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“Being Yourself”: Self-Determination at a Summer Sports Camp for Youth with Visual
Impairments

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the
College of Department of Education and Social Work
West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Education

By

Maria Lepore-Stevens

May 2020

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my camp family. So much of who I am fundamentally as a person has come from summer camp. I've grown as a leader, a teacher, a friend, and a person. I've learned to depend on the people around me when I'm in over my head, to say a problem aloud because in that moment you realize how small things that seem huge really are, to care deeply about the people I surround myself with, and to bring silliness to every day because nothing is so serious it cannot be done in tie dye. My camp family inspired me, supported me, and encouraged me throughout my whole dissertation process. I am so grateful for my camp family, my friends who have become my forever people.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people who have supported me throughout my doctoral journey. My advisor, Dr. Heather Schugar, encouraged and assisted me throughout the entire doctoral process from my ideas in my first year of the program to doing research over the summer and working through winter break on statistics. I am incredibly grateful for her support of my academic and professional career. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Christy Hicks for taking a risk on me when we only just met as I began the dissertation process; Dr. Beth Foster, who has been an enormous part of my camp experience throughout my life; and my peers Lisa DiMaio and Lisa Montgomery who committed to being on my committee while completing their own dissertations. The West Chester University EdD Cohort 2 was instrumental to my success in this program due to their moral support through late nights and tough days.

To my parents, Dr. Monica Lepore and Dr. Shawn Stevens, thank you for being role models in life and in academia, as well as willingly and enthusiastically reading my entire dissertation. To my husband, Eric Van Ess, thank for being my motivator and cheerleader through the whole doctorate process, from encouraging me to apply to listening me talk through my research hundreds of times.

Last but certainly not least, a *shout out* to my camp family because without them, there would be no research. At camp, I discovered my passion for teaching, enthusiasm for sport, and a love of a place that truly allows me to be myself.

Abstract

This mixed methods study examined self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. Athletes responded to questionnaires regarding their perceptions of their own self-determination across home, school, and camp settings; goals they set; and their experiences throughout the week of camp. Coaches answered similar questions concerning opportunities for athletes to practice and learn self-determination skills at camp. Five athletes also participated in interviews about their understanding of self-determination in the camp setting. A repeated measures ANOVA on the composite scores of AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) across home, school, and camp settings revealed athletes were statistically significantly more confident in their self-determination skills at camp ($M = 26.6$, $SD = 3.33$) compared to at home ($M = 19.1$, $SD = 5.76$) and at school ($M = 19.2$, $SD = 5.21$), $p < .001$. Through qualitative survey responses, questionnaires, and interviews, athletes reported that the camp setting created an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination skills through fostering positive relationships between coaches and athletes at camp, providing emotional support, and promoting inclusion with respect to visual impairment. This research will contribute to the literature surrounding teaching self-determination skills to young people with visual impairments and has implications for classroom learning. In particular, low staff-to-student ratios, access to adapted sport, options to follow one's own interests throughout the day, and goal-setting are all aspects of the camp environment that educators can adopt to promote self-determination in school.

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Chapter I: Introduction

For students who are blind and visually impaired, self-determination is not just an idealistic view of the possibilities of education, but a mandated part of a quality education. Self-determination relates to an individual's ability to control the path of his or her own life, without "undue influence" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p. 341). Despite the importance of self-determination, many educators reported not providing their students with visual impairments with time to practice self-determination skills as a result of limited time in the school day (Palmer, 2005; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Furthermore, some researchers posit that extended school year and summer programming are better places to teach self-determination than during the school day (Blackshear, 2014; Lohmeier et al., 2009; McDonough et al., 2006; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010); however, there is a dearth of research to support use of nontraditional programming to teach self-determining behaviors.

In this chapter, I will discuss my study of self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. The goal of this research was to determine what self-determination looks like at a summer sports program and what experiences at camp gave children opportunities to practice their self-determination skills. This mixed methods research employed case study and survey designs involving interviews, questionnaires, and surveys to gather information about the camp environment and the views of the individuals involved in the camp program.

Rationale and Significance

Students who are blind or visually impaired are entitled to education in the expanded core curriculum (ECC), an additional curriculum designed to teach both functional and academic skills (Hatlen, 2000). The ECC consists of nine areas of study beyond what the typical sighted

student receives in school: compensatory skills, orientation and mobility, social skills, independent living, recreation and leisure, career education, assistive technology, sensory efficiency skills, and self-determination. The theory behind the ECC is that students with visual impairments need additional instruction in particular functional skills to understand themselves and the world on the same level as their sighted peers. This study focused on the self-determination component of the expanded core.

Despite the addition of self-determination to the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments in 2003, current educational programs still lack opportunities for students to practice self-determining behaviors. Researchers suggest that physical education and physical activity are possible mediums through which to teach self-determining skills and behaviors (Brian et al., 2018; Lieberman et al., 2014; Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Opie, 2018; Robinson & Lieberman, 2004). A second trend in self-determination research is that self-determination should be taught outside the typical school day (Blackshear, 2014; Lohmeier et al., 2009; McDonough et al., 2006; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Additionally, McDonough and colleagues (2006) specifically advocated utilizing summer, after school, and vocational programming to educate students in components of the expanded core curriculum. Contemporary researchers examining self-determination have suggested utilizing physical activity and summer programming to teach self-determining behaviors (Blackshear, 2014; Brian et al., 2018; Lieberman et al., 2014; Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Lohmeier et al., 2009; McDonough et al., 2006; Opie, 2018, Robinson & Lieberman, 2004; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010).

The present study examined self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. I identified which activities at camp both children with visual impairments (*athletes*) and their adult coaches perceived best gave opportunities to practice self-determining

behaviors. In addition, I investigated how athletes perceived their experiences of self-determination at camp. The findings from this study could increase practitioner knowledge of how to deliver education in self-determination to children with visual impairments.

Problem Statement

Although self-determination is a required part of the ECC for students who are blind, “teachers, particularly those in regular schools, were generally ignorant about, did not see the value of, or had difficulty with the concept of the ECC” (Palmer, 2005, p. 915). Teachers’ lack of knowledge about self-determination is a fundamental problem with the education of young people with visual impairments. Robinson and Lieberman (2004) found that educators often do not give students with visual impairments opportunities to practice self-determination at school, alluding to the problem of educators overprotecting their students with low vision and not seeing a need for these students to make choices that lead them towards self-fulfillment. Students with visual impairments need additional opportunities to practice self-determination skills in an emotionally-safe environment (Hatlen, 2003). If teachers are not affording students opportunities to practice self-determining behaviors, traditional schooling systems are falling short of nurturing students into becoming self-determined individuals.

Research Questions

The predominant research question for this study was: What does self-determination look like at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments? This study had four sub-questions:

1. What is the experience of practicing self-determination at camp?
2. What qualities of camp contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination skills?

3. How do students practice self-determination skills at camp?
4. What experiences at camp contribute to developing self-determination skills?

Qualitative and quantitative data provided insight into athlete perceptions of self-determination at this mid-Atlantic summer camp and how they compare to perceptions of self-determination in other settings.

Rationale for Mixed Methods Research

An objective of mixed methods research is to triangulate data collected through both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The qualitative and quantitative portions of this study balanced the answer to the question “what is happening at camp” with the answer to “how and why is this happening” While the quantitative surveys provided some insight into how athletes react to scenarios that require self-determining behaviors, the interviews with athletes provided a richer narrative regarding why athletes respond in a particular way and what they report feeling about the experience of self-determination at camp. The experiences of the athletes involved in this research are necessary in order to understand the complete picture of what is happening at camp.

Survey Design

Researchers in the fields of visual impairment (Agran et al., 2007; Levin & Rotheram-Fuller, 2011; Lohmeier, 2006; Monson, 2009) often use survey design as their primary method of data collection or as part of mixed methods studies on self-determination. Agran and colleagues (2007) surveyed teachers of the visually impaired about their perspectives on self-determination in school. Lohmeier (2006) employed qualitative surveys to examine how teachers provide instruction in self-determination skills. Monson (2009) examined the relationship between ECC instruction postschool quality of life outcomes using survey data from the National

Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS-2). Levin and Rotheram-Fuller (2011) specifically used the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994), which I also administered during the current study.

As with visual impairment research, summer camp researchers (Garst & Gagnon, 2006; Garst et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2005) frequently utilize survey design when investigating positive youth development. Henderson and colleagues (2005) surveyed current summer camp participants while investigating youth development outcomes. Garst & Gagnon (2006) administered surveys to camp directors and parents in order to explore the relationship between camp practices and PYD. Ten years later, Garst and colleagues (2016) also explored the relationship between camp practices and PYD, this time surveying camp alumni.

For the quantitative portion of this research, I used the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994). This is a valid, reliable assessment that includes suggestions for modifications for use with children with disabilities (Wolman et al., 1994). Surveys were one ways I “triangulated” data, an important part of a mixed methods study (Creswell, 2012; Lichtman, 2013).

Case Study Design

Much of the literature surrounding summer camp programs is either qualitative or mixed methods with case studies, action research, phenomenology, and ethnographies as the most common qualitative research designs (Aggerholm & Moltke Martiny, 2017; Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011; Godwin & Staples, 2005; Halsall et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2005; Kendellen et al., 2016; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018; Weybright et al., 2017). In this study, instrumental case study design reinforces survey data with a rich narrative.

Case studies work well for summer camp research as a result of the nature of the camp experience. Researchers use case study design to study bounded systems (Creswell, 2012). Summer camp is a bounded system in that it is an educational and cultural experience that is physically cut off from the rest of the world, and therefore case study design qualitative research is appropriate. Much of the case study research on positive youth development at camp programs examines the bounded system of one camp program or one summer across several programs (Halsall et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2005; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018; Weybright et al., 2017). Case study design was appropriate for this research because summer camp programs fit the definition of a bounded system. Summer camps are cultural experiences that are often physically cut off from the rest of the world. At the camp site for this research, athletes do go home at night; however they are only home for about 13 hours (including sleep) before returning to camp, which creates an environment different from school in duration, intensity, and location.

Case Study Design in Camp Research. Camp research that utilizes case study design tends to focus on the concept of *positive youth development* (Halsall et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2005; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018; Weybright et al., 2017). A primary tenant of positive youth development (PYD) is the “enhancement of life skills” in young people (Garst et al., 2016, p. 183). In their research on perceived characteristics of effective camp counselors, Halsall et al. (2016) utilized semi-structured counselor interviews. Similarly, Povilaitis and Tamminen (2018) used interviews, focus groups, and researcher observations in their case study research on how a summer sports camp delivered positive youth development experiences. Henderson and colleagues (2005) examined positive youth development outcomes using a mixed methods study including survey data and researcher observations, with the goal of ascertaining if qualitative case study data researchers collected would accurately align with quantitative survey data.

Weybright and colleagues (2017) utilized interviews and researcher observations while investigating the impact of youth-adult relationships on PYD at summer camp. Qualitative research methods employed in summer camp research place a priority on PYD, and often use case study design to research the phenomenon.

Case Study Design in Visual Impairment Research. Researchers in the field of the expanded core curriculum (ECC) for students with visual impairments also often used case study designs. For example, Blackshear (2014) investigated the impact of one program on the education of young men with visual impairments at a school for the blind, with the conclusion that summer programs might be the best place to teach the ECC. Levin and Rotheram-Fuller (2011) utilized several pieces of qualitative data to investigate the use of a particular curriculum model to teach the ECC to students with visual impairments at an approved private school. Truan and Trent (1997) implemented multiple case study design to examine the impact of learning other ECC skills on self-determination of students with visual impairments. As Blackshear (2014), Levin and Rotheram-Fuller (2011), and Truan and Trent (1997) demonstrated, case study research is useful in examining to what extent students learn ECC skills in a variety of instructional settings.

Case Study Design at Summer Camp for Youth with Visual Impairments. In this research, I aimed to examine what qualities of a summer sports camp for athletes with visual impairments contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determining behaviors. There is some related qualitative research in the field, such as Povilaitis and Tamminen's (2018) study on positive youth development at summer sports camp and Aggerholm and Moltke Martiny's (2017) investigation into the lived experiences of self-determination for students with physical disabilities at sports camp. The current study specifically examined

experiences of self-determination at one mid-Atlantic sports camp program for students with visual impairments.

I employed a case study design when collecting qualitative data at camp. Qualitative points of triangulation in the current mixed methods study included semi-structured interviews with five athletes, post-camp coach questionnaires, and post-camp athlete questionnaire. Semi-structured, or guided, interviews allow researchers to follow the same format with all participants, but grants the flexibility to ask follow-up questions and continue conversations (Litchman, 2013). Bean, Kendellen, and Forneris (2016) reported using semi-structured interviews for their research on positive youth development sports programming because they allow for “flexibility, facilitation of rapport, and the ability to have in-depth discussions producing rich data” (p. 278). To provide context for survey responses, this research included interviews with five athletes without secondary disabilities that impact speech or attention.

In addition to interviews, I developed qualitative questionnaires for both coaches and athletes to gain more perspectives on the experience of self-determination at camp. All athletes who had parental consent and assented to their participation completed the athlete questionnaires, and all coaches who consented completed coach questionnaires.

Limitations

This research had several limitations, including population size, participant selection, age of participants, and setting. As the population of camp was small (19 athletes and 30 coaches), the sample size was even smaller: 15 total athletes and 24 total coaches participated. In this study, I addressed the issue of small sample size by using mixed methods. The qualitative components to the research provided more information to supplement quantitative survey data.

Camp participation is at the discretion of parents. While I attempt to ensure camp is available to all young people with visual impairments by providing free transportation, serving one meal and two snacks per day, and not charging families to send their children to camp, parents may choose not to send children to camp for a variety of reasons. Children who are eligible to attend camp may not do so as a result of family vacations, participation in extended school year programs in a local school district, minimal interest in physical activity, or lack of knowledge that camp exists. In addition to choice to come to camp, athlete age may have impacted the results of this study.

At camp, athlete ages ranged from 7 to 16. The youngest athletes in the research were more likely to request a scribe and ask for clarification than the older participants. The relationship between athletes and their coaches who scribed for them, as well as how coaches chose to rephrase questions, could have influenced athlete responses.

Camp is a one-week program that occurs in an outdoor environment during the summer. Athlete participants completed one to two sections of the AIR survey daily, with some athletes also taking part in an interview. Exhaustion, desire to return to other activities, boredom with paperwork at sports camp, and weather may have influenced athlete responses. Coaches also completed post-camp questionnaires outdoors, immediately prior to leaving camp. The timing of survey and questionnaire administration and weather may have resulted in lower participation rates because coaches wanted to leave or cool down. As a result of the weather and timing of surveys and questionnaires, the setting of camp was a limitation in collecting accurate data from coaches and athletes.

Definition of Terms

In the following section, I define relevant terms in the field of visual impairment that will be used in this study.

Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

Nine academic and functional content areas that students who are blind and visually impaired should learn, including compensatory skills, orientation and mobility, self-determination, assistive technology, career education, recreation and leisure, sensory efficiency, independent living, and social interaction (Hatlen, 1996, 2003).

Orientation and Mobility (O&M)

An ECC content area consisting of movement and travel skills, taught by an orientation and mobility specialist.

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

A learning theory that links youth contribution to their communities with the development of five main psychological, behavioral, and social characteristics: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/ compassion (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008).

Self-Determination

The ability to live life the way one desires without external influence (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). An understanding of oneself including: awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses, ability to advocate for oneself, and knowledge of how to set goals (Hatlen, 2003).

Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)

An educator certified to teach academic and functional content to learners with visual impairments.

Visual Impairment

Refers to any level of vision loss, even with correction, that adversely impacts an individual's educational performance. Visual impairment includes total blindness and partial vision (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Also referred to as *low vision*.

Preferred Language

For this research, I focused on a community of young people who receive vision services in their state. In writing about disability, both *identity-first* and *person-first* language may be appropriate. Identity-first language places the disability identifier first in the syntax of the sentence (visually impaired athlete), while person-first language places the descriptor of the person before the descriptor of the disability (athlete with a visual impairment). "Honoring the preference of the group is not only a sign of professional awareness and respect for any disability group but also a way to offer solidarity" (American Psychological Association, n.d., para. 2). In order to ascertain the preferences of athletes at camp, one question on athlete interviews and post-camp questionnaires was: "Do you prefer to be called a blind/ visually impaired athlete OR an athlete with a visual impairment/ blindness? Can you explain why?" Out of the 15 athlete participants in this study, 7 responded "athlete with a visual impairment," 3 responded "visually impaired athlete," 4 had no preference, and 1 did not prefer either term. In their responses, four athletes indicated they made their selection because they did not identify with the word *blind*, but did not appear to understand the underlying question. Throughout this document, I will use both

identity-first and person-first language when discussing visual impairment in order to respect the diversity of preferences in the community I investigated.

Summary

The expanded core curriculum is an essential part of education for students with visual impairments, but students often experience barriers to learning necessary skills during the school day (McDonough et al., 2006). In particular, educators overlook the self-determination component of the ECC in favor of more academic areas (Agran et al., 2007; Palmer, 2005; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Researchers in the field of the expanded core curriculum posit that educators could use physical activity and summer programming to teach self-determining behaviors (Blackshear, 2014; Brian et al., 2018; Lieberman et al., 2014; Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Lohmeier et al., 2009; McDonough et al., 2006; Opie, 2018, Robinson & Lieberman, 2004; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). In following with this body of research, the current study examined the experience of self-determination at one summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments.

In the following chapter, I will review the literature surrounding self-determination as an expanded core curriculum component in addition to as a goal of summer camp programming. I will also outline positive youth development and situated learning as theoretical frameworks for my research on self-determination and summer camp.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

It is common “best practice” in the visual impairment field that young people with visual impairments receive education in an additional curriculum called the expanded core curriculum or ECC (Hatlen, 2003). Self-determination is a prime component of the ECC, and the field of visual impairment education dedicates a significant research to ascertaining to what extent self-determination is taught to students with visual impairments (Agran et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Lohmeier, Blankenship, & Hatlen, 2009; Monson, 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010; Levin and Rotheram-Fuller, 2011; Opie, 2018). While camp programming for children with visual impairments is a small field of study, a body of research exists to show that sports camps for kids with visual impairments teach important curricular skills (Haegele et al., 2014a; Haegele et al., 2014b), that athletes retain these skills long after camp (Ponchillia et al., 2005), and that these programs are important for building community (Goodwin et al., 2011). There is not much overlap between research on self-determination for students with visual impairments and camp for youth with visual impairments.

General camp research often focuses on increased in positive youth development through camp (Henderson et al., 2005; Readdick & Schaller, 2005; Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008; Sibthorp et al., 2010; Halsall et al., 2016). Positive youth outcomes at camp include a wide range of behaviors and skills, from self-esteem and self-concept to leadership, confidence, and problem solving. While many positive youth development behaviors and skills relate to self-determination, general camp researchers rarely focus on self-determination in particular.

Additionally, neither the visual impairment field nor general camp research includes research on opportunities for self-determination at camps for young people with visual impairments. In literature regarding summer camp, self-determination behaviors appear to be

common youth development outcomes. However, further research on the topic is necessary to demonstrate whether camps are appropriate settings to deliver self-determination education to young people with visual impairments.

Self-Determination and Summer Camps

Self-determination has appeared throughout pedagogical history as both a purpose and a foundation of education. As far back as the 1800s, author Edwin Paxton Hood (1851) stated, "...all the education there has ever been in the world, has been a result of self-determination, self-training, and self-reliance" (p. 13). Educational theorist Friedrich Fröbel (1885) posited that "in good education, in genuine instruction, in true teaching, therefore, necessity must call forth freedom; and law; self-determination; the pressure from without, the free will within; the hate from without, the love within" (p. 8). Fröbel alluded to the meaning of self-determination: the free will within, a sense of freedom from the pressure of the outside world that good education can foster. Some educators take a different stance, defining self-determination as specifically assessable skills to be taught in schools. In literature regarding self-determination and teaching students with visual impairments, researchers defined the term in two main ways: as concrete skills and as a philosophical concept.

Self-Determination in Curriculum for Students with Visual Impairments

Self-determination as a collection of concrete skills often relates to assessable curricular items, such as decision-making, problem solving, goal setting, self-advocacy, self-control, and the ability to accept or decline help (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Opie, 2018). In addition, researchers include concepts like understanding strategies that allow students to regulate and direct behavior in their definitions (Agran et al., 2007). While many of these

skills can be generalized to all students, some, like explaining their nature of one's visual impairment, are specific to students with low vision (Opie, 2018).

Agran and colleagues (2007) defined self-determination specifically in terms of students: student-directed learning, student self-regulation of classroom behavior, and student involvement in planning individualized education plan. While it seems congruous to define self-determination in this way for educational purposes, this definition fails to take into account the potential purpose of self-determination skills. If the purpose of self-determination is only to create better students, then a self-determination curriculum would consist of school-based interventions that direct student behaviors toward assimilation in the classroom. Other research in the field (Monson, 2009; Levin and Rotheram-Fuller, 2011) focused on self-determination for the development of the whole person, which creates an entirely different view of a self-determination curriculum.

A secondary trend in the literature is to consider self-determination as an abstract, aesthetic concept, using terms like sense of self, self-realization, autonomy, physiological empowerment, and belief in oneself (Lohmeier et al., 2009; Monson, 2009; Opie, 2018). Rather than specific skills, the term *self-determination* can describe feelings, behaviors, and knowledge of self. Self-determination in this mode can be described as “a person's right to decide freely and without undue influence how he or she wishes to live his or her life” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p. 341). Related concepts in this view of self-determination are the understanding of one's abilities and limitations and feeling of control of life experiences (Opie, 2018). While more difficult to assess in the traditional educational sense, these interpretations of self-determination guide students toward being more self-actualized, complete people.

