members emphasized the importance of financial literacy in transition planning for ISWD. Family members interviewed stressed the necessity of equipping students with financial management skills, particularly to navigate potential financial hardships. This concern is underscored by the fact that, in 2022, 24.7% of people with disabilities lived below the poverty line, compared to 9.6% of people without disabilities (Erickson et al., 2022). Additionally, historical and systemic barriers contribute to higher poverty rates and lower financial literacy among Indigenous populations (Blue, 2016; Faircloth et al., 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Given these challenges, developing and identifying culturally responsive practices for teaching financial literacy skills is essential. Ensuring that ISWD are equipped with the necessary financial skills can help mitigate the impacts of poverty and support their successful transition into postsecondary life. This focus on financial literacy is crucial for preventing negative outcomes and promoting the overall well-being of ISWD.

Conclusion

Alright, one last story for the road. I tend to think my face is just neutral—not smiling, not frowning, not crying—just passively accepting what the universe has presented to me with no visible reaction. I am informed, however, that this is absolutely NOT the case. I have always thought when someone is talking or teaching that I should just keep a neutral face so they do not think I am making fun of them or being mean. So, you can imagine my confusion when I got into trouble as a graduate student because my face was too mean. It made a staff member uncomfortable! I was just so intimidating and scary! I should smile so the staff member knows I

like them! This was disappointing, but not surprising. What I learned from this experience was to *soften*. *Soften* my face to make colleagues more comfortable, *soften* my words so they do not think I am being mean, *soften* my research findings so the academics at conferences are not offended when I point out that Native students are not included in their research. Smile and tell a little joke to soften the blow when I tell a hard truth. I am sharing this with you because this experience wrecked up my confidence in how I impart information. What if I come across as mean, or intimidating, or aggressive? I always second-guess myself now, worrying if someone will be offended or feel called out. But what I have come to realize, is I am not intimidating, they are just intimidated. It has nothing to do with my face, but the uncomfortable truths I am pointing out. So, I really appreciated my committee's feedback in this chapter to "be bold, be blunt, say what you want to say.". It feels like I have been given back my voice. Here is what I want to say, boldly and bluntly. To me, the near-total absence of the largest proportional racial demographic of students receiving special education services under IDEA in postsecondary transition research can only be explained by a lack of effort on the part of researchers to include them. I do not believe there was a deliberate decision to exclude these students, but their inclusion seems to have been overlooked. Researchers can address this oversight through a few key actions: building relationships with Tribal Nations, recruiting and retaining Indigenous faculty and graduate students, and holding their research to a higher standard.

Research involving Indigenous peoples should be conducted in collaboration with them (Drawson et al., 2017). There is a movement in special education research to include people with disabilities on research teams under the principle of "Nothing about us without us." The same principle applies here. Researchers should establish relationships with Native communities in their area. However, researchers often face two main challenges in this regard. Please understand

you cannot just show up at Tribal headquarters and ask them to participate in your research. Would you go to your neighbor's house and tell them what they needed to fix to fit your idea of a good house? No, but you might offer to help with something specific, like fixing a leaky faucet. Similarly, researchers should ask Tribal communities what issues they are concerned about and how they can help, rather than imposing their own research agendas.

I often hear researchers say, "I just do not know any Native people to ask." Yet, these same researchers have no trouble finding Native organizations when they need a letter of support for a grant proposal involving CLD students. However, when it comes to actually including Native people in the work, they suddenly do not know any. Indigenous voices must be included at every level of research. This involves recruiting, supporting, and retaining Indigenous graduate students and faculty, and funding Indigenous researchers who focus on identifying effective practices and predictors for Indigenous students with disabilities (ISWD). A good starting point is writing proposals for personnel preparation grants specifically aimed at preparing Indigenous special education faculty. If you are recruiting Indigenous graduate students, you need to support them with resources such as Indigenous faculty and organizations on campus. Building relationships with Tribal Colleges and Universities can create a pipeline of students who will become special education faculty.

