IMPROVING TRANSITION DOMAINS BY EXAMINING SELF-DETERMINATION PROFICIENCY AMONG GENDER AND RACE OF SECONDARY ADOLESCENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) have been mandated participants in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individual Transition Plan (ITP) meetings since 1990, yet overprotective and well-meaning adults have assumed their advocacy role (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). This has weakened their (secondary AWD) ability to become self-determined. Secondary AWD should be involved with the development, implementation and execution of services and supports in their IEP/ITP in order to benefit from their participation in general education as well as develop self-determination skills. To improve transition outcomes, this study examined self-determination and socio-cultural factors (race/ethnic and gender groups) among secondary adolescents with disabilities by differentiating baseline skills among race and gender groups. The two independent variables were race/ethnicity and gender. The dependent variables were the self-determination total score and each of four domain total scores (Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization) of the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale*.

The literature revealed that there was not a standard for self-determination training programs for students with disabilities and teachers (Brunello-Prudencio, 2001). However, empirical data has emphasized that socio-cultural development (i.e. gender and race) could impact self-determination. Understanding the socio-cultural perspective of race/ethnicity and gender on self-determination has the potential to improve transition practices as well as highlight the importance for self-determination (Trainor, 2005).

This study utilized information from the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995) score of secondary adolescents with disabilities to determine whether

differences existed among race/ethnic and gender groups. Research findings from this study indicated significant differences in total scores among race/ethnic groups for: (1) the autonomy domain (the ability to express personal preferences or beliefs); (2) self-determination; and (3) there was no significant difference for gender on either domain score or self-determination total scores.

This research revealed that a self-determination assessment instrument could be used to isolate essential abilities and behaviors by gender and race for secondary adolescents with disabilities. To promote positive outcomes among deficit areas of self-determination for secondary adolescents with disabilities, this researcher recommended differentiated strategies for educational practitioners. Differentiated strategies could focus on collaborative learning communities, experiential learning options, and reduced emphasis on competitive learning environments.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It has been more than 25 years since the passage of the landmark Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142). Adolescents with specific learning disabilities have comprised the largest group of individuals identified as disabled and the largest group that has received educational support through this mandate (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). The categorical identification of a specific learning disability was determined by the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (2004) (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). The intent of this law was to provide appropriate academic and transition service support for adolescents with disabilities (Brown, 2002). The transition plan generally began at age 16 and continued through high school. The transition plan, developed by the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team, included learning objectives in the areas of vocational training, postsecondary preparation, independent living, parenting, and community participation (Trainor, 2005).

Since the 1990s, a considerable amount of attention has focused on the importance of self-determination in the education of students with disabilities. Numerous studies have documented barriers that interfere with secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) participating in their transition process. Hetherman (2004) stated that lack of communication between educators and families and lack of administrative support for transition planning hinders high school adolescent involvement. Consequently, secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) often have permitted their parents and adult mentors to make educational decisions for them (Test, Fowler,

Brewer, Wood, & Eddy, 2005). This, in turn, has interfered with their development of self-determination attitudes and abilities.

Self-determination skills frequently have not been included in the instruction of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). According to Trainor (2007) and Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, and Powers (2008), promoting self-determination and active participation in transition was a good practice, regardless of the secondary adolescent's gender or disability. When secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) were able to positively or satisfactorily engage self-determination attitudes and abilities to "... effectively communicate, negotiate, or assert their own interests, needs, and rights" (Cummings, Maddox, & Casey, 2000, p. 63), they improved their education outcomes. Maddaus (2005) maintained that when these life skills have not been developed and nurtured, the secondary adolescent often arrived in educational and employment settings unable to articulate his or her disability or need for accommodations. Significant individual variance has transpired within each developmental phase. These phases could impact maturity level in decision-making. Secondary adolescents with disabilities advanced through at least three developmental phases: (1) early adolescence (ages 11-14); (2) middle adolescence (ages 14-17); and (3) late adolescence (ages 17-19) (Field, Hoffman, & Posch, 1997).

Transition service planning was a federally required meeting that was used for developing postsecondary options for high school adolescents with disabilities (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). These services had to be in effect within the individual education plan (IEP) no later than the adolescent's sixteenth birthday (or younger as determined by the Individual Education Program Team) (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). This legislation required the IEP Team to develop

objectives that were based on identified needs of the secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) and that included input from interagency services across all transition domains (i.e., vocational training, postsecondary preparation, independent living, parenting, and community participation), as necessary (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). The transition service planning meeting was mandated to occur at least once annually. However, this conference could be scheduled more often depending on the individual needs of the secondary AWD.

Overview of the Issues

The provision of academic support for secondary adolescents with disabilities was mandated by two major pieces of Federal legislation: (1) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and (2) Public Law 94-142 (1975), also known as the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) (1975), which has been re-authorized three times since its inception (Brown, 2002). Brown noted that in order to meet IDEA Reauthorization of 1997 requirements, self-determination should be added as an outcome of any transition policy statements. Currently, many educators have continued to view transition services as a step in the individual education plan/individual transition plan (IEP/ITP) process, not as an integrated functional outcome for adolescents. More than often, educators have not linked the adolescents' secondary goals to postsecondary outcomes (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000). As a result, many secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) have been inadequately equipped to negotiate needed services and accommodations for their success.

A specific learning disability was a lifelong condition that resulted in pervasive and lasting deficits that had serious social, educational, and vocational implications (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000). These researchers discussed that secondary AWD faced many

obstacles, such as: (1) weaknesses in organizational skills; (2) difficulty in maintaining attention or focus; (3) deficits in processing oral and written language; (4) low self-esteem; and (4) poor social skills. In addition, Cummings et al., 2000 summarized that secondary AWD were more likely than their non-disabled peers without disabilities to fail or drop out of school.

Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) often do not demonstrate self-determination attitudes and abilities or feel the need to be directly involved with their own educational planning; as a result, teachers and parents may perceive them as incapable or not interested (Katiyannis and Zhang, 2001). Albeit, secondary AWD should be involved with the development, implementation and execution of services that support their IEP and permit them to benefit from general education participation, as well as, develop self-determination skills, often this has not occurred.

Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) reviewed the post high school outcomes of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). In their study, post high school outcomes were compared between adolescents with high and low self-determination scores. Secondary adolescents with disabilities with high levels of self-determination (for which self-advocacy was an important subskill) demonstrated higher levels of educational and employment independence across a variety of indicators. This reflected a relationship between successful educational outcomes after high school and acquisition of self-determination skills. This study suggested that as secondary adolescents with disabilities became more self-determined, outcomes for education improved.

Theoretical Framework

Test, Fowler, Brewer, Wood, and Eddy (2005) described a theoretical framework of self-advocacy comprising four components: (a) knowledge of self; (b) knowledge of rights, (c) the ability to effectively communicate service needs, and (4) leadership. These researchers believed

these components facilitated the development of self-determination attitudes and abilities. These authors further stated that knowledge of self and knowledge of rights were viewed as two basic tenets that formed the foundation of self-determination behaviors. As secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) gained knowledge of self, they became aware of their own interests, strengths, learning styles, and characteristics of their own disabilities.

The theoretical framework upon which the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* was constructed was based on the premise that self-determination was an educational outcome for secondary adolescents with disabilities (Beach Center on Disability, 2007). The *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* related that for the secondary adolescent to be self-determined, these students should represent the following characteristics: (1) attitudes (psychological empowerment and self-realization) and (2) abilities (autonomy and self-regulation) (Wehmeyer, 1995; Beach Center on Disability, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Often secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) have little knowledge about their disability, academic expectations, and personal responsibilities associated with self-determination (Merchant, 1998). When parents and teachers failed to encourage secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) to initiate and work through challenging experiences, the steps for mastering self-determination attitudes and abilities were compromised (Shogren & Turnbull, 2006). These authors suggested as adolescents learned to act on their own decisions and learned from the results of their own experiences, self-determination skills were acquired through a process of self-assessment and self-regulation.

Self-determination research has clearly found a positive relationship between selfdetermination and adult quality of life based on disability and gender (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003); however, little is known about how school environments affect a students' self-determination based on race of the secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). According to Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, and Powers (2008), while many studies have documented the inequities of self-determination found among gender and disability, far fewer studies have focused on self-determination among secondary adolescents with disabilities and race.

Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, and Powers (2008) addressed gender, disability, and transition outcomes among women. According to the authors, while more and more studies have documented the inequities found among gender and disability, fewer studies have examined the factors that has contributed to gender schism. Often the research has documented that women were underemployed, unemployed, or employed at lower status jobs than their male disabled counterparts. Regarding secondary female adolescents with disabilities that were socio-culturally diverse, Hogansen et al., 2008 noted that this group faced a triple minority status: gender, disability, and race. To improve transition domain outcomes, educators implemented instruction in self-determination with a participant-directed perspective (Hogansen et al., 2008).

Research raised questions about how societal norms silenced girls' and women's psychological development or quest for equal voice and power in a patriarchal culture (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor et al., 1995). These studies accentuated how societal and cultural norms (e.g., those related to gender, race, and authority figures) have influenced the extent to which adolescents suppressed their voice in decision-making for choices more consistent with the dominant culture. In addition, these studies have signaled that societal and cultural norms

interfered with adequate development of self-determination among adolescent females. Trainor (2007) and Hogansen et al. (2008) made the following conclusions:

- Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) remained generally uninvolved in creating and implementing postsecondary transition plans.
- Multicultural special education studies illustrated that a person's socio-cultural membership influenced their level of participation in transition planning.
- Educational research suggested that demographic and academic variables (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, linguistics) interacted to potentially marginalize scholastic opportunity and achievement among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD).

According to Shea (2005), secondary adolescents with high incidence disabilities (e.g. specific learning disability) have not acquired self-determination skills at the same rate, as their nondisabled peers, if at all. Moreover, the manner with which secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) developed and practiced self-determination was an important inquiry of research for analyzing whether self-determination skills among gender and race could be identified.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine whether socio-cultural influence (race/ethnicity and gender) on self-determination levels among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) could be identified among these students. This task involved two phases which examined specific self-determination features and how their relationship contributed to the current notion of self-determination proficiency. One primary issue addressed was how students understood the importance of self-determination. It was important to examine how secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) were instructed and supported in the development of self-determination

competency skills and in making informed decisions regarding that impact on their education. The second issue examined how socio-cultural characteristics such, as gender and race, influenced the development of self-determination skills among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). With proficient skills in understanding self-determination, secondary adolescents with disabilities would be prepared to advocate their needs and well-being to educators, IEP team members, and parents.

The intent of this study was to address why specific skills for making their own decisions should be taught to individuals with disabilities and how this should happen. By examining the skills related to and needed for self-determination, strategies could be created and implemented that might enable a secondary adolescent with disabilities to better engage goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous, and psychological empowerment attitudes and abilities.

Research Questions

The present study was guided by the four research questions listed below.

- 1. What were the differences between secondary Black (African American) and All Other adolescents with disabilities based on Autonomy? Self-Regulation? Psychological Empowerment? Self-Realization scale scores?
- 2. What were the gender differences in the domain scores on Autonomy? Self-Regulation? Psychological empowerment? Self-Realization scale scores?
- 3. What were the differences between secondary Black (African American) and All Other adolescents with disabilities based on overall Self-Determination scale scores?
- 4. What were the differences in Self-Determination scores based on gender?

Variables in the Study

There were two types of measures in the study, commonly referred to as independent and dependent variables. The determination of the placement of variables into specific categories was based on both theoretical considerations and previous empirical findings. A more detailed exploration for variable selection will be provided in Chapter Three.