Lee, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, and Little (2008) used the term *self-determination behaviors* rather than *self-determination skills*, which differs from other research on the topic. *Behaviors* seems to better encompass the at times nebulous and intangible nature of self-determination, whereas *skills* makes self-determination seem more concrete. The term *behaviors* versus *skills* seems more accurate to the true definition of self-determination. Defining self-determination as *skills* paints a picture of a list of curricular items a student can progress through, step-by-step until they have achieved them all, which does not mesh with the abstract and aesthetic definition of self-determination as empowerment and autonomy. Self-determination as *behaviors* generates an understanding of self-determination in which educators encourage or discourage particular expressions of self to help students create a lifestyle of living how one wants and taking responsibility for one's own life.

History of Educating Students with Visual impairments toward Self-Determination

Self-determination as an important concept in the education of students with visual impairments is not new. Rather, it has its roots in 19th century education for students at what was to become the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts. Samuel Gridley Howe, the founder of the school, believed that in addition to the typical public school curriculum, students with visual impairments must also learn according to their individual interests and abilities (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Howe (1833) asserted that students who are blind should be empowered as equals to their sighted peers:

...He ought to be made to attend to all his own personal wants and comforts, he ought to be left to puzzle and grope out as many things as possible, and to be left rather in perplexity for an hour, than receive assistance in the accomplishment of any thing which it is morally possible for him to do. (p. 18)

While self-determination as a formal curricular area for students with visual impairments did not become official until 2003, the roots of educating students with visual impairments in areas other than strictly academics and compensatory skills precedes the establishment of the ECC by well over a century.

The Development of the ECC

Formal educational programs for students with visual impairments in the United States date back to Gridley Howe's New England Asylum for the Blind (later Perkins) in the late 1820s (Hatlen, 2000). However, Gridley Howe's school, and the several other schools for the blind that developed throughout the U.S. in the subsequent years, had no standardized curriculum for students with visual impairments. Throughout the late 1900s, U.S. laws and educational *best practice* books shaped education for students with visual impairments (Hatlen, 2000). By the mid-1990s, a national committee of parents and educators (the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities) formed with the primary purpose of developing goals for the education of students with visual impairments.

Roots of the ECC. One of the goals of the National Agenda focused on a new concept of the *expanded core curriculum*. In 1996, Dr. Phil Hatlen, chair of the National Agenda and a prominent educator in the field of visual impairment in the latter part of the 20th century, published his groundbreaking work on the proposed expanded core for students with low vision entitled "The Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Students, Including Those with Additional Disabilities." This document set the stage for the future of education for students with visual impairments. In the document, he outlined what students with visual impairments are entitled to beyond the typical lessons taught in school, as well as some potential barriers to

teaching this expanded core. Hatlen (1996) acknowledged the difficulty teachers had in accepting “the concept that visually impaired students have educational needs that are in addition to the curriculum required for sighted students” as a primary reason why students with low vision were not getting the services they needed in school (para. 8). Additionally, he identified lack of time and caseload size as significant reasons why educators were not teaching elements of what he defined as the expanded core curriculum.

Hatlen (1996) outlined eight areas in which students with visual impairments should be specifically educated: (a) compensatory academic/ functional skills, (b) orientation and mobility, (c) social interaction, (d) independent living skills, (e) recreation and leisure, (f) career education, (g) assistive technology, and (h) sensory efficiency. While he referenced concepts related to self-advocacy and asserting one’s opinions and needs, he did not specifically use the phrase *self-determination*. Hatlen acknowledged that implementing the expanded core would be difficult and require educators to create additional learning experiences for students with visual impairments. “At this time, no single, simple method assures visually impaired students of accessing both traditional and expanded core curricula within the same length of time as their sighted peers” (Hatlen, 1996, “The Delivery”, para. 1). Furthermore, Hatlen asserted that it was imperative for educators to set aside time to specifically teach the skills of the expanded core, and not simply assume students would come to understand these skills at the same rate as their sighted peers.

Realities of Teaching the ECC. After Hatlen and the National Agenda established the ECC, teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) began to educate students in these eight areas as part of their school day. However, in their 2002 study on what TVIs and orientation and mobility (O&M) instructors spend their academic time doing, Wolffe, Sacks, Corn, Erin, Huebner, and

Lewis reported that teachers still spent 41% of if their educational time involved solely in academically-oriented activities (reading, mathematics, spelling, social studies, science, and language arts) or tutoring. Although social skills and orientation and mobility were part of the expanded core, teachers only spent 9% of their time teaching social-emotional skills (such as knowledge of self, knowledge of visual impairment, development of interaction skills, and self-advocacy skills) and 8% of their time teaching orientation and mobility skills (such as development of body image) (Wolffe et al., 2002). These numbers are significantly lower than time spent teaching academic skills. Sapp and Hatlen (2010) found that education in areas related to what Hatlen (2003) later deemed to be *self-determining skills* tended to be casual and unstructured rather than formal, direct teaching. Furthermore, “there was no evidence that the teachers were following a curricular sequence for any of these areas of the expanded core curriculum” (Wolffe et al., 2002, p. 301). Both Sapp and Hatlen’s (2010) and Wolffe et al.’s (2002) evidence suggested that students with visual impairments were still not receiving direct instruction following a planned sequence in many non-academic skills. Rather, these skills were something educators expected students with casual impairments to learn through casual interaction. The notion that indirect teaching can be sufficient for students with visual impairments goes against the core beliefs behind the ECC; students with visual impairments require direct instruction in a variety of non-academic skills in order to fully access the general curriculum and become independent adults.

Legal Protection of the ECC. While the ECC quickly became *best practice* for students with visual impairments, special education law in the United States did not reflect the importance of addressing expanded core skills. In 2003, Senate bill S1248 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2003) discussed various aspects of the expanded core, including

compensatory, O&M, assistive technology, and sensory efficiency skills (McDonough et al., 2006). However, S1248 was revised and ultimately passed in a different form as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, the law omitted this specific language. In a 2006 *Issue Brief* from the *Journal of Blindness and Visual Impairment*, McDonough and colleagues asserted that the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments “warrants a more official place in the educational experience of students who are visually impaired” than it was being given (p. 598).

This official place did not come for another decade. A grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs led to the production of the *Guidelines for the Administration of Educational Programs for Students who are Deaf/ Hard of Hearing, Visually Impaired, or Deafblind* (Bruce et al., 2016). This document, based on a review of current research studies, legislation, and policy documents regarding the administration of programs for students with sensory disabilities (vision loss, hearing loss, or dual sensory loss), led to identifying essential programming areas for students with sensory loss. By including the ECC and the need for instruction outside the realm of typical curriculum in the guidelines for program administration, Bruce, Ferrell, and Luckner (2016) allude to the importance of these skills. While these guidelines do not specifically refer to any one aspect of the ECC, the U.S. Department of Education’s recognition that the expanded core is an essential part of curriculum for students with visual impairments is significant, as it solidifies the entire ECC as a legitimate part of special education curriculum.

Addition of Self-Determination to the ECC

In 2003, Dr. Hatlen delivered a speech on literacy in teaching students with visual impairments that revised his earlier views. Initially, Hatlen (1996) promoted the idea that all

students with visual impairments need instruction in all areas of the expanded core. In this presentation, Hatlen (2003) expressed a changed viewpoint: educators should assess all children with visual impairments in all areas of the expanded core, and provide direct instruction in areas they demonstrate need. The focus of his 2003 presentation in relation to the expanded core was that all aspects of the ECC could be related to literacy, from basic (naming items in one's environment and defining their purpose) to more complex (technological literacy and the ability to use assistive technology).

Beginnings of Self-Determination in the ECC. In addition to clarifying that students should be assessed and that each aspect of the expanded core has a relationship to literacy, Hatlen (2003) used this presentation as a platform to introduce a ninth aspect of the expanded core: self-determination. As a reasoning behind why self-determination should be part of the ECC, Hatlen reminded the audience that “the litmus test for inclusion in the ECC is if it is a skill or knowledge that is learned differently by sighted and by visually impaired students” (2003, “Self-Determination”, para. 1). A major obstacle to self-determination is learned helplessness, the environment educators and parents create by doing things for a child with a visual impairment rather than creating a space in which a student can succeed (and fail safely) as they learn to do for themselves. Hatlen's belief was that educators create an environment of learned helplessness, and by focusing on teaching students to be self-determined, educators and parents can help children with visual impairments to become adults responsible for their own lives.

Finally, Hatlen (2003) argued that more teachers of the visually impaired should be trained to educate students in all areas of the expanded core. However, since TVIs often have high caseloads, teaching and assessing all areas of the ECC might be impossible. Therefore, Hatlen proposed a blurring of the lines between public schooling and schools for the visually

impaired. Students should be able to travel back and forth between their local education agency and their closest school for the blind based on need, without the placement being permanent. This belief, although discussed in practice, is not often represented in literature about students with visual impairments.

Hatlen's (2003) reimagining of the ECC with self-determination as an integral component set the stage for educating students with visual impairments in educational domains other than strictly academic. Most other components fall into physical (orientation and mobility, recreation and leisure, activities of daily living, sensory efficiency) or cognitive (academic/compensatory, career education, assistive technology). Other than social interaction skills, self-determination remains one of the only forays into ensuring students with visual impairments have specific teaching that addresses the affective learning domain. Adding self-determination to the ECC solidified the importance of recognizing that students with visual impairments may have different affective domain needs resulting from their disability and experiences as a person with a disability than their sighted peers.

Attitudes towards Self-Determination and the New ECC. While Hatlen (2003) and other experts in the field (McDonough et al., 2006; Agran et al., 2007) believed strongly in this new model of the ECC, teachers in the field did not always see the value of teaching self-determination. While some educators did not understand how the ECC fit in to the existing curricular structures of the public school system, other simply did not have enough time in their days to teach skills other than academics.

Self-Determination and the ECC: Just a Supporting Curriculum? Palmer's (2005) research on the ECC presented a clear view of *curriculum* as the typical subjects taught in school to students without disabilities. Palmer found that educators viewed the ECC as "the vehicle for

providing essential skills and knowledge to enable [students with visual impairments] to gain access to the regular curriculum, compete on a more equal footing with their sighted peers and participate more fully in learning” (p. 915). When polled, teachers often did not understand, failed to see the value in, or had never heard of the ECC. In general, teachers of the visually impaired felt that general educators thought the ECC was in competition with the regular core curriculum. General educators viewed typical core subjects as what should be taught, and visual impairment professionals identified that “this misconception resulted in difficulty in collecting and collating information nationally on the achievement of students with vision impairment against the Regular School Curriculum goals” (Palmer, 2005, p. 916). The author of this article appeared to posit that the general education curriculum is the primary curriculum, and the ECC should be looked at as a means toward achieving that curriculum. This is contrary to what other ECC scholars espouse (Hatlen, 1996; 2003). Palmer insinuated that the ECC is not a separate set of skills on par with the skills taught in general education, but rather additional skills to be incorporated into the general learning of the student with a visual impairment.

Two years after Hatlen’s (2003) declaration of the ninth expanded core area, Lohmeier (2005) published an article about teaching the ECC in schools for the blind that listed only eight components of the ECC, leaving out self-determination altogether. Instead of listing self-determination as an individual ECC component, Lohmeier only touched on it as part of social interaction skills. Lohmeier defined social interaction skills as “self advocacy skills, social concepts, appropriate vs. nonappropriate physical gestures” (p.133). While self-advocacy skills are an instrumental part of self-determination, they are not the entirety of the self-determination definition. Lohmeier divided aspects of self-determination throughout the eight other components, such as “exploring areas of strengths” under career education, and “selection of

appropriate assistive technology” under assistive technology (p. 133). This lack of focus on self-determination skills is significant, especially when coupled with other bodies of work that fail to reference self-determination as its own category of the ECC. Even at specialized schools for the blind, self-determination was still not seen as a valuable part of the curriculum for students with visual impairment in 2005, two years after Hatlen’s addition of self-determination to the components of the ECC.

Similarly to Palmer (2005), Lee, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, and Little’s (2008) research on self-determination and the expanded core insinuated that the ECC is important for access to the general curriculum rather than its own separate curriculum. They proposed that the ECC, specifically the self-determination component, can promote access to the general curriculum. State content standards often include self-determination skills such as goal setting, problem solving, and decision-making. Additionally, teaching self-determination behaviors, such as self-regulation strategies, goal setting, self-management, self-monitoring, and problem solving, can increase student learning and time on task. Lee and colleagues “confirmed that students with disabilities can achieve educational goals linked to the general education curriculum through instruction to promote self-determination and student-directed learning” (p. 105). If *curriculum* is defined in such a way that educators have to be able to evaluate students on curriculum, self-determination often seems outside the realm of evaluation. However, with the pressure American school place on all components of classroom learning being assessable and measurable, it is perhaps important to identify concrete ways self-determination can be placed into school evaluations.

While much of the literature seems to be split between the ECC as a way to access the general curriculum and the ECC as important in its own right, Levin and Rotheram-Fuller (2009)

bridge the gap with research on the *empowered curriculum*. The language the authors utilized (empowerment, capacity, new perspectives) puts them in the camp of self-determination as an affective domain skill with applications beyond simply being a better student. However, the authors still define self-determination in terms of how it can support academics and areas of the general curriculum. In reviewing literature surrounding visual impairment and self-determination, Levin and Rotheram-Fuller found that the impact of self-determination on students with visual impairments is not completely known despite the inclusion of self-determination in the expanded core. They concluded that self-determination is an important skill to teach, as it provides a basis for students to access other areas of the expanded core and the general education curriculum.

Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, teacher preparation programs began to shape their definitions of curriculum for students with visual impairments around the expanded core. The primary textbooks for pre-service TVIs and O&M instructors began to include information about the ECC that discussed self-determination (Hatlen, 2000; Wiener et al., 2011). In particular, the primary O&M textbook, *Foundations of Orientation and Mobility*, gave strategies to infuse self-determination into O&M instruction, such as utilizing collaborative goal setting. Weiner et al. (2011) asserted that “collaborative goal setting with students helps to increase motivation for learning and provides students with opportunities for practicing self-determination” (p. 211). Additionally, the text often framed orientation and mobility in terms of concepts related to self-determination, such as self-concept, self-esteem, involvement in one’s community, self-efficacy, motivation, and self-management (pp. 414, 429). Specialists regularly provide orientation and mobility instruction to students with visual impairments as an integral part of their access to the general education curriculum. Framing orientation and mobility as a self-determining curriculum is one way to ensure students are given opportunities to practice

these skills and that self-determination remains a central part of the education of students with visual impairments.

As a result of pre-service educators learning more about the ECC, many better understood how to teach requisite skills. In a 2007 survey, Sapp and Hatlen (2010) found that professionals who graduated from teacher preparation programs between 1998 and 2007 were better prepared to teach the ECC than educators who graduated prior. In particular, they found statistically significant differences in how prepared professionals were to teach the ECC content areas of career skills, self-determination, social skills, and technology skills. When educators taught in areas of the ECC that are not closely tied to academic content, like self-determination, it was unplanned and unstructured rather than direct instruction. These results are congruent with Lohmeier, Blankenship, and Hatlen's (2009) ECC research. The issue of teachers failing to focus on self-determination as an important aspect of the educational lives of students with visual impairments seems to reflect a lack of understanding of the importance of self-determination as both a vital part of curriculum in and of itself, in addition to as an area that supports the general curriculum.

In more recent research, Opie (2018) threaded together definitions of self-determination that speak to empowerment (believing in oneself, understanding one's abilities and limitations, having control over life experiences), as well as more tangible, assessable skills (student's ability to explain their visual impairment, making choices, and ability to accept and decline help). Utilizing both of these definitions helped to explain self-determination to a variety of audiences that might be interested in this research (parents, general educators, students themselves, TVIs, O&M instructors). Furthermore, this research went beyond others who have tried to stress the importance of self-determination as an integral part of curriculum by showing each aspect of life

impacted by self-determination (academics, leisure time, social skills, employment). Opie painted a picture of self-determination as essential to student success, both as learners and as people, and tasked schools with providing specific education in self-determining behaviors.

Hatlen's (1996, 2003; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010) persistent view seemed to be that self-determination and the ECC are central to the education of students with visual impairments. Learning that their choices and voices matter is hugely important for students with visual impairments, since they are so frequently hearing otherwise. Hatlen's (1996) intent in creating the ECC was that students with visual impairments need *direct instruction* in core areas, including self-determination. He perceived that students did not get enough from instruction that was just incidental. The ECC had to count as a vital aspect curriculum for students with visual impairments. Incidental teaching of self-determining skills and behaviors is not enough; teachers need to specifically set aside educational time to focus on self-determining skills and behaviors like goal setting, making choices, and being responsible for their own actions in order to facilitate students with visual impairments becoming self-determined adults.

Not Enough Time to Teach. Self-determination is an ECC component that is particularly ignored in favor of strictly academic skills (Palmer, 2005; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Reasons educators often failed to provide instruction in self-determination included “greater urgency of other curricular areas, the lack of awareness of available curricula to teach such skills, the lack of familiarity with the construct, and insufficient time to provide such instruction” (Agran et al., 2007, p. 458).

Palmer's (2005) research specifically examined reasons why teachers do not provide instruction in self-determination and other areas of the ECC. Palmer found that a major barrier was “the perception by some classroom teachers that it added to their already heavy curriculum

load” (p. 915). Often, this left teachers having to focus on ECC material that is strictly relevant to the regular core curriculum, like braille, traveling between classes, and finding ways to do visual curricular material with tactile models.

As a result of the outcomes of previous studies on self-determination and special education, and lack of specific research on self-determination and visual impairment, Agran and colleagues (2007) sought to examine further what teachers of the visually impaired thought about self-determination, to what extent they taught self-determination skills, and why they did or did not teach these skills. They found that although self-determination is a mandatory part of the ECC, only 62% of TVIs polled had familiarity with the term *self-determination*. When researchers broke down the term *self-determination* into specific skills, over 60% of TVIs polled reported teaching self-instruction, self-evaluation, and goal setting skills to their students. Top reasons educators reported for not teaching and reinforcing self-determining behaviors included greater student need in other curricular areas, lack of time, lack of teacher training, and lack of curricular materials.

One critical area of administration of services for students with visual impairments identified by researchers is caseload size of teachers of the visually impaired and orientation and mobility specialists, the two specialists certified to work specifically with students who are visually impaired (Bruce et al., 2016). *Guidelines for the Administration of Educational Programs for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Visually Impaired, or Deafblind* recommends taking the expanded core curriculum into account when making determinations about teacher caseload size: “Other considerations for caseload size include delivery of the expanded core curriculum (Hatlen, 1996, 2003) and the need for instruction in areas not

traditionally part of the school curriculum, but which are critical for children who do not learn by observation and visual imitation” (Bruce et al., 2016, p. 53).

Lohmeier, Blankenship, and Hatlen’s 2009 research on the ECC investigated parent and teacher attitudes towards the expanded core, and how those attitudes have changed since their last evaluation in 1998. This research includes self-determination as an ECC content area, whereas the 1998 survey did not. Researchers found that 57% of TVIs noted that they did not have time to teach all of the components of the expanded core curriculum, leaving them to prioritize skills taught. Only 1.2% of participants reported that they were more likely to focus on self-determination than other aspects of the ECC. Additionally, over one-third of respondents felt that the best time to teach expanded core skills was not during the typical school day, but during summer programs, on the weekend, or after school (Lohmeier et al., 2009). These results indicate that educators of students with visual impairments do not place a high priority on self-determination skills, and moreover think that the ECC in general should be taught at a time other than during the school day.

Importance of Self-Determination in Curriculum for Students with Visual Impairments

Monson’s (2009) use of phrases like *self-realization* and *psychological empowerment* in his research speak to the root of what an education program focusing on self-determination can do for students. Researchers tend to look at the importance of self-determination in academics (Lee et al., 2008), and not on how self-determination is an important end within itself. Monson’s research uses language similar to what Levin and Rotheram-Fuller (2011) used several years later when discussing self-determination as an empowering experience that addresses capacity to student with visual impairments.

The purpose of Monson's (2009) research was to examine the relationship between quality of life in adulthood and previous instruction in the expanded core curriculum for students with visually impairments. The author utilized existing data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2, and analyzed data from high schoolers and their parents, as well as these same participants when they were young adults out of school. The NLTS2 was a 10-year longitudinal study that gathered information about secondary students with disabilities. The data Monson used for his research focused specifically on information collected about students with visual impairments. The National Center for Special Education research uses sampling procedures such that results can be generalized to the population of individuals with visual impairments. A variety of other studies in visual impairment, the expanded core, and postschool outcomes have utilized this data, however many fail to explore the impact of self-determination skills. In fact, other studies identified that further research should focus on self-determination (Wolffe & Kelly, 2011). Monson found that although only 42.4% of participants had self-determination written into their IEPs, it was one of the strongest determining factors of high quality of life after high school graduation.

For the purposes of this research, Monson (2009) defined self-determination factors as personal autonomy, autonomy in career planning, self-realization, and physiological empowerment. Analysis of the NLTS2 results indicated that self-determination is instrumental to quality of life for students with visual impairments post-graduation. Self-determination is often pushed into the cognitive domain of learning skills, rather than recognizing that affective domain learning of behaviors and feelings is a valid goal for students as well. Monson's research insinuated that quality of life is a legitimate learning outcome, and a purpose for teaching self-determining behaviors.

Levin and Rotheram-Fuller (2011) used empowerment language when discussing self-determination curriculum as well. They found that “when self-determination is conceptualized as a product of opportunity and capacity, it becomes apparent that students with visual impairments are in need of interventions that will maximize both these areas” (pp. 350-351). This research provides a framework for using curriculum as a source of empowerment, which is not a definition of curriculum seen elsewhere in research on self-determination. In this way, Levin and Rotheram-Fuller’s research seems to be an answer to what Agran and colleagues (2007) lacked regarding the *purpose* of teaching self-determination: empowerment.