Lastly, research must be held to a higher standard. Researchers need to provide detailed descriptions of their samples, avoiding vague categories like "other" or "two or more races," and explicitly explaining who is included in the study. Even if each characteristic in the "Other" category is too small for statistical significance, specify who is included. Explain this in your manuscripts and conference proposals and demand it when reviewing others' work. Additionally, ISWD must be included in postsecondary transition research, reflecting their significant presence

in the special education population, which stands at 19% (Irwin et al., 2021), yet constitutes only 1% of the literature base. When I set out to determine ISWDs' presence in postsecondary transition research, I expected to find something. The fact that there is virtually nothing is deeply disappointing. We must do better. Building relationships and recruiting Indigenous faculty and graduate students can support ISWD's inclusion in postsecondary research, ensuring that the research is culturally appropriate and meets the communities' unique needs.

In conclusion, the bar is on the floor. The postsecondary transition research base fundamentally lacks representation of ISWD, the largest proportional racial group receiving special education services under IDEA. The studies in this dissertation highlight how their absence leads to the promotion of practices that fail to address their unique needs and experiences. This omission hinders the development of evidence-based practices, such as interagency collaboration, and limits our understanding of critical areas like family involvement. By taking these steps, we can create a more inclusive and effective postsecondary transition framework that fully supports ISWD and their communities.

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APPENDIX A: NTACT LEVELS OF EVIDENCE

NTACT Levels of Evidence				
	Evidence-Based	Research-Based	Promising Practice	Unestablished
Group Experimental	a) Two methodologically sound* group comparison studies with random assignment to groups, demonstrating positive effects, and including at least 60 total participants across studies OR b) Four methodologically sound* group comparison studies with non-random assignment to groups, demonstrating positive effects, and including at least 120 total participants across studies AND c) Includes no methodologically sound studies conducted with negative effects and at least a 3:1 ratio of methodologically sound studies with positive	a) One methodologically sound* group comparison study with random assignment to groups and positive effects OR b) Two or three methodologically sound* group comparison studies with nonrandom assignment to groups; and positive effects AND c) Includes no methodologically sound* studies conducted with negative effects, and at least a 2:1 ratio of methodologically sound studies with positive effects to methodologically sound* studies with neutral/mixed effects. This includes group experimental and non-	a) One methodologically sound* group comparison study with non-random assignment to groups; and positive effects AND b) The ratio of methodologically sound studies with positive effects to methodologically sound studies with neutral/mixed effects is less than 2:1 OR c) One or more methodologically sound* studies conducted with negative effects, as long as methodologically sound* studies with negative effects do not out number methodologically sound* studies with positive effects.	a) Insufficient research exists to meet the criteria for any of the other levels of evidence above (e.g., descriptive studies, anecdotal evidence, and/or professional judgment articles describing a practice) b) More methodologically sound* studies demonstrating negative effects, than studies demonstrating positive effects

	effects to methodologically sound studies with neutral/mixed effects. This includes group experimental and non-randomly assigned group comparison collectively AND d) Must calculate effect size or report data that allows for calculation	randomly assigned group comparisons AND d) Must calculate effect size or report data that allows for calculation		
Single Case	a) A combination of five methodologically sound*studies, demonstrating a functional relation (positive effects) and at least 20 total participants across studies AND b) Includes no methodologically sound studies conducted with negative effects and at least a 3:1 ratio of methodologically sound studies with positive effects to methodologically sound	a) Two to four methodologically sound single case studies demonstrating a functional relation (positive effects) AND b) Includes no methodologically sound studies conducted with negative effects, and at least a 2:1 ratio of methodologically sound studies with positive effects to methodologically sound studies with neutral/mixed effects. This all types of single-	a) One methodologically sound single case study demonstrating a functional relation (positive effects) OR b) Two or more single case studies demonstrating positive effects using methodologically weak designs (e.g., non-concurrent multiple baseline, AB) AND c) The ratio of methodologically sound studies with positive	

	studies with neutral/mixed effects. This includes all types of single-case design studies collectively AND c) Studies are conducted by at least three research teams with no overlapping authorship at three different institutions.	case design studies collectively	effects to methodologically sound studies with neutral/mixed effects is less than 2:1 OR d) One or more methodologically sound studies conducted with negative effects, as long as methodologically sound studies with negative effects do not out number methodologically sound studies with positive effects.	
Correlational	a) Two methodologically sound a priori (planned, hypothesis stated) studies using propensity score modeling/ matching which demonstrate consistent significant correlations between predictor and outcome variables AND b) Studies must calculate effect size or report data that allows for calculation	a) A combination of two methodologically sound a priori studies demonstrating consistent significant correlations between predictor and outcome AND b) Studies must calculate effect size or report data that allows for calculation AND c) There are more methodologically sound a priori studies	a) One methodologically sound a priori study with consistent significant correlations between predictor and outcome OR b) Two methodologically sound exploratory (no specific hypothesis) studies with significant correlations between predictor and outcome	