Independent Variables

Race and Ethnicity

In this section, the literature was reviewed in relation to a rationale for and differentiation between race and ethnic classification. Race/ethnic categories were developed to represent a political and social rather than an anthropological basis (Federal Register Notice:

OMB...Review of Racial Ethics and Standards, 1997). The present standards were designed for civil rights monitoring for groups that had historically experienced discrimination (OMB BULLETIN NO. 00-02, 2000). The standards provided a minimum of five categories for data collection on race and ethnicity: American Indian, Asian, Black/African American, Pacific Islander, and White (OMB BULLETIN NO. 00-02, 2000). For the purpose of this study, these two constructs, race and ethnicity, were combined since people tend to identify race and ethnicity together, not separately.

In this study, demographic designations were selected based upon extensive reviews of race/ethnicity coding within state and school district profile reports submitted by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Typical reporting by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education indicated race/ethnicity designations as follows: Black/African American; Asian; White; Hispanic/Latino; Indian/Native American (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Missouri School Improvement Program (2000 Census Demographics Profile-1, 2008). This researcher chose to use race/ethnic descriptors generally used by its state department of education.

All Other

Within the last decade, it has seemed more and more challenging to classify individuals by race, only. While race/ethnicity in social theory appeared fluid, quantitative research has confined race to objective categories (Saperstein, 2006). When participants have been requested to self-report their race/ethnicity, often self-selection was based on their ancestry or cultural schema; rather than, a biological or political reference or how they might have been perceived by others, Saperstein wrote. For example, a Middle Eastern person might biologically be classified as White; however, this individual might have identified their ethnicity, as Middle Eastern (Saperstein, 2006). This person would likely not select White as their race classification, but Middle Eastern (their culture or origin of ancestry). And sometimes with race, it has been possible for the same individual to be described in a different way by different people. In addition, a participant's response to questions about race could vary by region or community affiliation or whether an ethnicity appeared more valued in a particular context.

When given the option, respondents, typically, have not self-identified in neat categories.

As with secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) in this study, when respondents were

permitted to self-report race, it skewed the results. Overall, the majority of this sample self-selected as "Black" or African American. However, for all other participants in each race/ethnic category, the self-reporting member sets were small. As a result, for this study, these secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) were grouped as "All Other". Race/ethnic groups were similarly combined, in a study by Caraballo, Pechacek, Henson, and Gfroerer (2006). Therefore, this study examined two race/ethnic groups: Black/African American (n= 21) and All Other (n = 10). In addition, statistical tests cannot be conducted using only one participant.

Gender

Gender divides students into two exclusive categories: males and females. Regarding how secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) attained self-determination skills, the research was mixed, as no specific program guaranteed acquisition of self-determined abilities (Agran, 2006; Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001; Pierson, Cortez, & Shea, 2005). To enhance the effectiveness of individual transition services, secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) often benefited from direct instruction of self-determination skills, using socio-cultural learning strategies to support students in the process (Eisenman & Tascione, 2002; Test et al., 2005; Trainor, 2007). Because secondary adolescent males and females with disabilities may present different achievement, disability, and self-determination capabilities during transition planning, differential strategies should be implemented to ameliorate these inequities between the sexes in the transition domains (Trainor, 2005).

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable used in this dissertation was self-determination. The domain measures were: (1) autonomy, (2) self-regulation; (3) self-realization; and (4) psychological empowerment. This study addressed why specific skills for making their own

decisions should be taught to individuals with disabilities and how this should happen. From this research, an educational design or set of strategies, which encompassed self-determination, could be created that extended a person's skill to engage goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous, and psychological empowerment behaviors. While self-determination could be taught using a variety of methods, there was no best method.

Significance of the Study

While secondary programs may be meeting the federal mandate of inviting secondary adolescents (AWD) to attend IEP or ITP meetings (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000), this level of transition service may not be adequate preparation for secondary AWD who face the real world challenge of advocating for themselves beyond high school. It appeared doubtful that the adolescent's attendance at transition conferences indicated that the secondary adolescent was becoming proficient or competent participants in the IEP or ITP process (Trainor, 2005). Mere attendance alone may not be enough to support secondary adolescents in understanding their role and rights, the role of others, the IEP Team dynamic, and how to articulate their individual needs for service related to their specific disability. Academic variables and socio-cultural factors, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and type of disability have continued to affect the transition domains of post high school outcomes (Trainor, 2005).

High school transition teams, who coordinate services for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD), were concerned with the inadequacy of the adolescents' self-determination abilities (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). High school transition teams have been expected to provide secondary adolescents with a clear understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and specific accommodations that will service their disability (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

Secondary AWD have often not possessed the skill level to articulate their disability needs and have failed to take an active role in determining their transition outcome (Trainor, 2007).

Professional educators who participated in transition teams continued to report that high school teachers and support staff still may not be fully aware of the needs of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). For example, secondary school personnel may not be aware of the importance of implementing self-determination instruction and encouraging students in middle and late adolescence to actively participate in building self-determined attitudes and abilities. According to Janiga and Costenbader (2002), school personnel may not understand how significantly advocacy altered when the laws governing secondary AWD changed from IDEA (education law) to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (civil rights law) at college entrance. Professional staff training was essential to address these possibilities.

The catalyst should be an intensive focus on strategies that teachers and staff can use in their daily instructional settings. As educators may be overwhelmed by accountability requirements for student achievement, self-determination curriculum can be embedded within daily instructional programs (Konrad, Walker, Fowler, Test, & Wood, 2008). Understanding the significance of socio-cultural characteristics may begin to influence the way instructional strategies can be designed and implemented within the daily curriculum (Trainor, 2005).