So much of self-determination research focuses on parents or professionals (Wolffe et al., 2002; Lohmeier, 2005; Palmer, 2005; Agran et al., 2007; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010), and the ones that do focus on students often conceal what the researchers are assessing to participants (Robinson & Lieberman, 2004; Lieberman et al., 2014). Opie’s (2018) research illuminated how students feel, which is a lacking perspective in ECC research. Several of the high school aged participants indicated that a barrier to self-advocacy and gaining necessary assistance was the feeling of not wanting to be a burden. One participant specifically stated, “I could be more proactive, but I hate sort of being – I don’t want to be an inconvenience,” while another explained, “teachers just don’t understand, and it is embarrassing to ask during class. I don’t want to look like I am being weak” (Opie, 2018, p. 83). The author concluded that the students involved in this study needed more direct, specific education from TVIs in order to be better self-advocates, as well as “to overcome negative attitudes and practices resulting in their exclusion in class and from subjects such as science and sport” (Opie, 2018, p. 83). The student perspective again emphasized that the purpose of self-determination education is not only to create better students, but also to help students become more well-rounded, empowered people.

Looking Towards the Future

Self-determination has been part of the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairment for over a decade. However, it seems that educational programs have a long way to go to ensure their students have opportunities to learn and practice self-determining behaviors. Researchers suggest that physical education and extracurricular programming might be the best ways to ensure students with visual impairments get the direct instruction in the ECC that Hatlen (1996, 2003) championed.

Physical Activity. One of the first areas of the general school curriculum to pick up education in self-determining skills and behaviors was physical education. Significant bodies of research exist around the ideas of self-determination in physical education and using physical activity to teach self-determining skills and behaviors (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002, Robinson & Lieberman, 2004; Lieberman et al., 2014; Brian et al., 2018; Opie, 2018).

For visual impairment educators who trend towards defining self-determination as assessable skills, physical education can also be seen as an answer to how to teach self-determination. Self-determination skills, such as goal setting, problem solving, and decision-making, are often components of state physical education standards (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Lieberman et al., 2014). Thus, physical education programs may have goals congruent with educators who wish to teach such skills. If TVIs lack time to teach self-determination, physical educators may be qualified to assist with this aspect of the ECC.

Even prior to the addition of self-determination to the ECC, adapted physical education research recognized the importance of self-determining behaviors to individuals with visual impairments. Lieberman and Stuart (2002) asserted that self-determination can be defined as making choices, and physical activity/ sport participation are times in which opportunities to

practice self-determination are natural. The results of Lieberman and Stuart's study imply that people with visual impairments, and particularly those who are deafblind, need early exposure to options and full explanations of choices available in order to make informed, self-determined decision about how to spend their leisure time. "The earlier that people know the variety of choices available to them, the more likely they will be to make self-determined choices, initiate participation, and gain access to appropriate recreational programs" (p. 733). The authors asserted that quality inclusive physical education programs can be a prime way to ensure that individuals with visual impairments develop self-determining behaviors throughout their lifetime.

Just after the addition of self-determination to the ECC, Robinson and Lieberman (2004) discussed self-determination in terms of choice-making skills, and asserted that "an essential part of independence and dignity is the ability to make choices" (p. 352). Furthermore, they claimed that physical education or organized physical activity environment is a prime place to allow students to practice self-determination skills, as "students can realize that what they do or say is important and can influence others" (p. 352). Physical education could be an instrumental avenue for teaching self-determination skills, as students can translate these skills to physical activity environment at home or in their communities, allowing for a transfer of skills over various environments through physical activity. Although Robinson and Lieberman (2004) strongly emphasized that physical education is a place to teach self-determination skills to students with visual impairments and cited research to support their opinions, most students in the study reported not participating in physical education at school.

Ten years later, Lieberman and colleagues (2014) took the idea of using physical activity to teach the expanded core further than many other pieces of literature by listing specific

examples. Focusing on teaching the same skills as sighted peers, incorporating blind sport, and utilizing exergames (exercise-focused video games) are all ways to give students with visual impairments opportunities to practice self-determination skills. Other than literature about orientation and mobility (Wiener et al., 2010), physical education and self-determination seems to be the only body of research to suggest specific teaching activities, strategies, and ideas for educating students with visual impairments in self-determining skills and behaviors.

Other Settings. The growing trend in self-determination research is that teachers do not see self-determination as a viable part of the school day (Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). It seems that finding time outside the school environment to teach ECC components could be a solution. While major names in ECC research, like Hatlen, Blankenship, and Lieberman seem to believe that *curriculum* is all of the tools, behaviors, and skills a student with a visual impairment needs to be successful in school and life, many teachers of the visually impaired still believe that *curriculum* is the academic content that schools require of students. Over one-third of TVIs Lohmeier and colleagues (2009) polled responded that summer programs, on the weekend, and after school activities were more appropriate places to teach self-determination and the ECC than during the school day. If schools and educators fail to recognize self-realization and psychological empowerment as curriculum to be taught in school, looking towards other educational experiences might be a successful way to foster self-determination in students.

McDonough, Sticken, and Haack (2006) asserted, “Even for students who are high academic achievers, the expanded core curriculum is difficult to complete within 12 years of education” (pp. 597-598). The DOE mandates to teach the ECC to all students with visual impairments (Bruce et al., 2016), paired with lack of time during the school year, might push

districts and education agencies to look outside the traditional confines of the school year and classroom to educate students in non-academic components of the ECC. Since many researchers showed that professionals do not always value teaching self-determination or do not have time for education in components of the ECC other than academics (Palmer, 2005; Agran et al., 2007; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010), legal mandates that educators recognize the ECC is important. McDonough and colleagues' "Issue Brief" in the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* ends with a plea to educators and policymakers: include the ECC and mandatory assessment in all content areas in federal and state educational policy, and support utilizing summer, after school, and vocational programs to educate students in the expanded core.

In following with McDonough and colleagues (2006), Blackshear (2014) noted that without a focus on self-determination skills during the school year, students may be left without structured time to explore their needs in these areas. "Those of us in the field of visual impairment understand that general classroom teaching alone may not be able to adequately address [ECC] domains and that alternative instructional models need to be explored" (Blackshear, 2014, p. 492). Creating time outside the typical school day specifically for addressing skills that are not directly tied to the general core curriculum, like social interaction, recreation and leisure, and self-determination, could be a viable way to teach ECC skills. This research is particularly salient when looking for support of teaching ECC skills outside the confines of a typical educational program. Blackshear's work supports the idea that *curriculum* for students with visual impairments is not just in-school, assessable, academic content, but could be any programming that contributes to the education and learning of the students. It is not a stretch to apply Blackshear's programming ideas to an experience that is completely outside the school building, such as a summer camp.

Emotionally-Safe Environments at Summer Camp

Camp is a “social institution that touches more lives than any other except school” (Garst et al., 2011, p. 73). Researchers from American Camp Association studied youth development outcomes through survey data found that supportive staff-camper relationships were the greatest strength of camp programs (Garst et al., 2011). Garst and colleagues emphasized that low staff to camper ratios provide opportunities for young people to have meaningful interactions with adults, which in turn helps to create an emotionally-safe environment. In their review of the literature, Garst and colleagues found that camp programs in natural environments are predisposed to being emotionally-safe environments, as spending time outdoors can reduce stress and anxiety. Finally, the opportunities that camps give youth to reinvent their self-identities and explore social roles allows campers to feel connectedness and emotional safety (Garst et al., 2011). An environment that is emotionally-safe sets the stage for affective domain learning that may not occur in the same ways at home or school, such as camp participants practicing self-determining behaviors.

Camps can increase exploration skills, social skills, feelings of positive identity, independence, and leadership, and these positive youth outcomes are associated with observable camp qualities (Henderson et al., 2005). Henderson and colleagues engaged in a qualitative analysis, including interviews and observations, of summer camp programs on the east coast. When conducting observations, these researchers paid particular attention to emotional support, clear limits and expectations, and cultural competence and inclusion, all aspects of emotionally-safe environments. They found that their ratings of camp atmosphere, setting, and overall *feeling* of the camps matched quantitative data collected by the American Camp Association on positive youth outcomes at camp; camps that ranked highly by qualitative researchers generally produced

the most positive youth outcomes, and vice versa (Henderson et al., 2005). This research points to the importance of an emotionally-safe environment when looking for positive youth development outcomes, including increasing self-determining behaviors, at summer camp.

Self-Determination at Camp

Self-determination theory is the concept that individuals who feel competence, are given autonomy and choice, and have a sense of interpersonal connection are more likely to participate in activities for intrinsic reasons (Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008). Ramsing and Sibthorp posited that self-determination theory is the best approach for getting young people to self-regulate, one of the skills defined in self-determination education for students with visual impairments. In their research, Ramsing and Sibthorp utilized a mixed methods study in which they administered surveys to campers and interviewed both campers and staff. They found that in recreational program environments that support autonomy, competence, and interpersonal connection, participants are likely to internalize motivation and self-regulate in long-term lifestyle behaviors, such as physical activity or nutritional practices (Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008). This research supports the idea that program directors could employ summer camp programming that focuses on independence, competence, and interpersonal connections to give participants space to practice self-regulating and self-determining behaviors.

Self-Determination and General Summer Camps. In their research on positive youth development at camp, Sibthorp, Brown and Bialeschki (2010) sought to validate a survey to measure camp connectedness and problem-solving confidence through quantitative means. They define *camp connectedness* as a camper's relationship to camp, in particular, if campers feel welcome and supported by camp. With respect to self-determination, Sibthorpe and colleagues researched how camp provides opportunities to develop confidence in problem solving and gives

youth a forum for their voices to be heard. They argued that an important part of camp connectedness is related to emotional safety, peer support, and staff support. Through their research, Sibthorp et al. (2010) found that camps are generally able to provide participants with emotionally-safe environments in which to express personal voice and develop confidence in problem solving.

Research on camp also supports the notion that young people can learn life skills through the camp experience. For the purposes of their research, Garst and colleagues (2016) operated under a definition of ‘life skills’ from the World Health Organization that involves the capacity for adaptive and positive behaviors, as well as the ability to deal with the demands of daily life. In this context, ‘life skills’ are similar to self-determination definitions that include problem solving skills, self-regulation, decision-making skills, and self-control (Lohmeier et al., 2009; Opie, 2018). Garst and colleagues employed a survey design to gather quantitative data from camp alumni regarding their life skill development throughout their camp experiences. They found that camp alumni felt that camp increased self-determining behaviors of confidence, self-efficacy, competence, initiative, friend making, courage, resiliency, and perseverance (Garst et al., 2016). Additionally, participants in this research listed “emotional safety” as an important part of their camp experience.

Bialeschki et al. (2007) reported that organizational goals, physical and emotional safety, and staff attention make positive youth development outcomes possible in the camp setting. In their review of the literature, Bialeschki and colleagues (2007) found that children attending camps with organizational goals of positive youth development had statistically significant increases in self-esteem and independence between pre- and post-camp surveys. Furthermore, children maintained this statistically significant increase in behaviors when polled again six

months after camp. Parent polls also supported this data; they noted that their children became more independent and had higher levels of self-esteem after camp than before. In addition, camp counselors noticed that throughout the camp experience, their campers demonstrated more positive identity and thinking skills than at the beginning of the camp experience (Bialeschki et al., 2007). This research supports the idea that camp programs can lead to growth in self-determining skills and behaviors if the program is designed around an emotionally-safe environment.

Self-Determination at Camps for Youth with Disabilities. Camp programs for young people with disabilities report similar gains in self-determination-related outcomes. In their phenomenological study, Goodwin and colleagues (2011) found that the experience of a summer sports camp for kids with visual impairments helped participants understand their potential. In particular, participants identified that they learned responsibility, developed independence, and gained more self-esteem, all self-determining behaviors. One participant maintained that other young people should consider attending camp because "they can learn a lot about the person that is inside of them" (Goodwin et al., 2011, p. 48). Learning about the person inside oneself is at the heart of the aesthetic model of self-determination.

Using a phenomenological approach to research camp and disability, Godwin and Staples (2005) found that camp provided children with physical disabilities opportunities to practice self-determining behaviors, specifically in the areas of autonomy, decision-making, and self-realization. Camps for youth with physical disabilities in which children interacted with others similar to themselves allowed participants to learn about their own capabilities and physical potentials, as well as be more independent and self-reliant than at home. In particular, the

participants Godwin and Staples interviewed and observed felt more determined and confident in their abilities to do daily tasks independently.

Camp can increase knowledge of one's own abilities for participants with physical disabilities (Aggerholm & Moltke Martiny, 2017). Like much other research in the field of camp and disability, Aggerholm and Moltke Martiny utilized a phenomenological approach to study the impact of sports camp on young people with physical disabilities. When interviewed in small groups, participants in a winter sports camp expressed feeling more confident in their physical abilities, and transferring that confidence to other aspects of their lives, like school. This research adds to the body of knowledge that camps, in particular sports camps, for young people with disabilities can increase self-determination-related skills and behaviors for that population.

Research Moving Forward

Research surrounding camp and self-determining behaviors tends to be either based on quantitative survey data (much of it taken from American Camp Association research) on general camps (Bialeschki et al., 2007; Sibthorp et al., 2010; Garst et al., 2016) or focus on phenomenological methods of assessing qualitative data surrounding specialized camps for young people with disabilities (Goodwin et al., 2011; Godwin & Staples, 2005; Aggerholm & Moltke Martiny, 2017). While there are some studies that utilize mixed methods (Henderson et al, 2005; Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008), few mixed methods studies focus specifically on camps for young people with disabilities. The breadth of research on camps for youth with disabilities seems to be qualitative and phenomenological rather than include quantitative data in any way. Researchers in the camp field recommend further research on whether quantitative survey data on youth outcomes can be associated with qualitative observational data (Henderson et al, 2005), how camp staff can be youth-driven and also explicitly teach skills (Halsall et al., 2016), if skills

and positive behaviors learned at camp transfer to other areas of life (Halsall et al., 2016), and how camps achieve positive youth development outcomes (Garst et al., 2011). Additionally, future camp research should include studies that can be generalized to camps other than the ones at which data collection occurs (Bialeschki et al., 2007).

Camp programming for students with disabilities could benefit from quantitative research to support the qualitative studies that are common in the field. Many researchers in this field identified that the qualitative data derived from interviewing youth with disabilities was important for camp personnel looking to create programming that reinforces identity and belonging to a community, and more research would help add to the knowledge-base for professionals creating new programs (Goodwin et al., 2011; Aggerholm et al., 2017). Additionally, research on camp for individuals with disabilities challenges theories of inclusion as always a best practice, and further research could be revolutionary to this field (Godwin & Staples, 2005).

Visual impairment educational research often focuses on if professionals are adequately teaching self-determining skills and behaviors (Agran et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Monson, 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010; Levin & Rotheram-Fuller, 2011; Opie, 2018). While some of this research begins to touch on the possibility of utilizing summer camp programming to reinforce self-determining behaviors (Lohmeier et al., 2009), there is scarce research to support the success of utilizing summer camps in this way. Since there is a breadth of research on general summer camp programming and its impact on positive youth outcomes including self-determining behaviors, it is not a stretch to hypothesize practitioners could use camp for this purpose with a population of students with visual impairments. The question then becomes similar to Henderson et al.'s (2005) research: are there observable qualities of camps

that create an emotionally-safe environment for students to practice self-determination skills? If so, determining what qualities are and if they could be generalized to a school environment may provide more options for students with visual impairments to learn self-determination skills.

Mixed methods camp research involving interviews and survey data could significantly contribute to the field of research surrounding how to educate students with visual impairments towards self-determination in a novel way.

Theoretical Framework for Summer Camp Research

Summer camps provide unique opportunities to enhance learning. Research shows that camps are “sustained and immersive experiences that have the intensity and duration to have a substantial impact on children’s developmental outcomes” (Ventura & Garst, 2013, p. 2).

Because of the potential impact, as well as the more casual structure, of summer camp, nontraditional learning can occur in different ways at camp than during the school year.

Summer camps in general have been shown to increase self-esteem in children (Readdick & Schaller, 2005). In addition, research on sports camp programming for young athletes with visual impairments has shown that sport and physical activity instruction increases self-perception in areas of social skills, athletic competence, and physical appearance (Shapiro et al, 2005).

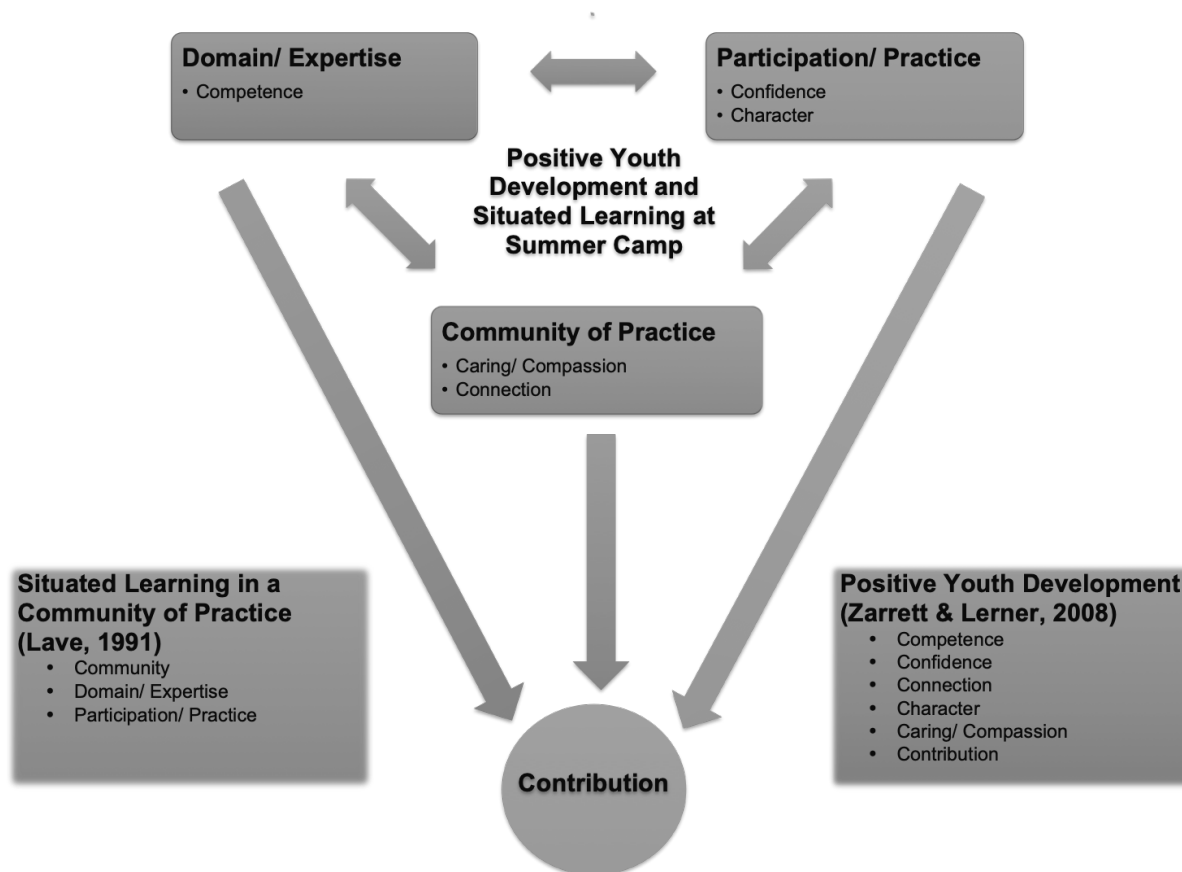
Summer camp sports programming for students with visual impairments can result in more than just athletic learning for participants.

A primary goal of quality sports camp programming for young people with visual impairments is to “empower students with visual impairments to be physically active members of their communities” (Haegele et al., 2014b, p. 474). This mission, while including physical activity, also encompasses so much more. With empowerment as the main goal of camp, all learning is directed towards this objective, with athletics and wellness being the vehicle through

which participants become empowered. This study's theoretical framework builds upon the two theories of situated learning and positive youth development. Figure 1 illustrates how these theories interact.

Figure 1

Positive Youth Development and Situated Learning at Summer Camp



The following sections discuss positive youth development, situated learning, and how the two theories interact at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments.

Situated Learning

In order to better examine how camp culture promotes learning, situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1990) can be an appropriate theoretical lens. Situated learning theory, also

referred to as situated social practice or situated cognition, “emphasizes the relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing. It emphasizes the inherently socially negotiated quality of meaning and the interested, concerned character of the thought and action of persons engaged in activity” (Lave, 1991, p. 67). Lave (1991) argued that the social world and its influences cannot be removed from the learning process, and that education occurs through participation in the world.

According to situated learning theory, “learning is recognized as a social phenomenon constituted in the experienced, lived-in world, through legitimate peripheral participation in ongoing social practice” (Lave, 1991, p. 64). Lave’s (1991) term *legitimate peripheral participation* refers to real, actual participation in the area of study throughout all levels of the learning process. In order for this situated learning to occur, learners must be involved in a task or activity with increasing levels of involvement and complexity from the beginning.

Camp as Situated Learning. Traditional views of education see learning as something that occurs in a classroom. However, according to Lave (1991), “Once one begins to think in terms of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice, many other forms of socially organized activity become salient as sites of learning” (pp. 64-65). In a camp environment, learners are involved in creating their own empowerment from the moment they arrive. Athletes are asked to set goals for themselves, make schedule choices, and make small decisions that impact their experience throughout the day. As athletes get older, gain camp experience, and develop a mastery of skills taught, they are asked for more input and given leadership opportunities. From arrival at camp, athletes have opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation in their educational and empowerment experience. By making choices about themselves and their world, camp gives athletes the means to forge the path towards

independence, empowerment, and self-efficacy, major components of what camp strives to teach.