	AND c) No evidence from a methodologically sound a priori study demonstrating negative correlations between predictor and outcome variables	demonstrating positive correlations than methodologically sound a priori studies demonstrating negative correlations		
Mix of Group, Single Case, Correlational, or Qualitative	Meet at least 50% of criteria for group experimental, single-case designs, and/or quasi-experimental correlational design as described. For example, the practice is supported by: a) One methodologically sound group comparison study with random assignment, positive effects, and at least 30 total participants across studies, plus three methodologically sound single-case research studies with positive effects and at least 10 total participants across studies OR	Meet at least 50% of criteria for group experimental, single-case designs, and/or quasi-experimental correlational design as described. For example, practice is supported by: a) One methodologically sound single case study with positive effects and one methodologically sound group comparison study with non-random assignment to groups and positive effects AND b) Includes no methodologically sound studies conducted with negative effects, and at least a 2:1 ratio of methodologically sound	Meet at least 50% of criteria for group experimental, single-case designs, and/or quasi-experimental and/or exploratory correlational designs as described. For example, practice is supported by: a) One methodologically weak group design study and one single case study demonstrating positive effects using a methodologically weak design (e.g., non-concurrent multiple baseline, AB) OR b) Two or more single case design studies demonstrating positive effects using	

	b) Three methodologically sound single case studies with positive effects and at least 10 total participants across studies, plus two methodologically sound group comparison studies with non-random assignment, positive effects, and at least 60 total participants across studies AND c) Includes no methodologically sound studies conducted with negative effects and at least a 3:1 ratio of methodologically sound studies with positive effects to methodologically sound studies with neutral/mixed effects. This includes group experimental, non-randomly assigned group comparison, single-case design, and quasi-experimental	studies with positive effects to methodologically sound studies with neutral/mixed effects. This includes group experimental, non-randomly assigned group comparison, and single-case design studies collectively. d) For correlational studies, a combination of two methodologically sound a priori studies demonstrating consistent significant correlations between predictor and outcome AND c) Studies must calculate effect size or report data that allows for calculation	methodologically weak designs (e.g., non-concurrent multiple baseline, AB) and one quality qualitative design study OR c) One methodologically sound correlational study with significant effects and one single case study demonstrating positive effects using a methodologically weak design (e.g., non-concurrent multiple baseline, AB) AND d) The ratio of studies with positive effects to studies with neutral/mixed effects is less than 2:1; OR e) One or more studies conducted with negative effects, as long as studies with negative effects do not out number methodologically sound	

	correlational studies collectively.		studies with positive effects.	

APPENDIX B: EVIDENCE LEVELS OF PRACTICES AND PREDICTORS

Practices Operationally Defined by NTACT (2022)

Practice	Evidence Level
At Work Vocational Rehabilitation Program	PP
Backward Chaining	PP
Beyond High School Model	PP
Check and Connect	EBP
Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students (CIRCLES)	RBP
Community Based Instruction	RBP
Computer Assisted Instruction	PP
Constant Time Delay	PP
Differential Reinforcement	PP
Direct Instruction of Main Idea	RBP
Envision IT Curriculum	EBP
FEAT Curriculum	PP
Forward Chaining	PP
Internships	RBP
Mentoring	RBP
Most to Least Prompting	PP
Multimodal Anxiety and Social Skills Intervention (MASSI)	RBP
One-More-Than Strategy	RBP
Parent Training in Transition	EBP
Peer-Assisted Instruction and Support	RBP
Peer-Assisted Instruction/Support plus Simultaneous Prompting	PP
Peer Networking Intervention	PP
Person Centered Planning	RBP
Progressive Time Delay	PP
Post-School Achievement Through Higher Learning Skills (PATHS) Curriculum	PP
Project SEARCH	EBP
Response Prompting	RBP
Self-Advocacy Strategy	EBP
Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)	EBP