Studies have indicated that secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) gained positive benefit from direct instruction regarding how to access support services essential to obtaining modifications in instruction and testing (Field, Darver & Shaw, 2003; Field, Hoffman & Posch, 1997; Shea, 2005; Test et al., 2005). However, many teachers reported that they do not know how to teach secondary AWD self-determination skills (Hogansen et al., 2008; Mason,

Field, & Sawilowsky, 2004). Moreover, still other teachers were unaware of published programs on the subject (Thomas, Nathenson, Baker, & Tamura, 2002). Yet, if professionals take on the advocacy role, then secondary adolescents cannot learn to become self-determined. When denied the opportunity to speak up for themselves, it reduced their chance for positive outcomes beyond high school for these students (Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, & Powers, 2008; Trainor, 2007).

The development of self-determination skills needed to be included within every transition plan for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) who seek postsecondary education (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Self-determination of secondary AWD can be improved through understanding academic variables and socio-cultural influence on transition domains (i.e. employment, education, postsecondary options, community involvement, and parenting) (Hogansen et al., 2008; Trainor, 2005). As transition plan teams facilitated the acquisition of self-determination skills among secondary AWD, additional expectations that have yielded successful results for college-bound secondary AWD must be managed. Levinson and Ohler (1997) summarized that college access and retention rates of adolescents with disabilities were beneficially influenced when they possessed average cognition, essential graduation requirements, 2.5 or above grade point average, perseverance, and developed strategies in study skills and social skills.

When secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) have developed the skill level needed to obtain and articulate knowledge related to their disability, apply training to meet transition domain requirements; then, self-determination abilities and attitudes have emancipated them to move forward in meeting educational goals. Obtaining these tools provided secondary AWD with a chance for positive outcomes beyond high school. As these students acquired the

requisite knowledge regarding how gender, race/ethnicity, disability, and academics affected post high school outcomes, differential strategies could be implemented to reduce inequities among secondary male and female AWD in the transition domains (i.e. employment, education, postsecondary options, community involvement, and parenting) (Hogansen et al., 2008; Trainor, 2007).

Definition of Terms

- 1. Adolescents with disabilities (AWD). Adolescents during the developmental phase from dependent childhood to independent adulthood (Field, Hoffman, & Posch, 1997), with specific learning disability (such as, weaknesses in organizational skills, difficulty in maintaining attention or focus, deficits in processing oral and written language, low selfesteem, and poor social skills (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000) categorically determined by reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004.
- 2. *Cultural identity*. An individual's identity is multi-faceted and includes other facets of such as language preference, sexual orientation, age, gender, religion, social class, generation, etc.) (Ethnic Identity, 2009; Trainor, 2005, 2007).
- 3. *Equal opportunity*. This term is defined as limiting an otherwise qualified handicapped person the satisfaction of participating in any right, privilege, advantage, or opportunity enjoyed by others receiving an aid, benefit, or service (United States Department of Education, 2007).
- 4. Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Legislation that stipulates that a recipient which operates a public elementary or secondary program or activity shall provide regular education, special education, and related services which meets the

- educational standards of the state agency for the education of each qualified handicapped person (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006).
- 5. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). Legislation that has been successful in ensuring access to a free and appropriate education for children with disabilities and the families of such children and in improving educational results for children with disabilities Subpart B Section 682. (c)(3). 300.4 (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006).
- 6. *Individual education program (IEP)*. A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with Section 614 (d). 300.320 (a) (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006).
- 7. *Individual transition plan (ITP)*. By age 16, or younger (if determined appropriate by the IEP Team), and updated annually, a statement of needed transition services must be included, focusing on the student's postsecondary course of study (e.g., college preparatory, vocational education). 300.321 (b) (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006).
- 8. Least restrictive environment (LRE). Each public agency must ensure that each IDEA eligible student receives the services determined appropriate by the IEP Team in the least restrictive setting and to the maximum extent possible 300.14 (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006).
- 9. *Otherwise qualified*. No qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives federal financial assistance 104.4 (a) (United States Department of Education, 2007).

- 10. *Race*. Race/ethnic categories were developed to represent a political and social rationale rather than an anthropological basis (Federal Register Notice: OMB...Review of Racial Ethics and Standards, 1997). The present standards were designed for civil rights monitoring for groups that had historically experienced discrimination (OMB BULLETIN NO. 00-02, 2000). The standards provided a minimum of five categories for data collection on race and ethnicity: American Indian, Asian, Black/African American, Pacific Islander, and White (OMB BULLETIN NO. 00-02, 2000).
- 11. *Reasonable accommodations*. Recipients should make reasonable accommodations to known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified handicapped applicant unless the recipient can prove that the accommodations would impose an undue hardship on the operation of its program or activity104.12 (a) (United States Department of Education, 2007).
- 12. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. No otherwise qualified individual with handicaps in the United States, shall, solely by reason of his/her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. 104.4 (a) (United States Department of Education, 2007).
- 13. *Self-determination*. Refers to acting as the primary agent in one's life by making choices and decisions about one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference. There are four attitudes or behaviors that characterize an adolescent's action(s) as self-determined: (1) the adolescent can act alone, (2) the behaviors are self-monitored, (3) the adolescent can initiate and respond to event(s) in a psychologically

- empowering manner and (4) the adolescent acts in a self-actualized manner (Wehmeyer, & Kelchner, 1995).
- 14. *Socio-cultural*. An individual's identity that is shaped by ethnic group membership or race, language, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, education, and environment (Trainor, 2005, 2007).
- 15. Specific learning disability (SLD). A child who does not meet age/grade-level state standards in one or more areas of oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, math calculation, and/or math problem solving when provided with learning experiences appropriated for the child's age 300.309 9a) (1) 2 (1) (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006).
- 16. *Transition domain*. When young adolescent males and females with disabilities participate in transition services designed by an IEP Team that include consideration for employment, education, postsecondary options, community involvement, and parenting (Trainor, 2007).
- 17. *Transition services*. "A coordinated set of activities" for a child with a disability that is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006).