Situating Learning in a Community of Practice. According to Lave and Wenger's (1990) situated learning theory, learning occurs through cultural interactions between newcomers/ apprentices and old-timers/ experts in a particular field. These cultural interactions occur in a community of practice, or group of people who "engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 4). Lave and Wenger (1990) developed their theory of situated learning in a community of practice after observing apprenticeships in a variety of fields and societies. They determined that significant learning occurred as a result of the mentor-apprentice relationship, especially when combined with legitimate peripheral participation throughout the experience.

In a camp setting, both athletes who have been at camp for many years and trained coaches can be seen as experts in the field. Newcomers to the camp community can be athletes coming to camp for the first time; athletes who are very young, and therefore have little memory of previous years; and athletes who have recently experienced vision changes, thereby altering their experience of camp and the world. Experts share their knowledge of sport, movement, and empowerment with newcomers, and newcomers can learn from the entire community.

Although camp focuses on athletics as a means to achieve empowerment, there are many other learning opportunities available. According to Standal and Jespersen (2008), "Situated learning transcends the individualized focus on skill acquisition" (p. 222). These researchers found that in a physical activity program for a group of individuals with disabilities, the learning that occurred was more than just the activities taught; other learning happened beyond the curriculum of the program. A significant benefit of situated learning in a community of practice

is that the constant interaction between experts and newcomers allows for learning to occur on a variety of levels.

Camp as a Community of Practice. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) argued that for a group of people to be a community of practice they require three distinct characteristics: domain, community, and practice. Domain relates to the interest, commitment, and shared perception of expertise that members of a community of practice share (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In order for a group to be a community of practice, it must have shared understanding of competence in a particular field. In a camp setting, being an expert means understanding camp culture, having an awareness of customs and schedules, and internalizing values inherent to the environment. More than simply playing sport, the domain of camp is empowerment of people with visual impairments. Anyone entering the camp environment must buy in to empowerment of young people with visual impairments, and all of the culture surrounding the goal of empowerment, to be a part of the community of practice.

To be a community of practice, individuals cannot simply share a title; they must “engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 7). Participants in the camp experience are not necessarily part of a community of practice with other students who are blind simply due to their disability status, or with other athletes because of shared athletic identity. At camp, participants communicate about their blindness in ways not always encouraged in the world outside of camp. They share their experiences and knowledge of assistive technology and mobility devices. Participants help one another to navigate life with the identity of blind athletes through their engagement in the camp experience.

The concept of *practice* as part of the community of practice definition refers to expanding knowledge base (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Members of the group “develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 8). Athletes at camp learn from staff members as well as one another. Stories of how high school aged students have been successful encourages younger athletes to keep working to develop their skills. Students remind one another to use their canes, explain ways they have been successful in making lunch without vision, and tell stories about overcoming bullies in their school lives. These experiences not only bond camp participants in their community of practice, but also generate new ideas and ways of coping. In addition to sharing prior knowledge, participants in the camp experience develop new stories, tools, and ways of solving problems through interactions with one another in athletic and social settings. In research on physical activity programs for individuals with disabilities, Standal and Jespersen (2008) found that “the language [participants] used was their own, and not the technical phrases of the healthcare system or the sometimes derogatory and insensitive language of able-bodied persons” (p. 220). The same occurs in a camp setting for young people with visual impairments. Students are able to speak in a way that is not always understood by people who are not blind athletes. Blindness and discussion of vision is not clinical or pitying; it is simply part of life. The *practice* of camp expands participant understanding of navigating the world as a blind young person, in addition to cultivating athletic expertise.

Positive Youth Development at Summer Camp

Positive youth development (PYD) is an often-cited educational theory in summer camp research (Halsall et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2005; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018; Readdick & Schaller, 2005; Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008; Sibthorp et al., 2010; Weybright, 2017). A central

philosophy of PYD is the “enhancement of life skills” (Garst et al., 2016, p. 183). Through PYD, youth develop five main psychological, behavioral, and social characteristics: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/ compassion (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). If youth cultivate these five qualities, they are more likely to contribute to their families, communities, and society at large (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008).

The “five Cs” of PYD contribute to the idea that “change is a consequence of mutually influential relationships between the developing person and aspects such as biology, psychological characteristics, family, community, and culture” (Henderson et al., 2005, p. 60). Competence relates to positive views of oneself and one’s actions, specifically in the areas of social, academic, cognitive, health, and vocational skills (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Relatedly, Zarrett and Lerner (2008) defined confidence in positive youth development as overall self-efficacy and positive self-worth. *Connection* pertains to how youth relate to others in their communities. PYD aims to create “positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his or her peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship” (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008, p. 2). The theory of positive youth development describes *character* in terms of morality and integrity (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Through PYD, programs can foster caring and compassion, or a sense of sympathy and empathy, in young people (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Overall, positive youth outcomes at camp include a wide range of behaviors and skills, from self-esteem and self-concept to leadership, confidence, and problem solving.

PYD and Situated Learning in an Emotionally-Safe Camp Community

Camp is a “social institution that touches more lives than any other except school” (Garst et al., 2011, p. 73). Summer camps can increase exploration skills, social skills, feelings of

positive identity, independence, and leadership, and these positive youth outcomes are associated with observable camp qualities (Henderson et al., 2005). Henderson and colleagues (2005) found that their ratings of camp atmosphere, setting, and overall *feeling* of summer camps matched quantitative data the American Camp Association collected on positive youth outcomes at camp; camps that qualitative researchers ranked highly generally produced the most positive youth outcomes, and vice versa. In their review of the literature, Garst and colleagues (2011) found that camp programs in natural environments are predisposed to being emotionally-safe environments, as spending time outdoors can reduce stress and anxiety. Additionally, the opportunities that camps give youth to reinvent their self-identities and explore social roles allows participants to feel connectedness and emotional safety (Garst et al., 2011). This body of research points to the importance of creating an emotionally-safe environment at summer camp when looking for positive youth development outcomes, including increasing self-determining behaviors.

Practice, Confidence, and Character. Povilaitis and Tamminen's (2018) research investigated the impact of the practice of learning sport and physical activity at summer camp. They found that "the summer sport camp setting may offer a brief but intensive opportunity for youth to achieve gains in positive developmental outcomes" (p. 491). Povilaitis and Tamminen's (2018) study alluded to the positive impact of using sport-based summer camps to support PYD.

Godwin and Staples (2005) found that confidence was a primary result of camp programming focused on young people with disabilities. In particular, Godwin and Staples' (2005) research uncovered that for children with disabilities at summer camp, the practice of "being among youths with disabilities in a physical activity context highlighted the self-determination, strength of character, and will of the other campers" (p. 170). A disability-positive summer camp environment that gives participants leeway to practice independence

skills, learn from others with their same disability, and discover their own abilities could contribute to confidence and character development. In this way, the *practice* of a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments would not just be sports skills, but also would encompass learning about disability identity and compensatory strategies.

Community, Connection, and Compassion. Connection and community are integral to summer camp programming for young people with visual impairments. Research on summer camp programming for youth with disabilities found that camp provides “a reprieve from disability isolation with gains in social acceptance, self-reliance and independence” (Bialeschki & Sibthorp, 2011, p. 16). Halsall and colleagues (2016) found that camps promote PYD through their leadership and community building structures. For example, many camps provide increasing opportunities for leadership as participants age, which leads to development of competence, competence, compassion, and connection for children who attend camp over several summers (Halsall et al., 2016). Legitimate participation in new roles within the camp community as children age allows older athletes to practice leadership skills and younger athletes to see older athletes as role models.

Connection and community in the form of positive adult-youth relationships are also instrumental to PYD (Halsall et al., 2016). Particularly, adults at camp who are caring and compassionate, individually adapt activities, act as role models, and work to create an autonomy-supportive environment contribute significantly to positive youth development (Halsall et al., 2016). American Camp Association research on youth development outcomes found that supportive staff-camper relationships were the greatest strength of camp programs (Garst et al., 2011). Garst and colleagues (2011) emphasized that low staff to camper ratios provide opportunities for young people to have meaningful interactions with adults, which in turn helps

to create an emotionally-safe environment. In particular, at camp this current study examined, young athletes are paired one-on-one with highly trained staff members. These one-on-one *performance coaches* work with their athlete to promote positive bonds, individually adapt activities, and give young people models of what it means to be an athlete and team player.

Domain and Competence. Domain in situated learning is a commitment to and shared perception of expertise that a community shares, while competence relates to positive views of oneself and one's actions and skills (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Summer camp programming in an environment with a shared perception of expertise can encourage participants to develop competence. Godwin and Staples (2005) found that at summer camps for youth with physical disabilities, "connecting to others with disabilities helped [participants] understand themselves better" (p. 174). With the shared community perspective that people with disabilities are capable of contribution, young people attending camp can develop a broader sense of competence.

Contribution. Self-determination is woven through all aspects of PYD. Educational researchers define self-determination for youth with visual impairments as understanding of one's abilities and limitations and feeling of control of life experiences (Opie, 2018). Specific self-determination skills and behaviors include decision-making, problem solving, goal setting, and self-advocacy (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Opie, 2018). Young people with visual impairments involved in communities of practice that value situated learning and positive youth development may develop the "sixth C" of PYD: contribution in the form of self-determining behaviors. Possessing self-determining skills and behaviors allows individuals to contribute to their broader communities in meaningful ways. Summer camps focused on fostering competence, confidence, connection, character, and compassion in a community of

practice can lead their participants towards being more self-determined, contributing members of society.

Summary

In this chapter, I investigated how self-determination appears in curriculum for students with visual impairments. Additionally, I explored how summer camp programs provide emotionally-safe environments for positive youth development, including self-determining behaviors. Lastly, I examined why positive youth development (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008) and situated learning (Lave, 1991) are suitable theoretical frameworks for this study on self-determination at summer camp.

In the following chapter, I will describe the methodological approach for this study. I will also outline key reasons why mixed methods research, and in particular case study and survey designs, is appropriate for studying self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments.

Chapter III: Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. In this chapter, I will describe my research methods and limitations of the study. Additionally, I will present my rationale for a mixed methods study utilizing survey and case study designs.

Participants

All participants in this research were attendees at a five-day summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. Youth camp attendees (*athletes*) and their families received information about camp through prior attendance or through their teachers of the visually impaired and orientation and mobility instructors. Adult camp attendees (*coaches*) were students from local universities and professionals in related fields who discovered this camp program as a result of participation in similar camps throughout the country.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was participants in an east coast sports camp for youth with visual impairments. In order to participate in camp, athletes must be residents of the state in which camp takes place and receive vision services through their local education agency. Adult volunteers (*coaches*) had no specific requirements other than presenting a clear background check, but most coaches were university students in education and therapy fields. Out of 19 athletes and 30 coaches attending this camp, 15 athletes and 24 coaches comprised the research sample.

The youngest athlete who participated in this study was 7 years old and the oldest was 16 years old, with a mean age of 11.3 years. In terms of schooling, 20% of the athletes who participated in the study are homeschooled, while the remaining 80% attend public or charter

schools. In total, 11 female athletes and 4 male athletes participated in the study. Table 3.1 lists the demographic information of athlete participants.

Table 3.1

Athlete Participants in Data Collection

Age (in years)	
7-10	5
11-13	8
14-16	2
Schooling	
Homeschooled	3
Public or charter	12
Gender	
Female	11
Male	4

Coach participants ranged in experience from high school students who previously participated in the Coach in Training (CIT) program to educators in the field of adapted physical education and visual impairment. Two high school students who previously participated in the camp CIT program; 10 university students in physical education, visual impairment, or therapy related fields; and 10 certified physical educators or teachers of the visually impaired participated in this study. The remaining two coach participants were volunteers from the community in unrelated fields with previous camp experience. The youngest coach participant was 16 years old, and the oldest was 62. Six men and eighteen women completed coach questionnaires at the end of camp. Table 3.2 lists demographic information for coach participants.

Table 3.2*Coach Participants in Data Collection*

Age	
16-17	2
18-25	13
25 and older	9
Gender	
Female	18
Male	6
Experience	
High school students who previously participated in the camp CIT program	2
University students in physical education, O&M, or therapy related fields	10
Certified physical educators or teachers of the visually impaired	10
Volunteers from the community in unrelated fields with previous camp experience	2

While all coaches initially consented to participation in data collection, not all coaches completed the questionnaires. Some coaches left prior to data collection due to unforeseen circumstances, while others simply never returned their questionnaires.

Participants in Quantitative Data Collection

The main quantitative data collection tool was the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994). All athletes at camp who had parental consent and personally assented to their participation in the study completed the AIR scale.

Participants in Qualitative Data Collection

All 15 athletes and 24 coaches who had consent and assented to their participation in research completed qualitative questionnaires. One section of the AIR Self-Determination Scale included questions about goals that resulted in qualitative data (Wolman et al., 1994). In addition, athletes and coaches completed an end of camp questionnaire that included open-ended questions designed to elicit qualitative information.

This research also included an interview component. Thus, I randomly selected five athletes who had parental consent and assented to participate in interviews. To randomize selection, I placed all names into a bag and had a coach pull five names out. As a result of this randomization, I interviewed 4 girls and 1 boy ages 10 to 16 years old.

Description of the Setting

Data collection occurred at a sports camp for youth with visual impairments in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Camp is located at a state park with minimal indoor facilities. Coaches reside in cabins overnight and engage in training and teambuilding activities at night, while athletes take a bus to camp from their houses daily. Camp is centrally located to maximize the regions of the state from which athletes can commute each day.

Camp Schedule

Head coaches and lead staff at this camp designed programming and lessons specifically to foster self-determination skills. This differs from other similar types of sports camp programs for youth with visual impairments that focus more on sports skill acquisition (Haegele et al., 2014b; Ponchillia et al., 2005). While athletes developed their abilities in a variety of sports throughout the week, they also participated in health lessons and targeted instruction in self-determination skills.

Throughout the five-day program, athletes participated in structured sports lessons, free selects, wellness lessons, and goal time. Each morning, coaches taught lessons in cross country running, hiking, and field events (shot put, discus, javelin, and hammer throw). Coaches also offered *free selects* daily. During free selects, athletes had two options of sports that were taught one time during the week of camp. During the week of camp this study investigated, free select options included football, lacrosse, yoga, dance, rugby, volleyball, and team building activities.

After lunch, athletes participated in a health and wellness lesson, including topics such as goal setting, hygiene, nutrition, self-advocacy, and social skills. Coaches also taught afternoon structured sports lessons in golf and 5-a-side blind soccer. Camp included two free periods per day, one as athletes arrive and one right before they leave, which coaches call *goal time*. During goal time, athletes were free to pick any sport activity that camp offers and hone their skills. Prior to departure for the day, athletes were invited to share their daily accomplishments with the group in a time known at camp as *Care to Share*.

Coaches and Athletes

Athletes all received a one-on-one performance coach for the week of camp. These coaches assisted athletes throughout the day and encouraged participation in all activities. Performance coaches received training on visual impairment, sports skills, and coaching techniques prior to athlete arrival. Additional coaching staff members who were experts in visual impairment and adapted physical education fields teach at each sport. Athletes and their performance coaches belonged to a group, or *camp family*, for the week, based on athlete age and gender and were led by an experienced performance coach. Athletes and coaches rotated through activities at camp with their camp families.

Instrumentation

Mixed methods research triangulates data by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data sources. This study triangulated data through athlete surveys, athlete and coach questionnaires, and athlete interviews (See Table 3.3).

Table 3.3*Number of Participants Per Data Source*

	AIR Survey	Questionnaire	Interview
Athletes	15	15	5
Coaches	0	24	0

The following sections further explain each data source.

Surveys

During the camp program, athletes responded to surveys. Athletes completed surveys with both quantitative and qualitative components

AIR Self-Determination Scale. The AIR Self-Determination Scale (Appendix A) (Wolman et al., 1994) is a multi-part assessment that examines attitudes towards self-determination skills across several environments. The authors of the AIR scale gave permission for use on the instrument's website (Appendix B). The original assessment was split into five sections: Things I Do, How I Feel, What Happens at School, What Happens at Home, and Goals. The Things I Do, How I Feel, and Goals sections solicited responses about how self-determination generally appears in the lives of participants. The What Happens at School and What Happens at Home sections examined school and home environments in particular. I added an additional section, What Happens at Camp, based on the questions in the home and school sections of the scale (Appendix C). The AIR Self-Determination Scale includes both quantitative and qualitative components. Throughout the week of camp, athletes completed 1 to 2 sections of survey questions per day (approximately 6 questions per section). Athletes completed sections of the AIR survey after lunch daily in the format of their choosing (e.g., braille, large print, standard print, or reader/scribe).

Post-Camp Questionnaires

Both athletes and coaches completed researcher-created questionnaires prior to leaving camp for the week. These questionnaires attempted to ascertain what aspects of camp contributed to an emotionally-safe environment in which to practice self-determination skills, how athletes practiced self-determination, and which camp activities promoted self-determination.

Athlete Post-Camp Questionnaire. On the last afternoon of camp prior to departure, athletes completed a researcher-developed questionnaire regarding self-determination at this particular sports camp for youth with visual impairments (Appendix D). In particular, this questionnaire included questions to: (a) check for athlete understanding of the term *self-determination*, (b) inquire about what activities provided the most opportunities to practice self-determination skills, and (c) question if coaches did anything to help provide opportunities to practice self-determination skills. Additionally, I asked athletes if they preferred person first (athlete who is blind or an athlete with a visual impairment) or identity first (visually impaired/blind athlete) language in order to use preferred terminology throughout this dissertation. Athletes responded to the post-camp questionnaire after lunch daily in the format of their choosing (e.g., braille, large print, standard print, or reader/ scribe).

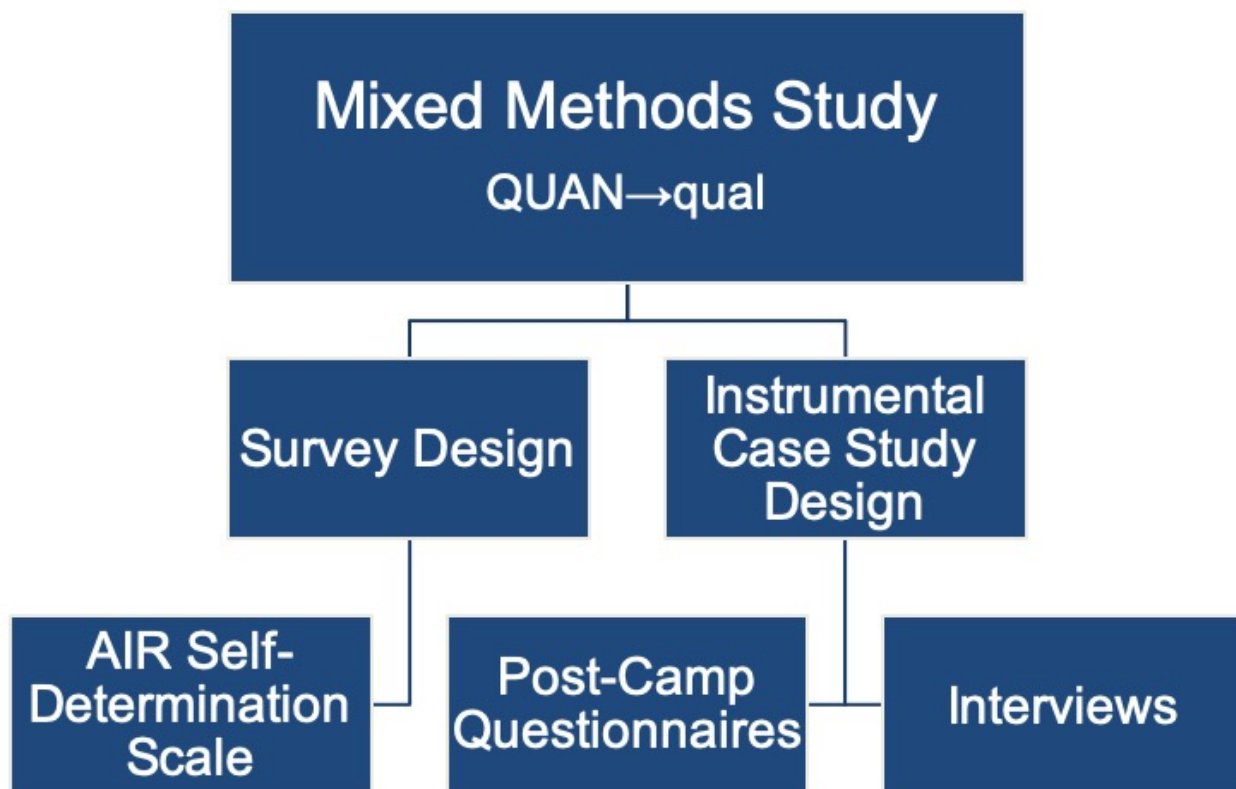
Coach Post-Camp Questionnaire. Coaches answered similar questions to athletes in their post-camp questionnaire (Appendix D). Coach questionnaires included questions about the definition of self-determination, instances of direct and incidental teaching of self-determination skills at camp, and which activities they perceived provided the most opportunities to practice self-determination skills. Coaches completed the post-camp questionnaire prior to their departure on the last day of camp in the format of their choosing (e.g., large print, standard print, or reader/ scribe).