Self-Directed IEP	EBP
Self-Management Instruction	RBP
Self-Monitoring Instruction	RBP
Service Learning	RBP
Simulated Instruction	RBP
Simultaneous Prompting	PP
Social Skills and Sports Program Curriculum	PP
Structured Inquiry	RBP
Student Directed Transition Planning	RBP
System of Least Prompts	PP
Take Action: Making Goals Happen Curriculum	PP
Take Charge Curriculum	EBP
Total Task Chaining	PP
Total Task Chaining plus Prompting	PP
Video Modeling	EBP
Video Modeling plus Constant Time Delay	PP
“Whose Future Is It? Plus, Rocket Reader” Curriculum	RBP
Working at Gaining Employment Skills (WAGES) Curriculum	RBP

NTACT Levels of Evidence for Predictors

Predictor	NTACT Evidence Level-Education	NTACT Evidence Level-Employment	NTACT Evidence Level-Independent Living
Career awareness	PP	PP	
Community experiences		PP	
Exit exam requirements/high school diploma status		PP	
Inclusion in general education	RBP	RBP	RBP
Interagency collaboration	PP	PP	
Occupational courses	PP	PP	
Paid employment/work experiences	RBP	RBP	PP
Parental involvement		PP	
Program of study	RBP	RBP	
Self-advocacy/self-determination	RBP	RBP	PP
Self-care/independent living skills	PP	PP	RBP
Social skills	PP	PP	
Student support	PP	RBP	PP
Transition program	RBP	PP	
Career and Technical Education (formerly Vocational education)	RBP	EBP	
Work study		RBP	
Goal setting	RBP		
Parental expectations	PP	RBP	
Travel skills	PP		

Predictor	NTACT Evidence Level-Education	NTACT Evidence Level-Employment	NTACT Evidence Level-Independent Living
Youth autonomy/decision making	RBP	RBP	PP
Psychological empowerment	PP	PP	PP
Self-actualization		PP	PP
Technology skills		PP	

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: January 24, 2023 **IRB#:** 15496

Principal Investigator: Courtney A Tennell

Approval Date: 01/24/2023

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: Indigenous Students' Postsecondary Needs: A Delphi Study

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Lara Mayeux

Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX D: SURVEY ROUND 1

Indigenous Postsecondary Transition
Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma?

I am Courtney Tennell from the Educational Psychology Department and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled Indigenous Students' Postsecondary Transition Needs: A Delphi Study This research is being conducted at the University of Oklahoma You were selected as a possible participant because of your expertise in Indigenous students' postsecondary transition needs. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? The purpose of this research is to identify the needs, skills, and knowledge specific to Indigenous students for successful postsecondary transition in the areas of education, employment, independent living and community participation.

How many participants will be in this research? About 5 people will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will complete a survey via Qualtrics to determine the relevance of existing postsecondary transition assessments to Indigenous students' needs, skills, and knowledge. Experts will then be asked to complete a second survey to weigh in on currently available transition assessment in terms of their cultural appropriateness for indigenous students.

How long will this take? Your participation will take about 2 hours total.

What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate? There are no risks from being in this research. We hope that this project will benefit those involved who are working in Indigenous postsecondary transition, including you and your community and how to improve it.

Will I be compensated for participating? You will be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research. After completing the second survey, you will be mailed a $100 gift card.

Who will see my information? In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you. However, we may use direct quotes from your survey responses. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records. Data are collected via an online survey system that has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. Please note no assurance can be made as to the use of the data you provide for purposes other than this research.

What will happen to my data in the future? We will not share your data or use it in future research projects.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits

or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

Who do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints? If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at 580-235-1277 or courtneytennell@ou.edu, or Kendra Williams-Diehm at klwd@ou.edu or 405-325-8951.

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) or if you cannot reach the researcher(s). Please print this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I am agreeing to participate in this research.

Once we have received responses from all participants, we will collate and summarize the findings and formulate a brief second questionnaire. You will receive this early next month. Your participation in the survey is voluntary and your individual responses will be strictly confidential to the research team and will not be divulged to any outside party, including other survey participants.