Organization of the Study

The present study has been organized as follows. Chapter 1 introduced the purpose and importance of the study. The purpose of the study was to examine whether socio-cultural influence on self-determination levels among secondary AWD could be identified among race/ethnic and gender groups. The importance of the study was to identify self-determination

needs among secondary AWD in an effort to assist them in becoming proficient self advocates in educational or employment settings, post high school. Chapter 1 discussed the benefits of self-determination and socio-cultural influence on the transitioning of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) from public school to postsecondary options. Chapter 2 focused on providing an overview of self-determination, self-advocacy, self-advocacy training programs, differences between the laws and how they have impacted adolescents with disabilities as they transition from public school settings to postsecondary settings, and the impact that practical application of self-advocacy skills might have on adolescents as they negotiate life goals past high school. Chapter 3 presented the design of the study, including the methodology, and statistical analysis. Chapter 4 presented the study's research findings. Chapter 5 discussed the implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

To summarize, Chapter 1 introduced this research project. This study used a self-determination instrument to analyze whether differences existed among race/ethnic and gender groups. The next chapter will provide an overview of the literature on secondary adolescents with disabilities and the importance of possessing self-determination skills. Disability laws, transition service planning, and the challenges secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) face, as they navigate the differences in philosophies between secondary and postsecondary environments.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the literature related to self-determination attitudes and abilities among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). This chapter provided an overview of the secondary AWD and the self-determination skills that they would need to develop in order to navigate a successful high school outcome. The difference in philosophies between the laws that serve secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) in secondary settings will be discussed. Finally, the importance of self-determination barriers, challenges, and strategies will be examined.

Adolescents with Disabilities

Like their secondary education peers, who are able-bodied, secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) can improve their quality of life through continued education. According to Palmer (1998), secondary AWD who had completed four years of college were four times more likely to be employed than secondary AWD who had no post high school training. Secondary AWD who exhibited self-determination were empowered to achieve such academic success, as they have higher entrance, retention, and graduation rates from postsecondary institutions (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Mull, Sitlington & Alper, 2001). Yet, Johnson, Stodden, Emmanuel, Luecking, and Mack (2002) indicated that approximately one-third of secondary AWD with a specific learning disability failed to graduate even from high school, with dropout rates as high as 32%.

Many secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) leave high school still lacking knowledge of the changes in their educational rights under the law, academic expectations, or their own personal responsibility associated with postsecondary settings (Merchant, 1998).

When secondary AWD graduated with a diploma or reached age 21, federal regulation made it their responsibility to seek the accommodations and services they would need. When secondary AWD shift from high school to the college experience, they must be prepared to advocate for themselves.

Unfortunately, many secondary AWD who might have previously sat passively during individual education plan (IEP) or individual transition plan (ITP) meetings were suddenly thrust into the role of fending for themselves as they considered their postsecondary options. As reported by Brunello-Prudencio (2001), secondary AWD often were unable to describe the attributes of their disability; secure coping skills to manage attitudinal barriers, or communicate needed accommodations to support them in new educational settings.

When secondary AWD were denied the opportunity to participate in making informed decisions in the home or in the school setting, this systematic denial has compromised the adolescent's ability to develop self-determined attitudes and abilities. As secondary AWD proceeded through middle and late adolescence, instruction and support in the development of self-determination competence assisted them in making informed decisions regarding their educational and vocational futures (Field, Hoffman & Posch, 1997). High school may be the last opportunity to teach self-determination skills to secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) (Harris & Robertson, 2001). As secondary adolescents became self-determined, it positively influenced their educational perseverance, and their propensity to explore disability laws, and educational opportunity.

Federal Laws

There were three disability laws that impacted students with disabilities. The first was PL 94-142, now called the Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004,

next Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Department of Education, 2003), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). Understanding these three federal initiatives facilitated an adolescent's ability to discuss the accommodations and the services that he or she would need.

Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (IDEA)

The first law, IDEA 2004, addressed the education of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD), preschool through grade 12 or age 21, if the secondary adolescent had not graduated with a diploma (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). This law prescribed specific curriculum and other school supports for secondary AWD.

Under IDEA 2004, secondary AWD were guaranteed educational rights; whereby, schools were mandated to identify and provide free and appropriate educational (FAPE) programming and accommodations (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). According to Field, Darver, and Shaw (2003), when the school and the parent assumed primary responsibility of developing the individual education plan (IEP), the meaningful intent of IDEA worked against development of self-determination competence among secondary AWD.

As secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) participated in their own IEP meetings, they should have been encouraged to identify for adult mentors the strengths and limitations of their disability and compensatory strategies that might support them. IDEA mandated for secondary adolescents to become collaborative participants in transition planning at age 16 or before, as determined appropriate by the secondary adolescent's IEP Team, and to continue through high school graduation or age 21 (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). Under IDEA, a statement of transition must be incorporated into the

IEP for any secondary adolescent needing specialized instruction or denied for any reason access to the general education curriculum.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The second law that secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) needed to be familiar with was Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which was the controlling legal mandate for postsecondary programs for adolescents with disabilities (Field, Darver, & Shaw, 2003). Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, "otherwise qualified" adolescents with disabilities must be able to meet essential program or course requirements when provided reasonable accommodations (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2007). Determination of "otherwise qualified" hinged on three considerations: (a) the program or course requirements; (b) whether nonessential criteria could be accommodated without changing the essence of the course or program; and (c) the specific abilities and disabilities of the adolescent (Mull, Sitlington & Alper, 2001). Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) must understand the implication of these laws, including the different levels of support and accommodations that would be granted by this mandate. For example, secondary AWD, who were identified with a disability under the IDEA model, may not qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, if their achievement was not significantly different from that of the average person (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) have too often permitted parents and adult mentors to advocate for them at transition planning meetings (Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara & Powers, 2008). Post high school, the responsibility for identification, documentation, and requesting accommodations resided in the hands of the secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD) (Field et al., 2003). These authors reported that adolescents must self-

advocate as the parent, after high school, would have no legal standing and the institution would only have to respond to the secondary adolescent's request for assistance.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Sometimes general education reform acts or mandates have conflicted with the intent of equitable educational access for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). However, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation has appeared to be one of the few laws that mostly complemented the intent of IDEA, which addressed the needs of students with disabilities (National Council on Disability, 2008). On its surface, NCLB legislation seemed to be one more reform method enacted to improve educational outcomes for general education adolescents, with minimal attention given to secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). However, because NCLB mandated that schools improve educational outcomes for *all* students, secondary AWD were likewise considered for any general education options presented to their nondisabled peers (Department of Eduaction: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, 2010).