Interviews

Five athletes participated in semi-structured interviews during the camp program. I chose athletes randomly for interviews to reduce researcher bias. In total, 4 girls and 1 boy ages 9-16 completed interviews. The interviews supported the questions I asked in the questionnaires, and elicited responses from athletes about their definition of self-determination, when they thought they practiced self-determination at camp, and what their coaches did to help encourage self-determination (Appendix E). I was able to use their responses as a starting point for a deeper conversation about the *why* behind their answers, in a way the surveys and questionnaires could not capture. Interviews occurred on the last two days of the camp program, in an area removed from other athletes and coaches. I recorded interviews using the iPhone Voice Memo application and then transferred them to a password-protected computer before deleting the files.

Mixed Methods Research

This mixed methods study into the experience of self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments utilized multiple case study and survey designs. Researchers who use mixed methods collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data in order to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2012). In this study, qualitative and quantitative survey and questionnaire data provided information about the entire sample, while five interviews provided a richer narrative to supplement information from the surveys. Figure 2 details the structure of this mixed methods study.

Figure 2*Mixed Methods Research Study*

Mixed methods research is more than “simply collecting two distinct ‘strands’ of research... it consists of merging, integrating, linking, or embedding the two ‘strands’ (Creswell, 2012, p. 535). Similarly, Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2015) defined mixed methods studies as those that are “based on the belief that there are existing problems whose complexity cannot be fully researched when the combination or integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches are not undertaken as components of the study” (p. 115). Essentially, mixed methods research aims to understand a research problem through incorporating both quantitative and qualitative means. My aim in employing mixed methods was to investigate if athletes at experience self-determination at camp more than in other settings and how athletes experience self-determination at camp. Both quantitative and qualitative *strands* of this research were important in

understanding the complete picture. In this mixed methods study, I used survey design and case study design during data collection.

Survey Design

Survey designs are used in educational research to describe trends in a sample or a whole population (Creswell, 2012). In research regarding the expanded core curriculum, researchers employ survey design regularly to investigate to what extent educators teach self-determining behaviors and skills (Agran et al., 2007; Levin & Rotheram-Fuller, 2011; Lohmeier, 2006; Monson, 2009). Similarly, summer camp researchers use surveys to assess positive youth development in camp programming (Garst & Gagnon, 2006; Garst et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2005).

Researchers use cross-sectional surveys to “examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices” at one point in time (Creswell, 2012, p. 377). Either a sample of the population or the entire population may participate in cross-sectional surveys. In this study, I administered surveys that solicited both qualitative and quantitative data to all athletes who assented and had parental consent.

Case Study Design

Educational researchers employ case study design to research bounded systems, or cases that are “separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (Creswell, 2012, p. 464). In particular, ECC researchers use case studies to explore to what extent students learn ECC skills in a variety of instructional settings (Blackshear 2014; Levin and Rotheram-Fuller, 2011; Truan & Trent, 1997). At camp, case study research typically examines the experience of PYD at one or several summer camps, as camps themselves are bounded

systems (Halsall et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2005; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018; Weybright et al., 2017).

This study was an instrumental case study. Stake (1995) explained, “For instrumental case study, issue is dominant; we start and end with issues dominant” (p. 16). The issue I addressed in this research was self-determination at summer camp. I started with investigating how the entire sample of athletes and coaches experienced self-determination at camp through post-camp questionnaire data, and then investigated the experiences of several athletes through interviews. The unit of analysis for this study was a mid-Atlantic summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments, while the units of observation were the athletes and coaches who participated in questionnaires and interviews. The ultimate goal of this study was to investigate the case of self-determination at summer camp using qualitative data collected from athletes and coaches.

Stake (1995) placed significant weight on “experiential understanding” in qualitative case study research (p. 43). In qualitative case studies, “dependent variables are experientially rather than operationally defined... even the independent variables are expected to develop in unexpected ways” (Stake, 1995, p. 41). For this study, I attempted to ascertain the perception of self-determination at summer camp for youth with visual impairments, and this research is defined by the experiences of both myself and the participants. The case study interviews and questionnaires highlighted the experiences of all individuals involved in camp, as well as the shared experiences athletes and I have at camp. These interviews contributed “thick description” (Stake, 1995, p. 43) to survey data from the larger population.

Merriam (1998) stated that “the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting

with their social worlds” (p. 6). For this study, I examined how young people interact with their social worlds at home, school, and camp, as well as how they experienced self-determination at camp in particular. The experiences of the athletes, coach interpretations of athlete experiences, my understanding of the data all construct reality in this study.

Procedures

In this study, I analyzed the how athletes experience self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. In order to do so, I examined the five cases of individual youth participants at a mid-Atlantic camp program through interviews and assessed the impact of a variety of activities on all participants.

Protection of Human Subjects

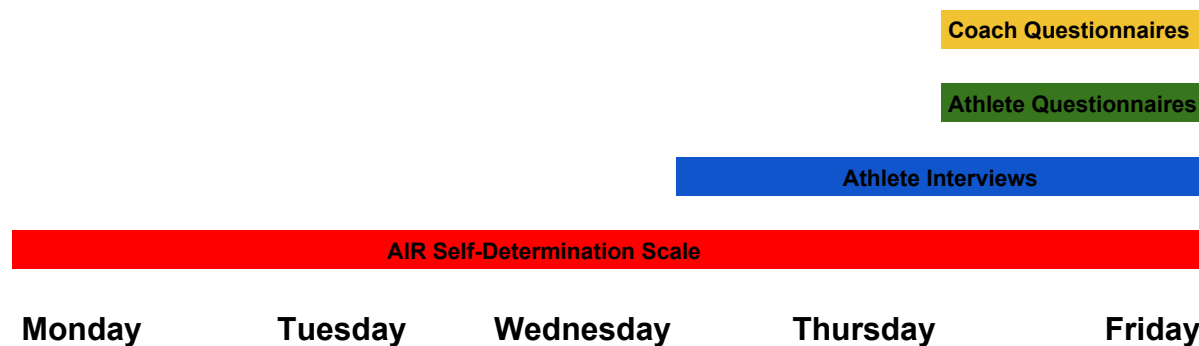
I received approval to begin this study through West Chester University’s Institutional Review Board (Appendix F). Prior to camp, I called each parent to explain the study. Depending on their preference, I sent consent forms (Appendix G) to parents via USPS or email, or send them home on the first day of camp. Prior to the first survey administration, I read the statement of assent to athletes and provided large print assent forms for them to sign (Appendix G). I provided consent forms (Appendix G) in both large print and standard print to coaches before administration of coach questionnaires. For coaches under age 18, both parents and coaches signed the coach consent form. In order to protect underage participants in the study, I gave athletes a unique ID number connected to their data rather than using names. Coach questionnaires were anonymous.

Data Collection Schedule

I collected data over one week of camp. Figure 3 illustrates the timeline of my data collection schedule.

Figure 3

Data Collection Schedule



In order to decrease fatigue with the data collection process, athletes answered only 6-12 questions per day from surveys and questionnaires. I administered the Things I Do and How I Feel sections of the AIR on day one, the What Happens at School section on day two, the goals sheet of the AIR on day three, the What Happens at Home section on day four, and both the What Happens at Camp section and post-camp questionnaire on day five. Coaches also completed their post-camp questionnaire on day five. I began interviews on day four and completed all five interviews throughout days four and five.

Analysis and Coding Procedures

After data collection, I analyzed the quantitative data I collected through statistical analysis. Additionally, I followed the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) to analyze qualitative data.

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data I collected came from the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994). The two quantitative sections of the AIR scale that were most relevant to this research on the experience of self-determination at summer sport camp for youth with visual

impairments were What Happens at Home and What Happens at School, as well as the additional section I created, What Happens at Camp. Athletes responded to six questions in each section using a Likert scale, resulting in a score for each question as well as a composite score for each section. Using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences, Version 24.0 (SPSS), I performed a repeated measures ANOVA test with three composite variables (home, school, and camp), as well as paired samples t-tests to examine differences at the question level.

Repeated Measures ANOVA. In this study, I utilized a repeated measures ANOVA on composite scores from the AIR to compare how athletes rated their self-determination skills across three locations: at home, in school, and at camp. When using a repeated measures test “all participants in a single group participate in all experimental treatments, with each group becoming its own control” (Creswell, 2012, p. 315). As all athlete participants completed home, school, and camp surveys, a repeated measures ANOVA was appropriate.

Paired Samples T-Test. In addition to the repeated measures ANOVA, I performed paired samples t-tests to investigate differences at the question level. The paired samples t-tests compared home with camp and school with camp by question rather than using the composite scores. The t-tests allowed me to further examine perceptions of self-determination at camp versus home and school.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data in this study came from three sources: interviews, the goals sheet of the AIR, and post-camp questionnaires. Both the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) and the researcher-created post-camp questionnaires yielded qualitative results in the form of open-ended questions athletes and coaches answered. In order to analyze this data, I utilized the constant comparative method. The goal of the constant comparative method is to aid

researchers in “generating a theory which is integrated, consistent, plausible, close to the data, and in a form which is clear enough to readily, if only partially, operationalized for testing in quantitative research” (Glaser, 1965, pp. 437-438). Additionally, the constant comparative method is useful for “generating and plausibly suggesting... properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon” (Glaser, 1965, p. 438). The general phenomenon I investigated in this study was the experience of self-determination athletes had at a particular summer camp.

There are four components to the constant comparative method: “(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory” (Glaser, 1965, p. 439). Fram (2013) indicated that the constant comparative method could be used in tandem with a theoretical framework “to identify and confirm that a socialization process existed and not to identify an emerging substantive theory” (p. 11). Similarly to Fram, I began the coding process with three major categories in order to answer the research questions: emotionally-safe environments, self-determination, and activities at camp. Each of these categories also had subcategories, based on my literature review and themes that arose, to help further refine coding. I used Dedoose to code qualitative survey data, questionnaire data, and interview transcripts for these themes, and refined the categories until I hit a point of saturation. *Saturation* refers to the point at which “no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61).

Threats to Internal and External Validity

Potential threats to internal and external validity included researcher bias, scheduling of data collection, maturation effects, skewed survey results, and sample size.

Researcher Bias

Researcher bias is a potential threat to validity in this study. In addition to the role of researcher at camp, I am also the camp director. Four years prior to this research, I designed the programming for camp with the intention of giving athletes time to practice self-determination skills. I came into the data analysis with an expectation that I was providing ample opportunities for direct and indirect teaching of self-determination skills. During the school year, I teach several of the athlete and coach camp participants. As a result, my role as educator and camp director may have impacted responses when interviewing and surveying athletes and coaches.

Scheduling and Maturation Effects

I was cognizant that the athletes' interest in participation could decrease if I pulled them out of activity to complete surveys, questionnaires, or interviews. In order to avoid removing athletes from sports and physical activity, athlete survey data collection occurred after lunch daily as a built-in part of the camp wellness education curriculum. Since practicing self-determination skills is a goal of camp in general, all athletes participated in self-assessment of self-determination skills and I only used data from athletes with parental consent for this research. I was aware that some athletes were tired after lunch and needed naps, others took medication that wore off at lunchtime, and others had difficulty getting back on task after unstructured time at lunch. I allowed athletes to take breaks from completing surveys and questionnaires or complete them at a later time of the day with the intention of decreasing instances of athletes rushing through surveys and questionnaires. For interviews, I asked each participant when they would like to meet with me for an interview and allowed them to schedule a different time if they did not like the time I chose. I conducted all interviews during *goal time*

(semi-structured time for free play that occurred two to three times per day) or lunchtime at camp.

Skewed Results

Although I chose athletes randomly for participation in interviews, the cases I selected may have produced skewed results. Two sections of the AIR Self-Determination Scale are What Happens at Home and What Happens at School (Wolman et al., 1994), and I asked questions about these environments in interviews. Three out of the five athletes selected are homeschooled, which means that the environments for these two sections are essentially the same. The IRB approval allowed for three to five interviews. Since three out of five participants have the same home and school environments, I interviewed five participants in order to increase validity of data I collected.

Generalizability

As 79% of the population of children attending this mid-Atlantic summer sports camp for athletes with visual impairments participated in research, this study is generalizable to the specific camp at which it took place. However, since the sample size was only 15 athletes and 24 coaches, this study is neither generalizable to the population of children who attend summer sports camps for athletes with visual impairments in general, nor to the population of children with visual impairments as a whole.

Limitations of Methodology

This study had several limitations, including the data collection schedule, cognitive level of the participants, schooling of the participants, and the survey used. I collected data over a one-week period, as camp only runs for one week per summer. If I had more time to collect data, I would have administered only one section (six questions) of the AIR per day or gave breaks

between days when I collected data. As a result of the data collection schedule, some athletes got bored, tired, or irritable while answering questions, which may have caused them to rush or not answer questions mindfully. Given more time to collect data, I also would have interviewed more participants. As a result of the time constraints of the camp schedule and my other roles at camp, I lacked sufficient opportunities to interview more participants.

The cognitive levels and ages of participants were also limitations. Some of the younger athletes and athletes with secondary disabilities may not have completely understood the questions. During survey and questionnaire administration, several athletes asked clarifying questions, but others appeared to answer questions despite not completely understanding what the survey or questionnaire asked of them. Two of the sections of the AIR survey asked about self-determination at home and school. Of the athletes who participated in this study, 20% of the athlete survey participants and 60% of the interviewees are homeschooled. Since the home and school environments are the same for these athletes, resulting data may be skewed and not representative of populations of students who attend traditional schooling.

The AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) itself contained limitations. First, the AIR survey did include definitions of the Likert scale in its instructions other than numbers associated with one-to-two word phrases: 1 (never), 2 (almost never), 3 (sometimes), 4 (almost always), and 5 (always). Secondly, the entire AIR Self-Determination Scale assessment includes sections for the educator and parent to fill out on each child. Finally, Wolman et al. (1994) based AIR Self-Determination Scale validity and reliability testing on the educator versions of the assessment, not the student form of the assessment. At camp, only child participants themselves completed the forms so results are solely their perceptions.

Summary

For the current study on the experience of self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments, I administered questionnaires to both athletes and coaches at one mid-Atlantic sports camp to solicit data about opportunities to practice self-determining behaviors. I also interviewed five athletes about their particular experiences. I analyzed the qualitative survey data, questionnaire data, and interview data using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) and the quantitative survey data using a repeated measures ANOVA test. In the next chapter, I will detail the results of data analysis.

Chapter IV: Results

In this chapter, I synthesize the data collected as part of this mixed methods study in order to answer the question: What does self-determination look like at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments? The AIR Self-Determination Scale surveys (Wolman et al., 1994) provided quantitative data as to how athlete's perception of self-determination differed between home, school, and camp settings, while questionnaires and interviews yielded qualitative information as to why the camp setting may differ from home and school in terms of opportunities to practice and learn self-determination skills.

Perceptions of Self-Determination at Summer Camp

The present study included three quantitative surveys. Athletes completed the "What Happens at Home" and "What Happens at School" sections of the AIR Self-Determination scale (Wolman et al., 1994), in addition to a section created for this research, "What Happens at Camp." Athletes answered identical questions about each setting using a five-point Likert scale. Repeated measures ANOVA and paired samples t-tests were used to analyze the data yielded from the three quantitative surveys.

AIR Self-Determination Scale

The AIR Self-Determination scale (Wolman et al., 1994) included sections that prompted the athletes to rank their perceptions of self-determination at home and at school on a five-point Likert scale. For the purposes of this research, athletes also responded to another section that included the same questions about camp. Appendix H lists responses to each question and the percentage of the total population who gave each response.

Repeated Measures ANOVA

Repeated measures ANOVA tests are appropriate when studying one “observational unit” on more than one occasion (Crowder & Hand, 1990, p. 1). For the purposes of the present study, the *observational unit* was individual athletes and the repeated occasion measured was their perceptions of self-determination across three settings: home, school, and camp. In order to utilize a repeated measures ANOVA, several conditions must be true about the data set: independent observations, sphericity, and normality (Lærd Statistics, 2018a). As all data points are individual people, this data meets the *independent observations* assumption. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated, $\chi^2(2) = 1.335, p = .512$. A Shapiro-Wilk test showed $W(15) = .936, p = .335$ for home scores; $W(15) = .982, p = .980$ for school scores; and $W(15) = .880, p = .048$ for camp scores. This test showed that the home and school scores follow a normal distribution and the camp scores are close to following a normal distribution. The camp scores slightly deviated from normality likely as a result of the small sample size and data points clustered approaching the maximum score. Since the data met or almost met all conditions, a repeated measures ANOVA was appropriate. Table 4.1 lists the results of the repeated measures ANOVA between the AIR home, school, and camp composite scores.

Table 4.1

Repeated Measures ANOVA for Composite AIR Scores

Setting	Composite score
Home	19.1 (5.76)
School	19.2 (5.21)
Camp	26.6*** (3.33)

***Statistically significant at $p < .001$

The repeated measures ANOVA on the composite scores of AIR Self-Determination Scale across home, school, and camp settings revealed athletes were statistically significantly more confident in their self-determination skills at camp ($M = 26.6$, $SD = 3.33$) compared to at home ($M = 19.1$, $SD = 5.76$) and at school ($M = 19.2$, $SD = 5.21$), $p < .001$.

Researchers utilize a Bonferroni Correction in order to avoid a Type I error (Shaffer, 1995). Table 4.2 details the results of the repeated measures ANOVA, including the Bonferroni post-hoc test.

Table 4.2

Repeated Measures ANOVA with Post-Hoc Test

		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig. ^b	95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Home	School	-0.100	1.496	1.000	-4.166	3.966
	Camp	-7.500*	1.139	0.000	-10.596	-4.404
School	Home	0.100	1.496	1.000	-3.966	4.166
	Camp	-7.400*	1.450	0.000	-11.341	-3.459
Camp	Home	7.500*	1.139	0.000	4.404	10.596
	School	7.400*	1.450	0.000	3.459	11.341

* Statistically significant at $p < .05$ ^b Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Paired Samples t-Test by Question

Athletes responded to AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) questions across home, school, and camp. In order to examine the differences in responses between settings, a paired samples t-test was used. A paired samples t-test is appropriate when attempting to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the means to two related groups (Lærd Statistics, 2018b). Table 4.3 displays the means and standard deviations of each question across all three settings.

Table 4.3*Paired Samples Statistics*

	Setting	Mean (SD)
People at <i>this setting</i> listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.	Home	3.73 (1.033)
	School	3.20 (1.014)
	Camp	4.67 (0.617)
People at <i>this setting</i> let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.	Home	2.87 (1.302)
	School	3.27 (1.033)
	Camp	4.27 (.884)
At <i>this setting</i> , I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.	Home	3.20 (1.146)
	School	3.80 (1.146)
	Camp	4.53 (.834)
People at <i>this setting</i> encourage me to start working on my plans right away.	Home	3.20 (1.320)
	School	2.60 (1.242)
	Camp	4.27 (1.100)
I have someone at <i>this setting</i> who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.	Home	2.73 (1.387)
	School	3.13 (1.552)
	Camp	4.33 (0.816)
People at <i>this setting</i> understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.	Home	3.37 (1.564)
	School	3.20 (1.373)
	Camp	4.53 (0.516)

A paired samples t-test was performed on each question between home and camp. Table 4.4 lists the results of the home and camp paired samples t-test. All camp scores were significant at the .001, .01, or .05 levels.

Table 4.4*Home and Camp Paired Samples t-Test by Question*

	t	df	Sig.
People at <i>this setting</i> listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.	-3.500	14	.004**
People at <i>this setting</i> let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.	-6.548	14	.000***
At <i>this setting</i> , I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.	-3.696	14	.002**
People at <i>this setting</i> encourage me to start working on my plans right away.	-2.166	14	.048*
I have someone at <i>this setting</i> who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.	-4.583	14	.000***
People at <i>this setting</i> understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.	-3.326	14	.005**

*Statistically significant at $p < .05$, **Statistically significant at $p < .01$, ***Statistically significant at $p < .001$

Another paired samples t-test was performed on each question between school and camp.

Table 4.5 lists the results of the school and camp paired samples t-test. Only one camp score was not significant at the .001, .01, or .05 levels.

Table 4.5*School and Camp Paired Samples t-Test by Question*

	t	df	Sig.
People at <i>this setting</i> listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.	-5.735	14	.000***
People at <i>this setting</i> let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.	-3.090	14	.008**
At <i>this setting</i> , I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.	-1.976	14	.068
People at <i>this setting</i> encourage me to start working on my plans right away.	-4.799	14	.000***
I have someone at <i>this setting</i> who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.	-2.358	14	.033*
People at <i>this setting</i> understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.	-4.000	14	.001**

*Statistically significant at $p < .05$, **Statistically significant at $p < .01$, ***Statistically significant at $p < .001$

This mixed methods study included both a repeated measures ANOVA and paired samples t-tests to analyze quantitative data. The sections below further explore each question analyzed using a t-test.

Desires, Needs, and Abilities. The first question on the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) regarding rating beliefs about a particular setting concerned athletes evaluating if they have people in their lives who listen to them when they talk about what they want, need, or are good at doing. Athletes reported that people at camp ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.617$) were statistically significantly more likely to listen to them about their desires, needs, and abilities compared to people in the athletes' homes ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.033$), $t(14) = -3.500$, $p < .01$, and compared to people in the athletes' schools ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.014$), $t(14) = -5.735$, $p < .001$.

Goals. The second question on the AIR related to if there were people in athlete's lives that let them know that they can set their own goals to get what they want or need. Athletes

reported that people at camp ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.884$) were statistically significantly more likely to let them know that they can set goals to get what they want or need compared to people in the athletes' homes ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.302$), $t(14) = -6.548$, $p < .001$, and compared to people in the athletes' schools ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.033$), $t(14) = -3.090$, $p < .01$.