- ○ I agree to participate (7)
- ○ I do not want to participate (8)

Skip To: Q86 If Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma? I am Courtney Tennell fr... = I agree to participate
Skip To: End of Survey If Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma? I am Courtney Tennell fr... = I do not want to participate

Q86 Name

_____

Q87 Position (Examples- university faculty, transition coordinator, special education teacher, Tribal education department staff)

_____

Q88 Email

_____

Q98 The Transition Assessment and Goals Generator (TAGG) is a formal, online transition assessment for students with disabilities that determines students' areas of strength, limitation, relative strength and relative limitation in the areas of persistence, strengths and limitations, disability awareness, support community, interacting with others, employment, goal setting and attainment, and student involvement in the IEP.

Please read the questions from the TAGG and tell us how relevant they are to Indigenous students with disabilities' postsecondary transition needs.

Q1 The student told someone what he or she does well.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q3 The student told someone what he or she has trouble doing.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q4 The student expressed accurate information about his or her academic strengths.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q5 The student identified situations when assistance was needed.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q6 The student uses the least stigmatizing disability label that results in getting most support.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q7 The student expressed the type of supports or accommodations needed for his or her disability.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q8 The student views the disability as only one aspect of his or her life.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q9 The student explained to others that he or she receives special education services.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q10 The student views not giving up in school as important.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q11 The student keeps working until he or she accomplishes a goal.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q12 The student utilizes different strategies as needed to continue staying on task.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q13 The student keeps working to achieve a goal, even when it becomes hard.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q14 The student learns from mistakes and does better next time.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q15 The student successfully participates in small groups to complete projects.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q16 The student participates in school or community organizations, such as sports clubs or organized social groups.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q17 The student successfully interacts with teachers, family, and other adults.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q18 The student set goals that match his or her strengths and interests while taking into consideration what the family or community wants him or her to do.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q19 The student creates short-term goals to attain long-term goals.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q20 The student uses plans he or she develops to attain goals.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q21 The student adjusts plans to attain goals if they do not work.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q22 The student moves on to the next goal after attaining one goal.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q23 The student attained at least one transition goal.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q24 The student expresses wanting a job.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q25 The student expresses wanting a job that matches his or her career interests and skills.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q26 The student had an unpaid job, such as working for a family member.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q27 The student had a paid job.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q28 The student told the IEP team his or her postschool goals.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q29 The student discussed his or her present level of performance at the IEP meeting.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q30 The student explained how his or her course of study assists in achieving postschool goals at the IEP meeting.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q31 The student led his or her IEP meeting.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q32 The student distinguishes between individuals who are a positive source of support from those who are not.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q33 The student accepts help from support people when offered.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q34 The student only uses support people when needed, not to get out of doing things

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q35 The student seeks assistance from community agencies.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q89 How thoroughly do you think the TAGG addresses Indigenous students' postsecondary transition needs?

- ○ Completely (1)
- ○ Somewhat (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Not really (4)
- ○ Not at all (5)

Q90 Please share the reason/explanation for your response.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q97 The Casey Life Skills American Indian/ Alaska Native Assessment is an informal transition questionnaire that was created in collaboration with Tribal Communities. It is designed to help American Indian students maintain their cultural identity while navigation between two worlds (Casey Family Programs, 2016).

Please read the questions from the Casey Life Skills American Indian/ Alaska Native Assessment and tell us how relevant they are to Indigenous students with disabilities' postsecondary transition needs.

Q36 I know how to become an enrolled member of my tribe.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q37 I feel comfortable identifying as a native/indigenous person.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q38 I am aware of my ancestral history and connection.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q39 I know how to actively stay connected with my tribe/native community.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q40 I am familiar with my tribe's culture and traditions such as food, religious/spiritual beliefs and practices, and language.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q41 I take the initiative in learning about my tribe's culture and traditions.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q42 I know how to actively participate in my tribe's cultural/ traditional activities.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q43 I have an elder or someone from my community who I can talk to.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q44 I feel a strong connection with my tribal/native community.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q45 I take initiative to connect to my tribal family and/or community.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q46 I take initiative to understand my native/tribal family and community.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q47 I know how to participate in my tribe/native community events.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q48 I understand how to support my native/tribal community.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q49 I know my Indian or spiritual name.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q50 I seek my native/tribal culture for help when I feel physically unwell.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q51 I seek my native/tribal culture for help when I feel mentally unwell.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q52 I turn to my native/tribal culture when I have a tough time making decisions.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q53 I find ways to live in balance and harmony.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q54 I feel like my native/tribal culture is seen in a positive way at school.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q55 I have the support in connecting to other native youth.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q56 I am respected in a non-native community.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q57 I feel included in my non-native school.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q91 How thoroughly do you think the Casey Life Skills American Indian/Alaska Native assessment addresses Indigenous students' postsecondary transition needs?