Because of the interplay of requirements between both laws, secondary AWD could not be overlooked. That is, strategies to improve their educational outcomes had to be considered in a manner comparable to their peers without disabilities. As such, educators and policymakers across the country began to look for ways to bridge the achievement gap between the expectations for these two mandates, NCLB and IDEA (Department of Education, 2003; National Council on Disability, 2008).

The National Council of Disability commissioned a study to assess the impact of NCLB and IDEA on schools (National Council on Disability, 2008). The findings were positive. Since 2004, there have been significant and positive changes in attitudes of educators toward educating secondary AWD. NCLB improved the culture of high expectations for all students, including

secondary AWD. This study found that secondary AWD had gained more access to grade-level curricula and had increased access to highly qualified staff. Also, more secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) were graduating with diplomas at a higher rate than in previous years.

The results of this commissioned study indicated that while there was more acceptance of inclusion of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) within the education curriculum with their peers than in previous years, the division between the two groups of students still existed (National Council on Disability, 2008). Developing the capacity of teachers to provide differentiated instruction and more rigorous curricula was one of the more conspicuous recommendations suggested within the report. In general, however, the combined effects of IDEA and NCLB have brought many notable and encouraging changes for most secondary AWD, mainly high expectations for *all* students and staff accountability standards (National Council on Disability, 2008). However, educational outcomes for secondary AWD of color have continued to lag behind White Middle class youth.

Race-Based Disproportionality in Special Education

While the goal of IDEA was to ensure that all males and females with disabilities have equal access to the general education curriculum (American Association of University Women, 2009), minority groups have been consistently over-identified for special education services disproportionately. Minority males in particular were overrepresented in special education (American Association of University Women, 2009). According to Boone and Kling-Berry (2007), the complex relationship between race and disability led to discriminatory disability classifications, placements, service delivery, and practices for minority males and females.

Boone and Kling-Berry (2007) suggested that the major principles of IDEA (i.e., equal access, free and appropriate education, least restrictive placement, and nondiscriminatory

assessment) were severely compromised for African American students and other students of color, systematically more often, than for youth from the White middle class. Once identified as having a disability, males and females of color seemed to have less right of entry than their White counterparts to least restrictive environment settings. African American males and females of color with disabilities typically maintained long-term placements in special education programs.

While no single factor explained the complex phenomenon of disproportionality, some researchers have suggested that race and race-related factors affect greater influence on the identification of African American males and females as disabled than on the identification of secondary non-African American adolescents (Boone & Kling-Berry, 2007; Meyer & Patton, 2001; Patton, 1998). Meyer and Patton (2001) reported that when African American students made up 16% of school enrollments, special education enrollments for this group of students commonly totaled 21%. The authors stated that African American students were 1.4 times more likely than their White Middle-class counterparts to be identified with a disability. Even when incidence of disability factors was included, minority males and females were underrepresented in socially valued special education classifications, such as giftedness, and overrepresented in disability classifications that were the most stigmatizing (e.g. mental retardation and emotional disturbance) (Boone & Kling-Berry, 2007; Meyer & Patton, 2001).

Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons and Feggins-Azziz (2006) and Meyer and Patton (2001) summarized that, although there was little agreement on the causes of minority disproportionality, two types of factors were thought to contribute to this phenomena: sociodemographic factors and educational factors. Causal agents, which might impact socio-

demographic and educational factors, included school readiness of minority students, general education expectation, and the special education referral process.

As a result of the devastating consequences of poverty, such as troubled home life, violence in the community, and instability in school, some secondary adolescents entered school with inadequate academic and behavioral readiness skills (Skiba et al., 2006). These researchers noted that when middle class values inherent in general education referral practices were conferred upon secondary minority males and females, this practice contributed to special education referrals. Their research found that males and females of color, especially African Americans, were overrepresented in more restrictive educational environments and underrepresented in less restrictive environments.

Boone & Kling-Berry (2007) reported that disparate placement of males and females in more restrictive settings might be due to irregularities in the special education eligibility determination process itself. Teachers that lack adequate classroom management skills might not implement appropriate accommodation or intervention strategies for at-risk males and females. Moreover, some teachers, who lacked adequate classroom management skills and other resources, may have used the special education referral process to obtain additional support for struggling secondary adolescents.

The goal of IDEA has been to push for equal access to general education and improved educational outcomes for all students (American Association of University Women, 2009).

Concerns remain regarding social and demographic factors that impacted the propensity of African Americans or students of color to be identified for more restrictive setting and for longer stays in those setting than their White Middle Class peers (Boone & Kling-Berry, 2007). These authors, also, asserted that the complex relationship among race and disability failed to extricate

minority male and female adolescents from discriminatory disability classifications, placements, and service delivery practices.

Gender and Disability

The conceptualization of a multiple minority status for females unified most scholarly writing on gender. Females with disabilities were at a further disadvantage when they faced discrimination based on both gender and disability. As females received special education services, they performed better academically; however, they were less likely to enroll in postsecondary training or education and were more likely to earn lower wages (American Association of University Women, 2009). According to this article, both the education level of females with disabilities and their wage earning power were inferior to males with disabilities and their non-disabled female peers.

Research suggested that young adult males and females with the same disability received different types of education (Traustadottir, 1997). As a result of their multiple minority status, females with disabilities were unlikely to have academic options that allowed them to access the better paying career pathways (Traustadottir, 1997). Traustadottir reported that school counselors channeled females with disabilities, like their non-disabled female peers, into gender-typed fields. This author suggested that if females with disabilities attempted to track into male-typed careers, they were likely to meet with even greater obstacles. Although special education laws have been instrumental in advancing educational equity and related services for males and females with disabilities, females, particularly those of color, have continued to be at risk for inequitable educational input, processes, and outcomes (Boone & Kline-Berry, 2007).