Plans to Meet Goals. Question three related to setting on the AIR scale involved athletes rating if they learned how to make plans to meet goals at home, school, and camp. Athletes reported that they were statistically significantly more likely to learn how to make plans to meet goals and feel good about them at camp ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.834$) than at home ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.146$), $t(14) = -3.696$, $p < 0.01$. However, athletes reported that they were not statistically significantly more likely to learn how to make plans to meet goals and feel good about them at camp ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.834$) than at school ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.146$), $t(14) = -1.976$, $p < 0.05$.

Encouragement to Start Goals. The fourth question on the AIR concerned encouragement from people at home, school, and camp when beginning to work on goals. Athletes reported that people at camp ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.100$) were statistically significantly more likely to encourage them to start working on their plans to achieve goals right away compared to people in the athletes' homes ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.320$), $t(14) = -2.166$, $p < 0.05$, and compared to people in the athletes' schools ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.242$), $t(14) = -4.799$, $p < 0.001$.

Meeting Goals. Question five of the AIR scale related to athlete's beliefs if they had someone at home, school, and camp who could tell them if they are meeting their goals. Athletes reported they were statistically significantly more likely to have people at camp ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.816$) who could tell them if they were meeting goals compared to at home ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.387$), $t(14) = -4.583$, $p < 0.001$, as well as compared to at school ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.552$), $t(14) = -2.358$, $p < 0.05$.

Changing Plans. The final question related to self-determination across home, school, and camp settings regarded encouragement when athletes needed to change their plans to meet goals. Athletes reported that people at camp ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.516$) were statistically significantly more likely to understand when they needed to change their plan to meet my goals, offer advice, and encourage them compared to people in the athletes' homes ($M = 3.367$, $SD = 1.564$), $t(14) = -3.326$, $p < 0.01$, and compared to people in the athletes' schools ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.373$), $t(14) = -4.000$, $p < 0.01$.

The quantitative data from the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) revealed that athletes perceived overall statistically significant differences in their self-determination abilities when they were at camp compared to when they were at home or school, and identified specific areas where their perceptions of self-determination abilities at camp differ statistically significantly from their perception of self-determination abilities at home and school. The following section will highlight how the qualitative data gathered from the AIR Self-Determination Scale, post-camp questionnaires, and interviews provided more context for why these visually-impaired students perceived that the camp environment supported their development of self-determination strategies.

Experiences of Self-Determination at Summer Camp

The qualitative component of this mixed methods research included both open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Coaches responded to post-camp questionnaires regarding the impact of aspects of the camp program on their athletes' self-determination skills, while athletes answered similar questions regarding their opinions of the camp program and self-determination. All athletes also reported on their goals mid-week, a qualitative component of the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994). Finally, five athletes participated in semi-structured

interviews about their experiences at camp. In order to answer the sub-questions in this research, qualitative data was coded on three major themes: emotionally-safe environments, practicing and learning self-determination, and activities at camp.

Emotionally-Safe Environment

One purpose of this research was to investigate what qualities of camp might contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination skills. Previous research from Garst et al. (2011) determined that low staff-to-child ratios help to create an emotionally-safe environment for camp participants, as low ratios provide children with more opportunities for meaningful adult interaction. In addition, Henderson and collaborators (2005) found that emotional support, clear limits and expectations, and inclusion all contributed to emotionally-safe camp environments. In this study, qualitative data included the use of qualitative post-camp questionnaires from coaches and athletes and interviews with athletes throughout the week. Both questionnaires and interviews highlighted instances of meaningful adult interaction, emotional support, and inclusion throughout the week of camp. Additionally, the data resulting from questionnaires and interviews revealed that relationships between athletes contributed to an emotionally-safe environment.

Coach-Athlete Relationships. This research occurred at a summer camp designed for youth with visual impairments. A tenant of the staffing philosophy at this particular camp is that youth are paired one-on-one with trained coaches in order to provide individualized sport instruction, as low staff-to-child ratios are instrumental for emotional safety at summer camp and fundamental to positive youth development (Garst et al., 2011).

During camp, athletes reported positive and meaningful relationships with their coaches. According to interview and questionnaire data, athletes tended to view their relationship with

their coach as a partnership. One athlete reported of her coach in an interview, “Instead of just letting me do everything, she’ll literally do it with me. Like she’s doing it with me instead of telling me to do it.” On her questionnaire, another athlete recounted that during sports, the coaches “did [a skill] with me then let me do it on my own.” The partnership nature of the coach-athlete relationship rather than a typical instructor-student relationship allowed athletes to connect to their coaches on a deeper level.

Athletes identified a level of respect coaches had for athletes at camp. On her questionnaire, one athlete reported, “When I ask for what I need, coaches listen.” Another athlete explained in response to the questionnaire, “Even if [the coaches] didn’t like what we did, they did it.” In turn, athletes also noted that they saw their coaches as role models. When asked what she liked about her coaches in an interview, an athlete responded, “They’re nice and encouraging and they— they’re really athletic and good at playing sports and they’re really fun. And they’re not really mean.” Coaches’ willingness to listen to and participate alongside their athletes contributed to positive coach-athlete relationships at camp.

Athletes noted that coaches often encouraged them to self-advocate and set goals. A young athlete at camp explained on her questionnaire that the coaches she worked with helped her physically and emotionally during the camp experience, “They keep me hydrated for sports. They help me deal with bullies. They help me think about my goals.” In her questionnaire responses, one athlete expressed similar thoughts about how her coach helped her at camp stating, “They help me decide how to take care of my body and ask for what it needs.” Athlete perceptions paralleled what coaches’ perceptions of camp. On their questionnaire, one coach recounted seeing “coaches asking athletes to speak up for themselves when asking for what they needed or wanted.” Other coaches reported witnessing their peers help athletes with goal setting.

The relationship between athletes and coaches contributed to emotionally-safe opportunities for athletes to practice self-determination skills.

Emotional Support. At the summer camp for youth with visual impairments the present study investigated, coaches and athletes identified instances of emotional support. Emotional support at camp is one aspect of an emotionally-safe environment. Henderson and colleagues (2005) defined emotional support in terms of opportunities to belong, “hugs, easy laughter, relaxed tone of interactions, and the knowing of and calling of first names” in their research on positive youth development at summer camp (p. 67).

Athletes and coaches stated they perceived camp to be a supportive environment. One athlete explicitly stated on her questionnaire, “It’s comfortable at camp and there are tons of supportive people.” A coach indicated on their questionnaire that coaches at camp actively work to create an emotionally-safe environment at camp by “showing that it is okay to ask for help.” Another athlete identified in her questionnaire that she perceived that she could practice her self-determination skills at camp because she has “people with me to count on me and help me.” Throughout the interviews and post-camp questionnaires, many camp participants noted they perceived camp to be an emotionally-supportive environment.

Both coaches and athletes provided specific examples of verbal encouragement at camp. Three out of fifteen athletes noted that coaches and other athletes encouraged them to keep trying when an activity was hard and praised them when they were successful. Coaches in particular demonstrated that they put intention into encouraging and motivating athletes. On their post-camp questionnaire, one coach stated, “When a camper didn’t [do] too well at a task/ skill one or more times they may have given up. Coaches and head coaches would then encourage the campers to try again.” Another coach identified times of day when their athlete struggled and

needed more encouragement, “Soccer/ five-a-side soccer [sic]... was new and difficult to do under blindfold. My camper needed more motivation to continue trying during soccer/ five-a-side soccer compared to other sports.” Verbal encouragement throughout camp activities allowed athletes to feel emotionally supported at camp.

Inclusion. According to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002), *opportunities for meaningful inclusion* are integral aspects of positive youth development and involve “social inclusion, social engagement, and integration; opportunities for sociocultural identity formation; and support for cultural and bicultural competence” (p. 90). At the summer camp for youth with visual impairments in the present research, a large part of social inclusion consisted of community acceptance of disability.

Three out of fifteen athletes identified specific times they experienced inclusion with respect to their visual impairment at camp. In her interview, one athlete stated, “When they teach us about advocacy, it makes me feel better like that I’m not the only person who does it and that a lot of other people do it.” Self-advocacy is a key component of self-determination (Hatlen, 2003). Learning and practicing self-advocacy at camp can directly relate to the experience of self-determination. The wellness lesson on one day of camp was direct instruction and practice in self-advocacy skills. This lesson included discussions about visual impairment-specific advocacy topics, such as asking for accommodations at school. In post-camp questionnaires, seven coaches referenced the impact the self-advocacy lesson had on their athletes. Throughout the week, coaches encouraged and reminded athletes to utilize their self-advocacy skills. Out of 24 coaches, 7 wrote in their post-camp questionnaires that they encouraged their athletes to speak up for themselves or asked probing questions in order to get their athletes to self-advocate.

Athletes reported experiences of inclusion related to their visual impairment during interviews and on questionnaires. Interviews with athletes at camp included the question, “What makes you feel you can use your self-determination skills and advocate for yourself at camp?” One elementary school-aged athlete responded, “Because everybody has like the same problem and like I won’t feel like afraid to ask or something because everyone will probably like have a similar question because we all are visually impaired.” This athlete implied that the environment of many people with visual impairments learning together at camp created an inclusive space to practice self-determination skills. Athlete post-camp questionnaires asked athletes if coaches did anything to help them practice self-determination skills. One athlete responded, “Talk about visual impairment.” At camp, coaches and athletes talk openly about visual impairment. Conversations about visual impairment and blindness normalize disability and help create an inclusive setting for athletes.

Relationships Between Athletes. Standal and Jespersen (2008) found that one benefit of recreation programs designed for people with disabilities is the opportunities for participants to learn from experienced peers with the same disabilities. Coaches at this particular camp identified many opportunities athletes had to form supportive relationships with one another. The camp program included a wellness lesson on starting conversations and concluding interactions with peers and allowed students opportunities to practice these skills in guided role plays. On their questionnaires, 3 out of 24 coaches listed direct instruction in social skills as a time when their athletes most practiced self-determination at camp. Coaches also noted frequent opportunities for athletes to both demonstrate leadership skills and learn from peers on their post-camp questionnaires. One coach stated that “seeing others continue to try again and being motivated by it to keep trying” was a driving force for their athlete. On the other hand, another

coach saw their athlete sharing a “technique that makes [them] successful with other athletes so that they can enjoy that independence too.” Athletes were able to act as role models and learn from one another at camp.

Practicing and Learning Self-Determination at Camp

Another goal of this research was to explore how participants practiced and learned self-determination skills at camp. For the purposes of coding data, *self-determination* refers to belief in oneself, awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, self-advocacy, decision-making, ability to accept or decline help, and knowledge of how to set goals (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Monson, 2009; Opie, 2018). Themes of independence and doing things for oneself also arose during coding.

Belief in Oneself. One aspect of self-determination is “belief in oneself” (Lohmeier et al., 2009; Monson, 2009; Opie, 2018). Athletes frequently vocalized belief in themselves during interviews. One question all athletes answered in interviews was, “Do you feel good about your ability to advocate for yourself?” One athlete responded, “You can do more things when you feel good about yourself.” When asked specifically why he thought he could advocate for himself at camp, the same athlete replied, “Because when I feel good about my ability, then I can like just have a better life and not think about my ability and just sit there like, ‘What can I do, I’m blind’.” He clarified that he liked that there are unique things he can do because of his disability, such as come to camp with other kids with disabilities.

On post-camp questionnaires, coaches also noted that athletes expressed belief in themselves when setting goals. One coach explained, “The athletes want to achieve their goals and set challenging but reachable goals.” Athletes demonstrated they understood their abilities by setting personal goals that were challenging.

Awareness of Strengths and Weaknesses. One wellness lesson at camp focused on setting goals in six areas: golf, cross country, soccer, field events, and two other activities that athletes could choose. This goal-setting activity encouraged athletes to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses with respect to areas of desired personal growth. Some athletes reflected on sports they had done at camp in previous years, while others chose to focus on setting goals for their home life. Midway through the week, athletes chose one of their goals on which to report progress using the AIR goals sheet. All athletes were able to state a goal, describe what they had done over the past several days to achieve their goal, and detail their progress toward the goal. One athlete set a goal of “remembering what I need for camp.” The steps she took to work towards the goal was to “try harder to remember, learn from my mistakes.” By halfway through the week, she reported she was doing “pretty well, I remembered today.” Other athletes set goals related specifically to athletic achievement. One of the youngest boys at camp set a specific soccer goal: “In soccer I will score at least 5 goals.” He worked on this goal by “playing soccer to score all my goals.” On the third day of camp, he reported he was doing “very well because I’m working on my kicking.” In their reflections on goals for the week using the AIR goals sheet, athletes demonstrated an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses through reporting what they already did to improve on their goals and how they could currently perform particular skills.

Self-Advocacy. The camp program introduced self-advocacy skills directly and indirectly, as evidenced through coach and athlete responses to questionnaires and interviews. In post-camp questionnaires, 6 out of 24 coaches identified the lesson on self-advocacy as instrumental to their athlete’s experience at camp. One coach reported, “The activity about self-advocacy had the greatest impact on the athlete in which she created many realizations about fending for herself as

well as getting more in touch with what self-advocacy is about.” Three additional coaches referenced ways in which they taught self-advocacy skills incidentally, including seeing “coaches asking athletes to speak up for themselves when asking for what they needed or wanted” and coach “encouragement of asking for what you need” when interacting with athletes.

During interviews, athletes reported comfort with self-advocating at camp. When asked about specifics of what at camp helped her feel like she could practice self-determination skills, one athlete responded, “When [the coaches] teach us about advocacy, it makes me feel better like that I’m not the only person who does [self-advocacy] and that a lot of other people do it.” Another athlete responded in a similar way, “Because everybody has like the same problem and like I won’t feel like afraid to ask or something because everyone will probably like have a similar question because we all are visually impaired.” Athletes expressed that being around other people with similar visual impairments contributed to their comfort in advocating for themselves.

Requesting, Accepting, and Declining Help. Self-advocacy includes understanding when one needs assistance, soliciting that assistance, accepting help when it is needed, and declining help when it is not. During interviews, athletes identified times when they requested, accepted, or declined help. One athlete stated that she used her self-advocacy skills at camp to request help during sports:

If I need help on, during a certain activity, like during soccer or something and I need help, and like I don’t know what to do or I didn’t hear what she said or something, maybe I could ask whoever is teaching... “What did you mean?” or “What was the, um, skill?”

During an interview, one athlete explained that it makes her feel good about herself that at camp, she “can just walk up and ask, um, like, ‘can I have this’ or ‘what are we doing after this’ or

something.” Another athlete reflected in her interview that at camp, “It helps, you know, that I can ask for help and like, uh, know that if I need any help with anything I can just ask.” Athletes identified that they felt comfortable asking for help at camp, which allowed them to request assistance when needed.

Decision Making. Making decisions and vocalizing choices are integral aspects of self-determination. In post-camp questionnaires, 12 out of 24 coaches listed specific times in the camp program during which athletes had opportunities to make decisions, including free selects, goal time, meal time, hiking, and adventure race. In particular, seven coaches listed *free selects* and five identified *goal time* as activities at camp that provided opportunities for athletes to make choices. At camp, *free selects* are offered daily. Athletes may choose which new sport they want to try each day at camp, with options such as rugby, dance, yoga, football, lacrosse, and volleyball. Goal time is a guided free play activity during which athletes are given access to equipment for all sports and encouraged to work towards a goal they set for themselves throughout the week. Coaches observed that providing times throughout the day to make choices contributed to their athletes practicing self-determination skills at camp.

Goal Setting. Athletes set six individual goals for the week on the first day of camp. Four goals related directly to sports we played at camp, while the remaining two could relate to camp, home, or school life. In questionnaires and interviews, 3 out of 15 athletes noted that having goals was important to their camp experience. When asked during her interview about what made her feel comfortable trying again when she made a mistake while playing sports, one athlete responded, “trying to do my goal.” Having a goal in mind for the activity gave her motivation to continue trying. Another athlete explained on her post-camp questionnaire that her coaches helped her practice self-determination skills at camp by reminding her to think about her

goals throughout the week. Athletes identified goal setting as a part of camp that allowed them to practice self-determination.

Out of 24 coaches who completed questionnaires, 17 listed goal-setting activities as an aspect of camp that gave athletes opportunities to learn and practice self-determination skills, while 4 coaches specifically discussed the structured goal-setting lesson. When asked what activities at camp directly taught skills related to self-determination, one coach stated, “The first day talking about what a goal is and allowing the students to create their goals and how they would achieve them.” Coaches also gave examples of coaches following up and reinforcing goal-setting lessons throughout the week, such as when one coach saw their colleagues “encouraging students to record goals and giving time to work on them with one on one instruction.” Coaches at camp made teaching goal setting and giving ample opportunities for athletes to set their own goals a priority.

Camp Experiences Contributing to Self-Determination

Finally, this research examined what experiences at camp contributed to participants developing self-determination skills. The camp schedule included daily sport instruction, health and wellness lessons, free selects, goal time, and three snack or meal times. Athletes participated in golf, soccer, cross-country running, and four field events (shotput, discus, javelin, and hammer throw) every day at camp. Health and wellness lessons included instruction and practice with goal setting, social skills, self-advocacy, nutrition, hygiene, and money management. At camp, free select sport options change daily and athletes pick a new activity each day. Goal time provides athletes with opportunities to further work on personal goals for the week, with access to instruction from coaches and all needed equipment. Athletes and coaches reported that athletes practiced self-determination throughout all of these activities.

Daily Sport Activities. Both athletes and coaches associated daily sport activities (cross-country, field, golf, and soccer) with self-determination skills. On post-camp questionnaires, 50% of coaches and 60% of the athletes identified daily sport lessons in golf, soccer, cross-country running, and field events as important to athletes learning and practicing self-determination skills. Both groups mentioned soccer and golf instruction most frequently as prime times of day for athletes to practice aspects of self-determination, such as relationships with other athletes, goal setting, independence, and self-advocacy. An elementary school aged athlete said she practiced self-determination during “times when you need to do things on your own, sports like cross-country and soccer.”

Coach questionnaires included questions about directly and indirectly teaching self-determination skills. In response, one coach stated, “During golf we encourage athletes to set goals and advocate for what they need to be successful. Knowing the equipment you need to be successful is a part of that internal force that drives you to succeed.” Another coach elaborated,

Golf is a physical activity that also allows socialization. This allows for conversations about life and the sport. Athletes share experiences that were positive & [sic] negative but they all share a common ground and understand what each other have got [sic] through.

This really pulls out the self-determination skills. Golf is also a hard sport so the athletes are setting goals and working really hard towards it.

The post-camp coach and athlete questionnaires prompted coaches to rank activities in order of opportunities for athletes to practice self-determination skills from most (1) to least (5). When responding to the questionnaire, 60% of athletes and 46% of coaches ranked daily sport activities first or second. Daily sport activities, especially golf, provided opportunities for athletes to practice self-determination at camp.

Daily Wellness Lessons. Thirteen out of twenty-four coaches saw self-determination directly or incidentally taught to athletes at daily wellness lessons, with seven coaches specifically mentioning the goal setting lesson on post-camp questionnaires. Questionnaires for coaches included the question, “What activity, if any, do you feel had the most impact on the athlete's self-determination skills throughout the week?” One coach responded, “The activity about self-advocacy had the greatest impact on [my] athlete in which she created many realizations about fending for herself as well as getting more in touch with what self-advocacy is about.” Another coach explained that the goal setting lesson specifically “allowed the widest variety of opportunities to practice self-determination” of any activities at camp. In terms of opportunities to practice self-determination skills, 17% of coaches ranked wellness lessons as first or second. Wellness lessons, and in particular the goal setting lesson, allowed for athletes to learn and practice self-determination skills daily at camp.

Athletes also mentioned wellness lessons in post-camp questionnaires and interviews, and 27% of athletes ranked wellness lessons as first or second in terms of opportunities to practice self-determination skills. One middle-school-aged athlete wrote on his questionnaire, “The lessons after lunch helped me to learn skills for life.” In her interview, an elementary school aged athlete specifically discussed the self-advocacy wellness lesson, while another elementary school aged athlete said the “the time after lunch” made him feel like he could practice his self-determination skills (the wellness activity occurred after lunch daily).

Free Selects. In terms of opportunities to practice self-determination skills, 40% of athletes and 42% of coaches ranked free selects first or second. Eight coaches listed free selects as activities that allowed athletes to practice self-determination skills, specifically decision making and self-advocacy. One coach explained in their post-camp questionnaire that they saw

direct teaching of self-determination skills at camp when in coaches “asking athletes which sport they want to attend at free select & [sic] getting them their choice.” When asked on the post-camp questionnaire what at camp allowed her to practice self-determination, an early elementary school aged athlete responded, “All week... [I] chose what free select I wanted to do.” Free selects provided athletes with opportunities to make choices about their wants and needs, an aspect of self-determination.

Goal Time. When asked to rank activities in terms of providing the most opportunities to practice self-determination skills at camp, 92% percent of coaches ranked goal time as first or second. In response to the open-ended question regarding what activity at camp had the most impact on their athletes’ self-determination skills, five coaches discussed aspects of goal time. One coach explained that goal time impacted their athlete the most because “they got to choose which goals they wanted to work on and make a plan to achieve it.” Another coach expounded:

I think that goal time had the biggest impact on my athlete. It allowed them to pick a goal they felt they needed to work on the most, work on that goal, and decide the next time whether they should continue or work on a new goal during the next time.

In general, coaches identified goal time as particularly beneficial to athletes in the self-determination areas of decision-making and goal setting.

During interviews, three out of five athletes elaborated on their experiences at goal time. One athlete said that he specifically practiced self-determination skills like independence and goal setting at goal time: “When I was doing goal time, I felt like I could do, like, I could achieve my goal and not have it as a goal anymore.” Only 33% of athletes ranked goal time as opportunities to practice self-determination skills. Coach and athlete rankings of goal time represented the largest difference in opinion of all activities ranked, however this may be

because athletes considered activities they participated in during goal time daily sports or free selects, depending on their choices.