- ○ Completely (1)
- ○ Somewhat (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Not really (4)
- ○ Not at all (5)

Q92 Please share the reason/explanation for your response.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q96 The Self-Determination Inventory: Student Report (SDI:SR) asks students questions about how they feel about their ability to be self-determined; that is to make choices, set and go after goals, and make decisions (University of Kansas, 2017).

Please read the questions from the SDI:SR and tell us how relevant they are to Indigenous students with disabilities' postsecondary transition needs.

Q58 This student has what it takes to reach their goals.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q59 This student thinks of more than one way to solve a problem.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q60 This student considers many possibilities when they make plans for their future.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q61 This student knows what they do best.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q62 This student plans weekend activities they like to do.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q63 This student keeps trying even after they get something wrong.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q64 This student sets their own goals.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q65 This student thinks trying hard helps them get what they want.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q66 This student chooses activities they want to do.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q67 This student works hard to reach their goals.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q68 This student figures out ways to get around obstacles.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

This student figures out ways to get around obstacles.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q70 This student is confident in their abilities.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q71 This student's past experiences help them plan what they will do next.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q72 This student thinks about each of their goals.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q73 This student makes choices that are important to them.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q74 This student looks for new experiences they think they will like.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q75 This student is able to focus to reach their goals.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q76 This student chooses what their room looks like.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q77 This student takes action when new opportunities come their way.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q78 This student knows their strengths.

- Very relevant (1)
- Somewhat relevant (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- Very irrelevant (5)

Q79 This student comes up with ways to reach their goals.

- ○ Very relevant (1)
- ○ Somewhat relevant (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Somewhat irrelevant (4)
- ○ Very irrelevant (5)

Q94 How thoroughly do you think the Self-Determination Inventory assessment addresses Indigenous students' postsecondary transition needs?

- ○ Completely (1)
- ○ Somewhat (2)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Not really (4)
- ○ Not at all (5)

Q93 Please share the reason/explanation for your response.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q79 In your own words, share what a positive postsecondary outcome in the area of employment means for Indigenous students.

_____
_____
_____
_____

_____

Q80 In your own words, share what a positive postsecondary outcome in the area of education means for Indigenous students.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q81 In your own words, share what a positive postsecondary outcome in the area of independent living means for Indigenous students.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q82 In your own words, share what a positive postsecondary outcome in the area of community participation means for Indigenous students.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q84 If a transition assessment were created for Indigenous students, which of the following areas would be important to include? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Education (1)
- ☐ Employment (2)
- ☐ Independent Living (3)
- ☐ Community Participation (4)
- ☐ Self-Determination (5)
- ☐ Student Involvement in the IEP (6)
- ☐ Financial literacy (7)
- ☐ Indigenous language learning (8)
- ☐ Other (9) _____

Q95 In your opinion, what skills, needs, or knowledge specific to Indigenous students (if any) are missing from current transition assessments?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q83 Please share any additional thoughts about transition outcomes for Indigenous students.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX E: SURVEY ROUND 2

Indigenous Postsecondary Transition Final
Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma?

I am Courtney Tennell from the Educational Psychology Department and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled Indigenous Students' Postsecondary Transition Needs: A Delphi Study This research is being conducted at the University of Oklahoma. You were selected as a possible participant because of your expertise in Indigenous students' postsecondary transition needs. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? The purpose of this research is to identify the needs, skills, and knowledge specific to Indigenous students for successful postsecondary transition in the areas of education, employment, independent living and community participation.

How many participants will be in this research? About 5 people will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will complete a survey via Qualtrics to determine the relevance of existing postsecondary transition assessments to Indigenous students' needs, skills, and knowledge. Experts will then be asked to complete a second survey to weigh in on currently available transition assessment in terms of their cultural appropriateness for indigenous students.