While most people believed that they interact with secondary adolescent males and females the same, they actually addressed them based on their own sex-biased assumptions (Geis, 1993).

Females were viewed more negatively and were more stigmatized than males (Hanna & Rogovsky, 1991). Hanna and Rogovsky stated that when secondary adolescent females were treated more negatively, they may have felt socially isolated and developed passive behaviors. According to these authors, females with disabilities participated less than their male disabled or their female non-disabled peers in socio-cultural interactions and within educational institutions. Socio-cultural (i.e. race/ethnicity, language, gender, education, disability) and attribution factors impacted the self-esteem of young adult females with disabilities. When these females with disabilities felt socially isolated or stigmatized, it inhibited their potential for success in education (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). The experience of social isolation was manifested more during female development than male. These biological, psychological, and social differences among males and females will be discussed further in the next section.

Gender and Voice

A women's development was influenced internally and externally by patriarchal values to maintain relationships without complaining or risk isolation by the dominant culture (Gilligan, 1993). As women gave in to cultural expectation, what they truly thought became less and less audible. The paradox was that as women conformed to social expectations, they felt more and more isolated. Their voice or true feelings became silenced or less heard. As males and females developed, their gender role was impacted by and evolved through three perspectives: biological, psychological, and social (Linn & Petersen, 1985).

Biological and developmental theorists treated gender differences as arising from essential characteristics that were built into the person. While the biological viewpoint suggested that sex referred simply to being a male or being a female, one of the earliest researchers in the area of gender and social psychology, Carol Gilligan (1993), addressed how psychological

theory stifled women's voices. She explained that when women failed to socially conform within male-dominated rule-based systems, they may be subjected to violence or societal isolation (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

In describing Gilligan's work, Jerzak (2001) noted that Gilligan addressed the importance of understanding female development in the context of significant relationships. According to Gilligan (1993), the female voice approached conflict with an eye to maintaining relationships and connections; on the other hand, the male equivalent attended to creating and maintaining boundaries between people through a rule-based structure. Key words that encapsulated the difference between males and females were *separation* and *connection*, respectively. Gilligan also noted that males and females developed and learned differently (Jerzak, 2001; Gilligan, 1993).

Gnaulati and Heine (2001) analyzed separation among adolescents in connection to gender and ethnic differences. These authors revealed that men were more likely to deny close attachments, while women were more likely to form close peer relationships. In regard to the effects of ethnicity on separation, they found significant differences between White and non-White groups, but few significant differences were noted among non-White groups. Although Gnaulati and Heine (2001) suggested more research was needed to validate their findings with respect to ethnicity, on the question of gender, their study was consistent with previous findings regarding the female's tendency toward connection in relationships.

According to Gilligan (1993), females thrived within settings that were collaborative and cooperative in nature, while males thrived in settings that reflected a system of rules, logic, or fairness. Gilligan suggested that while the typical male's development was threatened by intimacy, division threatened typical female development. For example, males and females

might present two different perspectives on the same issue. The male's perspective typically revealed disagreement and intellectual competitiveness, whereas females, typically responded with concordance (common-ground) or connection (Jerzak, 2001; Gilligan, 1993).

When women's voices go unheard, they may be fated to a "social system of relationships that sustain economic dependence and social subordination" (Gilligan, 1993, p. 169). Women have a desire for authentic connections, but they experience disconnection or fear that others will not listen to them. This struggle, which demarcated realistic and idealized relationships, affected the very core of the adolescent's ability to interact within the world.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) undertook a study that raised questions about women's psychological development, the society and culture we live in, and our ability to prevent or minimize challenges related to the adolescents' fear of lost relationships. These researchers interviewed culturally diverse middle and upper class girls. They found that at about age eight, girls began to be challenged to give up or shift their reality of true relationship for that deemed appropriate by social or cultural cues. They observed from early adolescence the development of the split between choices of an authentic or idealized relationship imposed by the dominant culture. These authors related that they had witnessed the onset of psychological dissociation that plagued many women.

In this study, the developing adolescent learned to silence themselves in response to the treacherous undercurrent toward relationship and cultural norms expected of girls. Rather than invite conflict or cultural disloyalty that might lead to isolation or violence, these girls on the precipice of adolescence began to outwardly reflect appropriate relational social norms, though they still might have covertly searched out real or authentic relationships. As these girls became young women, they began to adopt survival strategies, such as modulating their voice and

dismissing their experience. They had learned that when they said what they felt, they lost relationships and power and became isolated.

Taylor, Gilligan, and Sullivan (1995) completed a three-year qualitative study of adolescent girls who were considered by society to be working class, poor, and "at risk." This diverse group of 26 girls reflected African American, Caribbean, Latina, Portuguese, Irish, and Italian American ethnicities. They began the study as thirteen-year-old eighth graders who saw the world of relationship as open to them. Their voices were influenced by their own beliefs, values, and experiences. They were psychologically healthy. However, as these adolescents entered ninth grade, they began to undergo a feeling of disconnection (isolation) that continued throughout high school.

During adolescence, they began to feel that their experiences were incongruent, devalued, and not representative of patriarchal cultural expectations. When their experiences were incongruent with society's expectation/image of what was deemed "good" or "proper behavior" or characteristic of the "perfect girl," these girls began to feel disconnected or isolated. Because of social norms, these girls suppressed their viewpoints. As these girls began to recognize that their quest for equal voice or power in a patriarchal society could result in their psychological isolation, they often began to shift their voice. In its conclusions, this study highlighted opportunities to prevent girls from silencing themselves.