Snack and Meal Times. The camp program included two snack breaks, one mealtime, and many water breaks throughout the day. Forty percent of athletes ranked lunchtime first or second in terms of opportunities to practice self-determination skills. On post-camp questionnaires, two athletes specifically mentioned asking for a break to get water or independently getting water as times when they used self-determination skills at camp.

While only 4% of coaches ranked lunch and meal times as first or second in terms of providing opportunities for athletes to practice self-determination skills at camp, four coaches elaborated in their post-camp questionnaires on how meal, snack, and water break times supported self-determination. On their post-camp questionnaire, one coach stated that the athletes practiced independence during these times by “being able to choose their own lunch everyday [sic] and then getting lunch and eating on their own. Also being able to fill their own waters when they are empty.” Young people with visual impairments often experience *learned helplessness*, the “psychological state that results when an individual perceives that events in his or her environment are uncontrollable” (Wiener et al., 2011, p. 667), which is a barrier to self-determination. Activities that promote independence help young people with visual impairments learn skills that contribute to self-determination. Coaches at camp identified mealtime and snack time as camp activities that promoted independence for athletes.

Adventure Race. The culminating activity at camp was the adventure race. This activity occurred on the last day at camp and required athletes to work together, without adult help, to read a map and complete challenges based on activities they learned throughout the week. As this activity only happened one time, it was not included on the list of activities athletes and

coaches ranked on their post-camp questionnaires. However, on open-ended questionnaire and interview questions, both athletes and coaches reported that athletes practiced self-determination skills throughout the adventure race. One athlete wrote that coaches helped her practice self-determination skills during the adventure race, “[when] we did the evencher-race [sic] the coaches did not help us.” Lack of direct intervention from coaches during the adventure race allowed athletes to be independent and make decisions, both characteristics of self-determination.

On post-camp questionnaires, 8 out of 24 coaches described aspects of the adventure race that allowed athletes to work independently, advocate for themselves, make decisions, and problem-solve. One coach outright stated, “Our adventure challenge at the end of the week definitely had a huge impact on our campers [sic] self-determination skills.” Another coach gave more detail about the adventure race experience: “[The athletes] worked on a lot of the skills implicitly. Problem solving, leadership, decision-making, choice making, safety.” Coaches observed athletes utilizing many self-determination skills during the end-of-camp adventure race activity.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the results of surveys, questionnaires, and interviews in order to answer the question: What does self-determination look like at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments? Quantitative data revealed that athletes rated their ability to use self-determination skills statistically significantly higher at camp than at home and school. Through questionnaires and interviews, athletes and coaches explained how camp provided an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination skills, which specific skills athletes used most often, and which activities afforded athletes the most opportunities to learn and

practice self-determination skills. In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of these findings in relation to my research question and the broader educational context.

Chapter V: Discussion

In Chapter IV, I presented the results of my study on self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. In this chapter, I will: (a) summarize the study, (b) review participants' definitions of self-determination, (c) relate the results back to positive youth development and situated learning theories, (d) examine the results of the study in relation to my sub-questions, (e) discuss the implications of this study for future educational practice, (f) explain the limitations of the study, and (g) consider the implications of this study for future research.

Summary of Study

Through this mixed methods study, I sought to answer the question: What does self-determination look like at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments? While self-determination is a mandatory part of curriculum for students with visual impairments (Hatlen, 2003), teachers of students with visual impairments focus on teaching academic skills as opposed to self-determination (Palmer, 2005; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Some educational researchers (Blackshear, 2014; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010) indicated that summer programming may be an avenue to incorporate education in self-determination, while other experts in the field (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002, Robinson & Lieberman, 2004; Lieberman et al., 2014; Brian et al., 2018; Opie, 2018) found that physical education programs may be a place to teach self-determination skills.

In order to investigate the experience of self-determination at one mid-Atlantic summer camp, I employed survey and case study design. In total, 15 athletes and 24 coaches participated in this research study. Both athletes and coaches at camp completed questionnaires, while a random selection of athletes also participated in interviews.

Based on the results of the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994), athletes reported that they were statistically significantly more confident in their self-determination skills at camp compared to at home and at school. Qualitative data from surveys, questionnaires, and interviews provided more in-depth insight into what athletes and coaches saw happening at camp that could contribute to this discrepancy between home, school, and camp. In particular, the qualitative data focused on discerning what aspects of self-determination athletes utilized most at camp, what qualities of camp contributed to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination skills, and how athletes practiced and learned self-determination skills at camp.

Self-Determination

Sapp and Hatlen (2010) defined self-determination as “a person’s right to decide freely and without undue influence how he or she wishes to live his or her life (p. 341). On questionnaires and in interviews, coaches and athletes responded to the question: What is self-determination in your own words? This question served to ensure participants knew the meaning of the term *self-determination* prior to responding to the rest of the questions. Athlete definitions of self-determination in interviews and on post-camp questionnaires included “being yourself”, “asking for things I need”, and “stand[ing] up for yourself.” Coaches defined self-determination using phrasing such as “an individual’s ability to complete a task or work toward a goal by themselves” and “setting goals and knowing how to make them happen.” Both groups of participants were able to retain definitions of self-determination throughout the week of camp.

Situated Learning and Positive Youth Development

The theoretical framework that guided this study included situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1990) and positive youth development theory (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). This

framework is based on the premise that summer camp communities that promote situated learning and positive youth development can foster learning and practicing self-determining behaviors for their participants. Through quantitative surveys, athletes expressed their perception of their self-determination skills as statistically significantly higher at camp than at home or school. In the following sections, I will explain this result through the theoretical lenses of situated learning theory and positive youth development.

Situated Learning at Summer Camp

Situated learning theory accentuates the interdependence between individuals and their learning environments (Lave, 1991). Therefore, learning is a product of “legitimate peripheral participation” in a particular social practice or community (Lave, 1991, p. 64). In the present research, individuals often had opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation in activities requiring self-determination.

The summer camp environment investigated in this study was structured differently than home and school environments. Athletes had daily choices about their activities (free selects and goal time), made decisions about their goals throughout each day, and were, for the most part, constantly engaged in activity throughout the day.

Lave and Wenger (1990) found in their research that significant learning occurred as a result of a mentor-apprentice relationship in a community of practice. A mentor-apprentice relationship, or in the case of this study, a coach-athlete relationship, was a key feature of the camp experience for athletes. Athletes identified several ways in which their coaches mentored them in both physical skills and emotionally throughout camp, such as encouraging them to set goals, fostering independence, role modeling athletic skills, and completing tasks alongside of

athletes. In post-camp questionnaires, one athlete specifically stated that the coaches “did [activities] with me then let me do it on my own.”

Coaches also recognized the mentor-apprentice relationship, but between older and younger athletes rather than coaches and athletes. Specifically, athletes had the opportunity during the adventure race activity to mentor one another and foster their leadership skills. As visual impairment is a low incidence disability (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2015), many athletes at camp do not experience mixed age groups of children with visual impairments on a regular basis in their home and school lives. The experience of mentoring and being mentored by other youth with visual impairments is then unique to camp and contributes to learning.

The mentor-apprentice relationship at camp is a crucial difference between camp and the home and school environments. Both home and school settings often have an adult who is in charge of children who must follow directions. At camp, the athletes are a part of creating their environment and can learn from adults who are working alongside them.

Positive Youth Development at Summer Camp

Positive youth development is a theory in which youth can develop, through targeted programming, five main psychological, behavioral, and social characteristics: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/ compassion (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Zarrett and Lerner (2008) indicated that if youth develop these five “Cs”, they might in turn become better contributing members of their communities. Contribution to one’s community can take the form of self-determined behaviors such as self-advocacy, belief in oneself, and decision-making.

The mid-Atlantic summer camp for youth with visual impairments investigated in the current study contained programming in all five areas of positive youth development. Through

targeted instruction in goal setting, social skills, and self-advocacy, athletes developed competence in aspects of self-determination. Coaches provided encouragement and positive feedback to promote confidence and character throughout sport lessons and downtime at camp. Athletes and coaches both identified ways in which athletes connected with one another, as well as with their coaches, in a caring and compassion manner. Through qualitative questionnaire data and interviews, athletes identified that they experienced all five characteristics of positive youth development during the week of summer camp.

Summary and Discussion of Results

The present mixed methods study had four sub-questions that served as the basis for data analysis and discussion: What is the experience of practicing self-determination at camp? What qualities of camp contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination skills? How do students practice self-determination skills at camp? What experiences at camp contribute to developing self-determination skills? The results of quantitative surveys, paired with qualitative questionnaires and interview data, contributed to a broader understanding of the experience of self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments.

Perceptions of Self-Determination at Summer Camp

Through the AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994), athletes reported that they were statistically significantly more confident in their self-determination skills at camp compared to at home and at school. This result shows that there is a clear difference in how athletes perceive themselves and their environments with respect to self-determination when they are at camp versus when they are at home or at school. While this statistic alone is not enough to make conclusions as to why athletes may rank camp higher on measures of self-determination,

open-ended questionnaires and interviews with athletes provided more data as to the specific attributes of camp that may be contributing to this result.

Emotionally-Safe Environment

Questionnaires and interviews completed by both athletes and coaches for this study revealed that coach-athlete relationships, emotional support, inclusion, and relationships with other athletes were instrumental in creating an emotionally-safe environment at camp. The partnership coaches and athletes experienced at camp was different than a typical student-teacher relationship. Coaches received training on visual impairment, targeted educational strategies for teaching individuals with vision loss, and camp-specific programming. While all children at camp benefit from teachers of the visually impaired and/or orientation and mobility instructors throughout the school year, these specialists are not working one-on-one with the student throughout each school day. A camp staff comprised of experts who understand athletes' needs and were willing to listen to what athletes had to say was instrumental to creating an emotionally-safe environment at camp.

The language athletes used on their open-ended questionnaires revealed that they perceived they were emotionally supported and included at camp. In particular, one athlete stated, "It's comfortable at camp and there are tons of supportive people," while another athlete made a marginal note on her questionnaire that expressed, "I will miss camp!!! See ya [sic] next year!!" Athletes and coaches also cited other examples of emotional support at camp, including: verbal encouragement, support when athletes made mistakes, and coaches "showing that it is okay to ask for help." Several athletes also referenced open discussions of visual impairment as an aspect of camp that made them feel supported and included. For example, several camp activities included specific conversations about visual impairment. Coaches addressed ways to

accommodate for visual impairments using assistive technology and other sensory information, encouraged discussions on how to advocate for one's visual needs, and spoke about their own visual impairments during wellness lessons. Throughout sport activities, coaches asked athletes to choose equipment that was best for their level of visual impairment. Coaches openly discussed canes and glasses, and set the expectation that athletes use the vision and mobility aids appropriate for them. Visual impairment is not a common point of discussion in school outside of sessions with vision professionals, so camp was a unique setting in this way.

Overall, this study revealed that the camp setting provided an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination skills through positive relationships with coaches and athletes at camp, emotional support, and inclusion with respect to visual impairment. Athletes received individualized attention from trained coaches who regularly validated their disability identities, an integral part of what makes camp a particularly salient environment for practicing self-determination skills.

Practicing and Learning Self-Determination at Camp

Research regarding the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments defined self-determination in terms of belief in oneself, awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, self-advocacy, decision-making, ability to accept or decline help, and knowledge of how to set goals (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Monson, 2009; Opie, 2018). The present study found that athletes practiced and learned all of these self-determination skills at camp.

Belief in Oneself and Understanding Abilities. Both athletes and coaches discussed goal setting as the primary time athletes demonstrated belief in themselves and awareness of strengths and weaknesses. On the first day of this particular camp, athletes participated in a

specific goal-setting lesson. The daily schedule at this camp included time set aside to work on goals, regular self-monitoring of goals, and *Care to Share*— a time for athletes to share their accomplishments with the whole camp. Coaches and athletes identified that these experiences contributed to athletes developing a greater understanding of their personal abilities. Instruction in goal setting is not often a part of the lives of young children, specifically those with disabilities. While teams of educators annually discuss the goals of students with visual impairments at an IEP meeting, children are not required to be included in this planning until they are 16 years old (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2006). Yet at camp, athletes of all ages learn to set goals and reassess their progress.

Self-Advocacy. Athletes at camp learned and practiced self-advocacy skills, including requesting help and making decisions. Emotional safety and an athlete-centered environment may be aspects of why athletes reported that they felt comfortable enough to advocate for themselves in the camp setting versus at home and school. Three athletes specifically identified that they felt comfortable asking for help at camp, which allowed them to solicit assistance when needed during sports and other camp activities. In terms of decision-making, coaches noted goal time and free selects as the primary times athletes made choices about what they wanted to do at camp, while athletes also included lunch and snack as times of day they made decisions. The camp schedule included times of day when athletes had to pick an activity they wanted to learn or practice. Goal time allowed athletes to explore their interests and work on individual goals, while free selects provided daily opportunities to try something new. Choice throughout the day and freedom to work on individual pursuits was an aspect of camp that differed from the school environment, and likely contributed to athletes' opportunities to practice self-determination skills.

Camp Experiences Contributing to Self-Determination

Goal time, free selects, and daily sport activities ranked highest terms of activities that promote self-determination among coaches and athletes. Both adapted sport and goal setting activities rarely happen for children with visual impairments in such a structured setting outside of camp.

Daily Sport Activities and Free Selects. Each day at camp, athletes played golf and soccer, ran cross-country or hiked, and threw shotput, discus, hammer, or javelin. Athletes had the opportunity throughout the week to pick a free select daily, with options such as rugby, lacrosse, football, volleyball, yoga, and dance. All sports and activities offered adaptations for vision, like larger equipment, brightly colored balls, or sound devices. With respect to self-determination skills, athletes identified that they had to do things for themselves and know what types of equipment worked best for them at sport activities, while coaches saw athletes socializing and setting goals during sports. On questionnaires, 60% of athletes and 46% of coaches ranked daily sport activities as first or second in terms of opportunities to practice self-determination. Both athletes and coaches noted that athletes used decision-making and self-advocacy skills at free selects. In total, 40% of athletes and 42% of coaches ranked free selects first or second in terms of opportunities to practice self-determination. Access to adapted sport and physical activity from qualified educators is a strength of the camp program.

Goal Setting. The camp schedule included a targeted lesson in goal setting and daily opportunities to check in and work towards goals. In terms of opportunities to practice self-determination, 92% coaches and 33% of athletes ranked goal setting as first or second. Young people with visual impairments are not required to participate in their educational goal setting

until they reach transition age, 16-years-old (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2006). Camp provides young people with opportunities to set their own goals regardless of age.

Implications for Future Educational Practice

In their research on summer camps, Ramsing and Sibthorp (2008) found that programs supporting autonomy, competence, and interpersonal connection helped participants develop self-determination skills. The current study found similar results at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. In particular, the current study suggests that coach-athlete relationships, emotional support, inclusion, relationships with other athletes, goal setting, and adapted sport contributed to youth with visual impairments perceiving themselves to better utilize self-determination skills at camp than at home and school.

Implement in School

Educators wishing to support self-determination skills for youth with visual impairments can incorporate some elements of the camp environment into the school setting. Athletes identified coach-athlete relationships, emotional support, inclusion, and relationships with other athletes as aspects of camp that made them feel emotionally safe. Low staff-to-child ratios, opportunities to interact with other individuals with visual impairments, verbal encouragement, and normalization of disability are all strategies camp uses that educators can replicate to make youth with visual impairments feel emotionally safe in the classroom.

In terms of activities, athletes and coaches ranked goal setting, free selects, and daily sports at camp as the activities that most promoted use of self-determination skills. Access to adapted sport, options to follow one's own interests throughout the day, setting goals, and checking in on goal progress regularly are all replicable activities within a school setting.

Another educational takeaway from this study is the importance of extra-curricular programming for young people with visual impairments. While individual activities may be incorporated into a school environment, the camp setting provides a unique opportunity for young people to be independent and self-determined. Garst and colleagues (2011) found that “young people reinvent themselves through the camp experience by escaping the negative impressions of others and revising their self-identity at camp” (p. 78). Summer camp experiences designed around the concept of normalizing visual impairment and emotionally supporting their attendees have the opportunity to promote self-determination in a unique way.

Implement at Home

Parents wishing to support self-determination skills for youth with visual impairments can also integrate aspects of the camp environment into home life. Athletes and coaches identified emotional safety and physical activity as components of camp that fostered self-determination skills. Parents can mimic aspects of the camp environment in order to promote self-determination at home.

Athletes and coaches noted opportunities to interact with other individuals with visual impairments and normalization of disability as key features of emotional safety at camp. In order to bring this experience into home life, families can join visual impairment-specific organizations, seek out role models with visual impairments for their child, and normalize disability in their everyday activities. Organizations such as American Foundation for the Blind; National Federation of the Blind; and various special interest groups like United States Association of Blind Athletes or National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation provide families with community and resources related to visual impairment.

Additionally, families can normalize visual impairment through making accessibility a part of their everyday lives and openly discussing visual impairment as a neutral rather than negative experience. Utilizing large print or braille text throughout the home, participating in accessible recreational activities, and holding the same expectations for sighted and visually impaired family members can contribute to the inclusion and emotional safety of children with visual impairments at home. In terms of accessible recreational activities, athletes and coaches at camp indicated that children practiced self-determination skills through participation in adapted sport. Use of auditory equipment like soccer balls, verbal description of tasks, and participation in blind sports such as beep baseball or five-a-side soccer at home and in the local community can contribute to self-determination skills for youth with visual impairments.

The results of the current study indicate that camp is an emotionally-safe environment in which young people with visual impairments can practice and learn self-determination skills through a variety of adapted activities. While this research can provide valuable information for other practitioners looking to teach similar skills, the study also contained limitations that could impact generalizability.

Limitations of the Study

This mixed methods study had limitations in three areas: methodology, analysis, and generalizability. Potential limitations include sample size, participants, data collection schedule, relationships between researcher and participants, tests used for analysis, and differences between this particular camp and other camp programs.

Limitations in Methodology

This research had methodological limitations as a result of the sample size, age of athlete participants, period of time over which participants produced data, environment in which data

collection occurred, and relationship of participants to the researcher. The entire camp program only included 19 athletes and 36 coaches. The small population size resulted in an even smaller final research sample (15 athletes and 24 coaches).

One limitation of the study may have been comprehension of the questionnaire and survey questions. Given that athlete participants ranged in age from 7 to 16 years old, many of the youngest participants needed supports such as help writing answers to questions or question rephrasing. Additionally, some of the youth participants had multiple disabilities that impacted comprehension, attention, or exhaustion. Several participants had to stop and re-start surveys or take surveys at a different time than the rest of the group due to naps or difficulty attending to tasks after lunch. However, if the data from two participants who live with disabilities impacting comprehension and attention were removed, this would skew the data more favorably towards camp.

As camp is only one week in duration, all data collection occurred over a one-week period of time. Thus, to prevent fatigue, all athletes completed one to two short sections of survey data per day, and five athletes also participated in interviews. Several athletes noted that they answered a question in an interview that repeated on a survey, and questioned why they had to answer it twice. A potential limitation of the study included athlete desire to get back to other activities. Relatedly, the environment in which participants completed surveys, questionnaires, and interviews was a potential limitation. Data collection occurred predominantly in an outdoor setting during a hot week in the summer in between lunch and a health lesson. The environment was not always ideal for quiet reflection on survey questions, and coaches regularly had to keep their athletes on task. Coaches filled out post-camp questionnaires outdoors at camp prior to

leaving for the week. However, several coaches left without completing questionnaires, despite filling out consent forms.

Another limitation is the relationship between the athletes, coaches, and researcher. The accommodations section of the AIR Self-Determination Scale allows participants to request preferred accommodations (Wolman et al., 1994). Athletes who requested a scribe worked with their one-on-one coaches to complete the questions. Thus, athletes' desire to please their coaches may have impacted their responses to questions. Similarly, I have known the athletes who participated in interviews for several years and therefore desire to please me with their interview responses may have influenced what they said.

Limitations in Analysis

There were three limitations with respect to analysis: power, normality, and qualitative data coding. While the small sample size for this research could have interfered with the power needed to get significance in a repeated measures ANOVA, however in the case of this study, the differences between camp and the other settings were considerable and alleviated this limitation.

In order to assume normality, a Shapiro-Wilk test should have a p-value greater than .05. A Shapiro-Wilk test showed $W(15) = .936$, $p = .335$ for home scores; $W(15) = .982$, $p = .980$ for school scores; and $W(15) = .880$, $p = .048$ for camp scores. The home and school scores follow a normal distribution, but the camp scores do not quite meet the $p > .05$ statistic. However, the camp scores were very close to following a normal distribution and likely only slightly deviated from normality as a result of the small sample size and data points clustered approaching the maximum score.

Finally, I utilized the constant comparative method to code qualitative data. As themes were pre-determined based on research and camp schedule, it is possible I have overlooked some

potential themes. However, as themes arose from the data, I noted them and added to my coding themes in order to counteract this limitation.

Limitations in Generalizability

The two primary limitations in this study regarding generalizability were small sample size and differences between this particular camp and other similar camps. As the sample size was small (15 athletes and 24 coaches), it would be hard to generalize this research to all students with visual impairments or even all students with visual impairments who attend summer camps. Additionally, this research took place within a specific camp environment focused on self-determination. While similar sports camps for children with visual impairments exist, unless the programs are run the same way with the same activities, staff, and training, the results might not be the same. This research can serve as a guideline for which activities and constructs may lead to students practicing and learning self-determination skills, however the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond this particular camp environment.