How long will this take? Your participation will take about 2 hours total. What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate? There are no risks from being in this research. We hope that this project will benefit those involved who are working in Indigenous postsecondary transition, including you and your community and how to improve it.

Will I be compensated for participating? You will be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research. After completing the second survey, you will be mailed a $100 gift card.

Who will see my information? In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you. However, we may use direct quotes from your survey responses. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records. Data are collected via an online survey system that has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. Please note no assurance can be made as to the use of the data you provide for purposes other than this research.
What will happen to my data in the future? We will not share your data or use it in future research projects.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

Who do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints? If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at 580-235-1277 or courtneytennell@ou.edu, or Kendra Williams-Diehm at klwd@ou.edu or 405-325-8951. You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) or if you cannot reach the researcher(s). Please print this document for your records.

By providing information to the researcher(s), I am agreeing to participate in this research.

- ○ I agree to participate (1)
- ○ I do not wish to participate (2)

Skip To: Q29 If Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma? I am Courtney Tennell fr... = I agree to participate
Skip To: End of Survey If Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma? I am Courtney Tennell fr... = I do not wish to participate

Q29 Name

_____

Q30 Email

_____

Q1 Thank you for your participation in this project. Based on the results from the initial questionnaire, the panel identified areas that were both present and missing from postsecondary transition assessments that are relevant to Indigenous students with disabilities postsecondary transitions.

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with these areas in the questions below.

Q2 Based on the results from the initial questionnaire, the panel identified the following areas as PRESENT in postsecondary transition assessments and relevant to Indigenous students with

disabilities postsecondary transitions. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with these areas in the questions below.

	Agree-Relevant (1)	Disagree- Not Relevant (2)
Education (1)	○	○
Employment (2)	○	○
Independent Living (3)	○	○
Community Participation (4)	○	○

Q30 Based on the results from the initial questionnaire, the panel identified the following areas as MISSING in postsecondary transition assessments and relevant to Indigenous students with

disabilities postsecondary transitions. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with these areas in the questions below.

	Agree-Relevant (1)	Disagree- Not Relevant (2)
Culture- This could include language, participation in cultural gatherings or ceremony, and/or cultural differences, as well as other aspects of culture. (1)	○	○
First Generation Students- This area could include filling out college paperwork, such as FAFSA, navigating institutional structures, and being away from home, as well as other challenges related to being a First Gen student. (2)	○	○
Family Involvement- This area could include the importance of family input into goals, family support for plans, as well as other ways to involve and support families in the transition planning process (3)	○	○
Guidance and/or Mentorship- This area could include building relationships, having a person who positively influences the student or can guide them through making important decisions and preparing for their future. (4)	○	○
Financial Literacy- This area could include learning to make a budget, understanding credit, paying for college or training, as well as related aspects of finances. (5)	○	○

Q7 Would you like to add any comments about these areas?

_____

Q16 While there are many different ways to define a "positive" postsecondary outcome, the following themes were identified from results to the questions about positive postsecondary outcomes in the areas of education, employment, independent living and community participation. Please indicate if you agree or disagree that these areas are relevant to Indigenous students with disabilities' postsecondary transition goals.

Q17 Education

	Agree- Relevant (1)	Disagree- Not Relevant (2)
Accessing Resources e.g Tribal education support, institutional financial and academic support, campus disability resource centers (1)	○	○
Culture- Choosing a college or university with an active Native community, cultural supports, Majors focused on Indigenous studies, distance from community (2)	○	○
Family Involvement/Support (3)	○	○

Q19 If you feel something is missing that does not fit into one of these areas, please share it below.

_____

Q18 Employment

	Agree- Should be considered (1)	Disagree- Should not be considered (2)
Accessing Resources e.g Tribal employment services (1)	○	○
Family Involvement/Support (2)	○	○
Source of income for themselves/family (3)	○	○

Q20 If you feel something is missing that does not fit into one of these areas, please share it below.

_____

Q22 Independent Living

	Agree- Relevant (1)	Disagree- Not relevant (2)
Supporting one's self/fulfilling own needs (1)	○	○
Responsibility to family or community (2)	○	○
Accessing resources- e.g. housing, transportation, food (3)	○	○

Q25 If you feel something is missing that does not fit into one of these areas, please share it below.

_____

Q24 Community Participation

	Agree- Relevant (1)	Disagree- Not relevant (2)
Sense of Identity/Acceptance (1)	○	○
Culture- Participating in ceremony, community functions, language learning options, etc. (2)	○	○
Helping when needed, or a sense of giving back or supporting the community (3)	○	○

Q23 If you feel something is missing that does not fit into one of these areas, please share it below.

_____

Q31 One concern identified by the panel was that culture is addressed in the Casey Life Skills AI/AN assessment in a way that is not inclusive to all Native students, or makes broad generalizations about Native students .

It is important to note that the majority of educators [90%, (Suk, et al., 2020)] are white and may not be familiar enough with Indigenous culture to understand what participating in culture actually means in Native communities.

How would you like to see culture addressed in postsecondary transition assessments for Native students? What aspects of culture do you feel should be included?

_____

Q26 Wado again for taking part in this study! Your expertise is vital in promoting positive outcomes for Indigenous students with disabilities. To thank you for your involvement, I will be sending you a $100 gift card.

Please indicate below how you would like to receive your gift card.

Q27 Please choose one.

- ○ Mail my $100 Visa gift card to the address below. (1)

_____

- ○ Email my $100 Amazon gift card to the email address below. (2)

_____

APPENDIX F: TRIBAL NATIONS IN OKLAHOMA

Federally Recognized Tribes	Capital or Tribal Headquarters
Absentee Shawnee Tribe	Shawnee, OK
Alabama Quasartee Tribal Town	Wetumka, OK
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma	Anadarko, OK
Caddo Nation	Binger, OK
Cherokee Nation	Tahlequah, OK
Cheyenne Arapaho Tribes	Concho, OK
Chickasaw Nation	Ada, OK
Choctaw Nation	Durant, OK
Citizen Potawatomi Nation	Shawnee, OK
Comanche Nation	Lawton, OK
Delaware Nation	Anadarko, OK
Delaware Tribe of Indians	Bartlesville, OK
Eastern Shawnee Tribe	Wyandotte, OK
Fort Sill Apache Tribe	Apache, OK
Iowa Tribe	Perkins, OK
Kaw Nation	Kaw City, OK
Kialagee Tribal Town	Wetumka, OK
Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma	McCloud, OK
Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma	Carnegie, OK
Miami Tribe of Oklahoma	Miami, OK
Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma	Miami, OK
Muscogee (Creek) Nation	Okmulgee, OK
Osage Nation	Pawhuska, OK
Otoe-Missouria Tribe	Red Rock, OK
Ottowa Tribe of Oklahoma	Miami, OK
Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma	Pawnee, OK
Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma	Miami, OK
Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma	Ponca City, OK
Quapaw Nation	Quapaw, OK
Sac and Fox Nation	Stroud, OK
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma	Wewoka, OK
Seneca-Cayuga Nation	Grove, OK
Shawnee Tribe	Miami, OK
Thlopthlocco Tribe Town	Okemah, OK
Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma	Tonkawa, OK
United Keetowah Band of Cherokee Indians	Tahlequah, OK
Wichita and Affliated Tribes	Anadarko, OK

Wyandotte Nation	Wyandotte, OK
State Recognized Tribe	
Euchi (Yuchi) Tribe	Sapulpa, OK

APPENDIX G: IRB APPROVAL 2

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: December 17, 2023 **IRB#:** 16765

Principal Investigator: Courtney A Tennell

Approval Date: 12/15/2023

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: Perspectives on Postsecondary Transition: Families of Indigneous Students with Disabilities

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Aimee Franklin, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Oral Consent

Background

- Please describe your student. You may use as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable with.
- What are your hopes and dreams for your student?
- What would you consider to be a Good Life for your student?

Transition Planning Experience

- Can you describe the transition planning portion of the IEP meeting(s) you attended?
- Were the assessment results and goals explained to you?
- Did you feel like the transition goals created were a good fit for your student?
- Did you receive any information on postsecondary resources available to Native students?
- Did you know about any resources prior to this that were available to Native students with disabilities?
- Did you feel like the transition plan created for your student took their culture into consideration?

Reflection on Experience

- What did you like about the transition planning process?
- What did you think could have been done better?
- What information about other types of resources would be/have been helpful to you and your student?
- How can sped teachers take Native students' culture into consideration when creating transition plans?