Implications for Future Educational Research

Past research in the field of the expanded core curriculum indicated that physical education (Lieberman & Stuart, 2002, Robinson & Lieberman, 2004; Lieberman et al., 2014; Brian et al., 2018; Opie, 2018) and summer programming (Blackshear, 2014; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010) might be the most appropriate time to teach self-determination skills to youth with visual impairments. However, that research fails to provide many specific recommendations as to what activities most promote the acquisition of self-determination skills. The current study adds to that existing body of research through exploring the attributes of the summer sports camp environment which contribute to student learning of self-determination skills.

Participants in this study indicated they perceived themselves to have better self-determination skills at camp than at home and school. This study specifically investigated what characteristics of the camp setting made athletes comfortable enough to practice these skills and what activities promoted and taught self-determination. Future research focusing on what qualities of the home and school settings do not encourage self-determination compared to the camp setting would provide a more comprehensive account of how children with visual impairments perceive their surroundings.

The small sample size of youth participants in this study impacts generalizability and further research that focuses on a larger pool of youth with visual impairments may provide different results or corroborate the results of this study. However, gathering large samples of youth with visual impairments is difficult since visual impairment is a low incidence disability. Replicating this same study at other summer sports camps for youth with visual impairments could offer more information as to what types of activities contribute to athletes' development of self-determination skills.

Summary

This study investigated self-determination at a summer sports camp for youth with visual impairments. Through data taken from surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, participants revealed that they perceived this mid-Atlantic summer camp to be an emotionally-safe environment that both taught and provided opportunities to practice self-determination skills.

This research will contribute to the literature surrounding teaching self-determination skills to young people with visual impairments and has implications for classroom learning. In particular, low staff-to-student ratios, access to adapted sport, options to follow one's own

interests throughout the day, and goal-setting are all aspects of the camp environment that educators can utilize to promote self-determination in school.

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Appendix A: AIR Self-Determination Scale

This is the accessible version printed for large print users at camp. Full document available from: <http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/self-determination-assessment-tools/air-self-determination-assessment>

Circle the number of the answer which tells what you are most like. Circle only one number.

- 1: Never
- 2: Almost Never
- 3: Sometimes
- 4: Almost Always
- 5: Always

I know what I need, what I like, and what I'm good at.

1 2 3 4 5

I set goals to get what I want or need. I think about what I am good at when I do this.

1 2 3 4 5

I figure out how to meet my goals. I make plans and decide what I should do.

1 2 3 4 5

I begin working on my plans to meet my goals as soon as possible.

1 2 3 4 5

I check how I'm doing when I'm working on my plan. If I need to, I ask others what they think of how I'm doing.

1 2 3 4 5

If my plan doesn't work, I try another one to meet my goals.

1 2 3 4 5

Circle the number of the answer which tells what you are most like. Circle only one number.

1: Never

2: Almost Never

3: Sometimes

4: Almost Always

5: Always

I feel good about what I like, what I want, and what I need to do.

1 2 3 4 5

I believe that I can set goals to get what I want.

1 2 3 4 5

I like to make plans to meet my goals.

1 2 3 4 5

I like to begin working on my plans right away.

1 2 3 4 5

I like to check on how well I'm doing in meeting my goals.

1 2 3 4 5

I am willing to try another way if it helps me meet my goals.

1 2 3 4 5

Circle the number of the answer which tells what you are most like. Circle only one number.

1: Never

2: Almost Never

3: Sometimes

4: Almost Always

5: Always

People at school listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.

1 2 3 4 5

People at school let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.

1 2 3 4 5

At school, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.

1 2 3 4 5

People at school encourage me to start working on my plans right away.

1 2 3 4 5

I have someone at school who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.

1 2 3 4 5

People at school understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.

1 2 3 4 5

Circle the number of the answer which tells what you are most like. Circle only one number.

1: Never

2: Almost Never

3: Sometimes

4: Almost Always

5: Always

People at home listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.

1 2 3 4 5

People at home let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.

1 2 3 4 5

At home, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.

1 2 3 4 5

People at home encourage me to start working on my plans right away.

1 2 3 4 5

I have someone at home who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.

1 2 3 4 5

People at home understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.

1 2 3 4 5

Give an example of a goal you are working on.

What are you doing to reach this goal?

How well are you doing in reaching this goal?

Appendix B: Letter of Use

Available online: <http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/self-determination-assessment-tools/air-self-determination-assessment>

TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK NEW YORK 10027

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

James Martin, Ph.D.
The University of Oklahoma
Zarrow Endowed Professor of Special Education
Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment
Carpenter Hall, Room 111
840 Asp Ave.
Norman, OK 73019

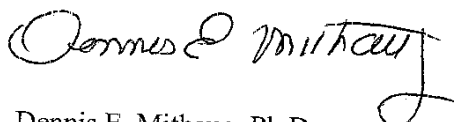
January 30, 2006

Dear Dr. Martin,

I am pleased that you can make the AIR assessments and User Guide available for download from your OU website. This will provide a valuable service to schools across the country.

You have my permission to place the AIR Educator, Parent, and Student assessment tools on the Zarrow Center web site for free downloading. You also have my permission to place the AIR User Guide on your web site for free downloading.

Respectfully,



Dennis E. Mithaug, Ph.D.
Professor

Appendix C: AIR Camp Addition

Circle the number of the answer which tells what you are most like. Circle only one number.

1: Never

2: Almost Never

3: Sometimes

4: Almost Always

5: Always

People at Camp Abilities listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.

1 2 3 4 5

People at Camp Abilities let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.

1 2 3 4 5

At Camp Abilities, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.

1 2 3 4 5

People at Camp Abilities encourage me to start working on my plans right away.

1 2 3 4 5

I have someone at Camp Abilities who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.

1 2 3 4 5

People at Camp Abilities understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix D: Post-Camp Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered in large print or braille, based on individual needs. Lead researcher can read and write braille.

Coach Questionnaire

1. What is self-determination in your own words?
2. Direct teaching is when a skill is explicitly taught. What instances, if any, of direct teaching of self-determination skills did you see at camp?
3. Indirect teaching is when students are given opportunities to practice and hone skills. What instances, if any, of indirect or incidental teaching of self-determination skills did you see at camp?
4. What activity, if any, do you feel had the most impact on the athlete's self-determination skills throughout the week?
5. Rank activities in order of how often athletes had opportunities to practice self-determination skills, where 1 is the most amount of opportunities and 5 is the least amount of opportunities.
 - a. Structured daily sport lessons
 - b. Structured daily health lessons
 - c. Free selects
 - d. Goal time
 - e. Lunch time

Athlete Questionnaire

1. Do you prefer to be called a blind/ visually impaired athlete OR an athlete with a visual impairment/ blindness? Can you explain why?
2. What is self-determination in your own words?
3. What did coaches do at camp to help you practice self-determination skills at camp?
4. When, if ever, else did you practice self-determination skills at camp?
5. What, if anything, made you feel like you could practice self-determination skills at camp?
6. Rank activities at camp in order of how often you think you practiced your self-determination skills at camp, where 1 is most often and 5 is least often.
 - a. Golf, soccer, cross-country, and field events
 - b. Wellness activities
 - c. Free selects
 - d. Goal time
 - e. Lunch time

Appendix E: Interview Questions

- Do you prefer to be called a blind/ visually impaired athlete OR an athlete with a visual impairment/ blindness? Why?
- What is self-determination in your own words?
 - If the athlete does not know, interviewer will define self-determination in words appropriate to the age level of the athlete.
- Do you feel like you use self-determination skills in your daily life at home or school?
 - If no, move on to the next question.
 - If yes, ask follow-up questions:
 - During which activities in your daily life at school do you feel you need self-determination skills?
 - During which activities in your daily life at home do you feel you need self-determination skills?
 - Do you feel good about your ability to advocate for yourself at home and in school? Why or why not?
 - Is there anything that would make you feel like you could practice your self-determination skills better at home or school?
- Do you feel like you practice your self-determination skills at camp?
 - If no, ask follow-up questions:
 - What could camp do to give you more opportunities to practice your self-determination skills?
 - If yes, ask follow-up questions:
 - When did you practice self-determination skills at camp?
 - What made you feel like you could practice self-determination skills at camp?
 - Do you feel good about your ability to advocate for yourself at camp? Why or why not?
 - Is there anything that would make you feel like you could practice your self-determination skills better at camp?

Appendix F: IRB Approval



Office of Research and Sponsored Programs | West Chester University | Ehinger Annex
West Chester, PA 19383 | 610-436-3557 | www.wcupa.edu

TO: Maria Lepore Stevens and Heather Schugar
FROM: Nicole M. Cattano, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB)
DATE: 6/2/2019

Protocol ID # 20190603B

This Protocol ID number must be used in all communications about this project with the IRB.

Project Title: Impact of Summer Camp of Self-Determination Behaviors
Date of Approval: 6/2/2019

Expedited Approval

This protocol has been approved under the new updated 45 CFR 46 common rule that went in to effect January 21, 2019. As a result, this project will not require continuing review. Any revisions to this protocol that are needed will require approval by the WCU IRB. Upon completion of the project, you are expected to submit appropriate closure documentation. Please see www.wcupa.edu/research/irb.aspx for more information.

Any adverse reaction by a research subject is to be reported immediately through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs via email at irb@wcupa.edu.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole M. Cattano".

Co-Chair of WCU IRB

WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB)
IORG#: IORG0004242
IRB#: IRB00005030
FWA#: FWA00014155

Appendix G: Informed Consent and Assent

Consent Form for Athlete Participation in Research

Project Title: Self-Determination at Camp Abilities

Investigator(s): Maria Lepore-Stevens; Heather Schugar (faculty advisor)

Project Overview:

Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being done by Maria Lepore-Stevens as part of her Doctoral Dissertation to investigate what qualities of a summer sports camp for athletes with visual impairments contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination. In other words, the researchers are investigating what happens at camp to make it a place where athletes feel safe enough to practice skills such as advocating for themselves and setting goals for themselves. Your child's participation will take about 10 minutes per day, during the wellness session at camp, to complete. If chosen for an interview, athletes will participate in an interview with Maria for 10-20 minutes during down time. There is a minimal risk of loss of confidentiality; However in order to keep participant records confidential, participants will be identified with a number and only the investigators will have access to information regarding which participant corresponds to which survey. Part of the camp program is investigating personal understanding of self-determination skills, so athletes would be completing surveys for personal use regardless of whether or not the data is used for research purposes. Since all participants in the camp program will be completing information as part of their participation in camp, no single athlete at camp will be singled out. Participants will be allowed to complete surveys and interviews on their own time schedules, stop and come back to the survey or interview if they need a break, and stop participation at any time. While there are no direct benefits to individual athletes from participating in this research, the resulting knowledge will be important in the field of education for individuals with visual impairments. Current research in the field of teaching students with visual impairments indicates that students with visual impairments receive minimal education in how to utilize and time to practice self-determining skills and behaviors. Research into what qualities of a summer sports program allow students to practice self-determining behaviors could provide impetus for visual impairment agencies and education institutions to provide more alternative programming to teach this aspect of the expanded core.

If you would like your child to take part in this research, West Chester University requires that you agree and sign this consent form.

You may ask Maria Lepore-Stevens any questions to help you understand this study. If you don't want your child to be a part of this study, it won't affect any services from West Chester University or Camp Abilities Delaware. If you choose to be a part of this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time.

1. **What is the purpose of this study?**
 - Investigate what qualities of a summer sports camp for athletes with visual impairments contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination. In other words, the researchers are investigating what happens at camp to make it a place where athletes feel safe enough to practice skills such as advocating for themselves and setting goals for themselves.
2. **If you decide to allow your child to be a part of this study, they will be asked to do the following:**
 - Complete a survey
 - Participate in an interview
3. **Are there any experimental medical treatments?**
 - No
4. **Is there any risk to me?**
 - There is a minimal risk of loss of confidentiality; However in order to keep participant records confidential, participants will be identified with a number and only the investigators will have access to information regarding which participant corresponds to which survey. Part of the camp program is investigating personal understanding of self-determination skills, so athletes would be completing surveys for personal use regardless of whether or not the data is used for research purposes. Since all participants in the camp program will be completing information as part of their participation in camp, no single athlete at camp will be singled out. Participants will be allowed to complete surveys and interviews on their own time schedules, stop and come back to the survey or interview if they need a break, and stop participation at any time.
 - If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Maria Lepore-Stevens
 - If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time.
5. **Is there any benefit to my child?**
 - While there are no direct benefits to individual athletes from participating in this research, the resulting knowledge will be important in the field of education for individuals with visual impairments. Current research in the field of teaching students with visual impairments indicates that students with visual impairments receive minimal education in how to utilize and time to practice self-determining skills and behaviors. Research into what qualities of a summer sports program allow students to practice self-determining behaviors could provide impetus for visual impairment agencies and education institutions to provide more alternative programming to teach this aspect of the expanded core.
6. **How will you protect my privacy?**
 - Interview sessions will be recorded. Several athletes will participate in interviews, which will be recorded for transcription purposes.
 - Your records will be private. Only Maria Lepore-Stevens, Heather Schugar, and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
 - Your name will **not** be used in any reports.

- Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator's office located (306 Sturzebecker Health Science Center, West Chester University). These data will include paper copies of the informed consent and assent forms and digital copies of transcriptions/ audio on an external drive. Data will be destroyed on July 28, 2024, five years after the end of data collection. In order to keep participant records confidential, participants will be identified with a number and only the investigators will have access to information regarding which participant corresponds to which survey. Only Heather Schugar, faculty advisor, and Maria Lepore-Stevens, principal investigator, will have access to the consent documents and data.
7. **Do I get paid to take part in this study?**
- No
8. **Who do I contact in case of research related injury?**
- For any questions with this study, contact:
 - **Primary Investigator:** Maria Lepore-Stevens at 302-229-3708 or mlepore2@wcupa.edu
 - **Secondary Investigator:** Heather Schugar at 610-738-0507 or HSchugar@wcupa.edu
 - **Faculty Sponsor:** Heather Schugar at 610-738-0507 or HSchugar@wcupa.edu
9. **What will you do with my Identifiable Information?**
- Your information will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the ORSP at 610-436-3557.

I, _____ (your name), legal guardian of
 _____ (child's name), have read this form and I understand
 the statements in this form. I know that if I am uncomfortable with this study, I can
 withdraw consent at any time. I know that it is not possible to know all possible risks in a
 study, and I think that reasonable safety measures have been taken to decrease any
 risk.

Date: _____

Legal Guardian Signature

Date: _____

Witness Signature

Assent Form for Athlete Participation in Research

Project Title: Self-Determination at Camp Abilities

Investigator(s): Maria Lepore-Stevens; Heather Schugar (faculty advisor)

I am Coach Maria from West Chester University. I am doing a study to figure out what happens at camp that makes kids feel like they can advocate for themselves, ask for help, and set goals. I am asking you to take part in the research study because I want to get information from as many athletes at camp as possible.

For this research, I will give you six questions to answer during Wellness Lesson after lunch. I will keep all your answers private, and will not show them to your parents or coach. Only my teacher, the people making sure this research is safe, and I have to know what you wrote.

I don't think that any big problems will happen to you as part of this study, but you might get tired answering the questions.

You can feel good about helping us to make camp better for more kids with visual impairments.

You should know that:

- You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You won't get into any trouble with *Camp Abilities* if you say no.
- You may stop being in the study at any time.
- Your parent(s)/guardian(s) were asked if it is okay for you to be in this study. Even if they say it's OK, it is still your choice whether or not to take part.
- You can ask any questions you have, now or later. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can contact me at mlepore2@wcupa.edu.

Sign this form only if you:

- Understand what you will be doing for this study,
- Have all your questions answered,
- Agree to be in the research.

Your Signature

Printed Name

Date

Name of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s)

Researcher explaining study signature

Printed Name

Date

Consent Form for Coach Participation in Research

Project Title: Self-Determination at Camp Abilities

Investigator(s): Maria Lepore-Stevens; Heather Schugar (faculty advisor)

Project Overview:

Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being done by Maria Lepore-Stevens as part of her Doctoral Dissertation to investigate what qualities of a summer sports camp for athletes with visual impairments contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination. In other words, the researchers are investigating what happens at camp to make it a place where athletes feel safe enough to practice skills such as advocating for themselves and setting goals for themselves. Your participation will take about 10 minutes on the last day of camp. There is a minimal risk of loss of confidentiality; however in order to keep participant records confidential, participants will be identified with a number and only the investigators will have access to information regarding which participant corresponds to which survey. Participants will be allowed to complete surveys on their own time schedules, stop and come back to the survey or interview if they need a break, and stop participation at any time. While there are no direct benefits to individual coaches from participating in this research, the resulting knowledge will be important in the field of education for individuals with visual impairments. Current research in the field of teaching students with visual impairments indicates that students with visual impairments receive minimal education in how to utilize and time to practice self-determining skills and behaviors. Research into what qualities of a summer sports program allow students to practice self-determining behaviors could provide impetus for visual impairment agencies and education institutions to provide more alternative programming to teach this aspect of the expanded core.

If you would like to take part in this research, West Chester University requires that you agree and sign this consent form.

You may ask Maria Lepore-Stevens any questions to help you understand this study. If you don't want to be a part of this study, it won't affect any services from West Chester University or Camp Abilities Delaware. If you choose to be a part of this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time.

1. What is the purpose of this study?

- Investigate what qualities of a summer sports camp for athletes with visual impairments contribute to creating an emotionally-safe environment to practice self-determination. In other words, the researchers are investigating what happens at camp to make it a place where athletes feel

safe enough to practice skills such as advocating for themselves and setting goals for themselves.

2. **If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to do the following:**
 - Complete a survey
3. **Are there any experimental medical treatments?**
 - No
4. **Is there any risk to me?**
 - There is a minimal risk of loss of confidentiality; however in order to keep participant records confidential, participants will be identified with a number and only the investigators will have access to information regarding which participant corresponds to which survey. Participants will be allowed to complete surveys and interviews on their own time schedules, stop and come back to the survey or interview if they need a break, and stop participation at any time.
 - If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Maria Lepore-Stevens
 - If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time.
5. **Is there any benefit to me?**
 - While there are no direct benefits to individual participants from participating in this research, the resulting knowledge will be important in the field of education for individuals with visual impairments. Current research in the field of teaching students with visual impairments indicates that students with visual impairments receive minimal education in how to utilize and time to practice self-determining skills and behaviors. Research into what qualities of a summer sports program allow students to practice self-determining behaviors could provide impetus for visual impairment agencies and education institutions to provide more alternative programming to teach this aspect of the expanded core.
6. **How will you protect my privacy?**
 - Your records will be private. Only Maria Lepore-Stevens, Heather Schugar, and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
 - Your name will **not** be used in any reports.
 - Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator's office located (306 Sturzebecker Health Science Center, West Chester University). These data will include paper copies of the informed consent and assent forms and digital copies of transcriptions/ audio on an external drive. Data will be destroyed on July 28, 2024, five years after the end of data collection. In order to keep participant records confidential, participants will be identified with a number and only the investigators will have access to information regarding which participant corresponds to which survey. Only Heather Schugar, faculty advisor, and Maria Lepore-Stevens, principal investigator, will have access to the consent documents and data.
7. **Do I get paid to take part in this study?**
 - No

8. Who do I contact in case of research related injury?

- For any questions with this study, contact:
 - **Primary Investigator:** Maria Lepore-Stevens at 302-229-3708 or mlepore2@wcupa.edu
 - **Secondary Investigator:** Heather Schugar at 610-738-0507 or HSchugar@wcupa.edu
 - **Faculty Sponsor:** Heather Schugar at 610-738-0507 or HSchugar@wcupa.edu

9. What will you do with my Identifiable Information?

- Your information will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the ORSP at 610-436-3557.

I, _____ (your name), have read this form and I understand the statements in this form. I know that if I am uncomfortable with this study, I can withdraw consent at any time. I know that it is not possible to know all possible risks in a study, and I think that reasonable safety measures have been taken to decrease any risk.

Date: _____

Participant Signature

Date: _____

Parent Signature (if under 18)

Date: _____

Witness Signature

Appendix H: AIR Data Frequencies

	Never		Almost Never		Sometimes		Almost Always		Always	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
People at home listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.	0	0.0	2	13.3	4	26.7	5	33.3	4	26.7
People at home let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.	3	20.0	2	13.3	6	40.0	2	13.3	2	13.3
At home, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.	1	6.7	3	20.0	5	33.3	4	26.7	2	13.3
People at home encourage me to start working on my plans right away.	1	6.7	4	26.7	5	33.3	1	6.7	4	26.7
I have someone at home who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.	4	26.7	2	13.3	5	33.3	2	13.3	2	13.3
People at home understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this. [†]	3	20.0	1	6.7	2	13.3	3	20.0	5	33.3
People at school listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.	0	0.0	4	26.7	6	40.0	3	20.0	2	13.3
People at school let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.	1	6.7	1	6.7	8	53.3	3	20.0	2	13.3
At school, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.	1	6.7	0	0.0	5	33.3	4	26.7	5	33.3
People at school encourage me to start working on my plans right away.	4	26.7	2	13.3	6	40.0	2	13.3	1	6.7

	Never		Almost Never		Sometimes		Almost Always		Always	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
People at school understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.	2	13.3	2	13.3	6	40.0	1	6.7	4	26.7
People at camp listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I'm good at.	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	6.7	3	20.0	11	73.3
People at camp let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.	0	0.0	1	6.7	1	6.7	6	40.0	7	46.7
At camp, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.	0	0.0	1	6.7	0	0.0	4	26.7	10	66.7
People at camp encourage me to start working on my plans right away.	1	6.7	0	0.0	1	6.7	5	33.3	8	53.3
I have someone at camp who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	20.0	4	26.7	8	53.3
People at camp understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I'm doing this.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	46.7	8	53.3

†One participant circled both 2 and 3, which was interpreted as 2.5 for the purposes of statistical analysis but not reported on this table.