Girls were encouraged most in trusting relationships with women who listened to them and women who were from their own cultural or ethnic background (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). According to Jerzak (2001) and Brown and Gilligan (1992), women and adolescent girls who participated in "other-mother" or mentorship interactions, experienced a transforming sense of

empowerment that helped reduce their feelings of disconnection. Despite the weight of expectation from a male-centered culture, in such instances women felt a sense of emancipation.

As a society that has related specific attributes to gender, it appeared males were born with an understood or unspoken social advantage in position (i.e., role, status, and power) that females did not inherit (Geis, 1993). Males and females tended to behave according to their expected gender roles. In fact, gender expectations lead us to anticipate or favor males in roles of authority and females in subordinate roles (Geis, 1993). When males and females selected gender-based career paths, they behaved according to socially expected frameworks. These behaviors were reinforced in society. This was a circular system of feedback based on society's positive and negative reinforcement of appropriate role selection by the male or female.

Geis (1993) suggested that familiarity with sex role stereotypes or schemas strengthened the perception of likeability. Geis explained that males and females knew the high and low status behaviors. These factors created a circular relationship of causation. That is, females typically assumed their instinctive gender role and conformed to societal norms of expectation. To illustrate, females usually selected a feminine career, such as nursing, which had a subordinate or low-status position. Society rewarded them for that choice, which was congruent with expected standards for females. In contrast, when females chose a masculine career path that was incongruent with social standards, communication signals resulting from this choice tended to hinder career growth and promotion potential.

Secondary adolescent males and females tended to behave in their gender roles as society dictated (Geis, 1993). Regarding ethnicity and gender, Gnaulati and Heine (2001) found significant differences among White and non-White groups on the importance of maintaining relationship; however, for gender, among females, maintaining connection was significant. This

was consistent with other findings (Brown &Gilligan, 1992; Jerzak, 2001). Socio-cultural and attribution factors impacted the self-esteem of secondary adolescent females with disabilities. When these secondary adolescent females with disabilities felt socially isolated or stigmatized, it inhibited or discouraged their potential for success in education and employment (Hanna & Rogovsky, 1991).

The Role of Gender in Education

Often the female perspective was so entrenched in tradition and social conformity that females lacked the self-determination to fully express their capabilities, particularly in school settings (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). Belenky et al. (1986) suggested that educational institutions improved the culture of learning for females when they: (1) implemented experiential learning strategies versus out-of-context interventions; (2) implemented connected classroom concepts (e.g., collaboration, tolerance of diverse ideas); (3) minimized use of competitive models; and (4) encouraged secondary adolescents to participate in structuring their learning, and monitoring and evaluating their progress. When these interventions were implemented, it improved the secondary female adolescent's participation in their own education and learning outcomes.

Hayes and Flannery (2000) conceptualized gender as a framework of social interactions that were renegotiated daily, and as outcomes of social, environmental, and cultural contexts. The results of these social and cultural interactions led to stereotypical expectations for males and females in traditional educational settings. When educational practitioners utilized learning strategies that were less competitive, more collaborative, and focused on relevant educational outcomes for the learner, the overall learning culture along with self-determination was improved (Belenky et al., 1986).

Self-Determination Skills

Wehmeyer defined self-determination as,

"the process of being in charge of one's own life to the degree that an individual and that individual's family unit believes is important. Self-determination involves the capacity, the needed supports, and the opportunity provided for making choices and decisions that are individually determined to the greatest degree possible. The choices and decisions may be related to where we live, have a job or spending leisure time and may be made individually or within a family or service provision system" (Wehmeyer, 1992, p.1).

To become self-determined, secondary AWD must gain competence in abilities and attitudes that characterize self-determination (self-advocacy). Secondary AWD featured autonomous behaviors when they demonstrated personal choice free from undue interference (Wehmeyer, 1995). Wehmeyer explained that self-regulatory behaviors manifested when the secondary AWD weaved through an intricate response system from environmental stimuli that required him or her to analyze available coping skills. Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD), who were psychologically empowered, believed they had control over their destiny and could achieve a positive outcome (Wehmeyer, 1995). Wehmeyer reported that with self-realization, the secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD) had knowledge and understood his or her strengths and weaknesses. By using these components of self-determination, secondary AWD acquired the basic tenets to become proficient self-advocates.

When adolescents with disabilities possessed these attitudes and abilities characterized by Wehmeyer, they adeptly advocated for their needs and well-being (Beach Center on Disability, 2007). Wehmeyer concluded that acquisition of autonomy, self-regulation, psychological

empowerment, and self-realization enabled secondary adolescents to gain self-determination proficiency. With proficiency in these skills, secondary AWD were better able to inform others about their disability, communicate their legal entitlement or legal rights, and negotiate necessary accommodations. As adolescents with disabilities became more adept with the abilities and attitudes that defined self-determination, they became better advocates (Wehmeyer, 1995).

Socio-cultural Factors Impact Self-Determination Skills

Recognizing how different variables influenced educational outcomes for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) helped individual transition plan (ITP) teams determine the type of instructional strategies to include in the transition training process. All learners regardless of gender or race benefited from learning environments that offered a sense of community and implementation of experiential or contextual learning strategies (Belenky et al., 1986). Secondary AWD should become collaborative partners in preparing their life's blueprint.

Socio-cultural factors such as gender and race influenced the development of self-determination skills among secondary AWD. Wehmeyer and Kelchner's (1995) sample provided norms that reflected differences between groups with respect to gender and age. Regarding gender, there was no statistical difference among male and female test-takers on overall self-determination score. Domain scores revealed some discrepancy. Females tended to score higher than their male counterparts on the autonomy and psychological empowerment domains. For the domains of self-regulation and self-realization, no such variances were noted. Older adolescents tended to perform better on all scales tested. Statistical analyses were conducted on scores for adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18. Statistically significant differences were noted by age for AWDs on the domains of autonomy, self-regulation,

psychological empowerment, and self-realization. Trend competence by age increased most notably between ages 15 and 16; however, age 17 showed the most marked spread. Though studies of participants with socio-culturally diverse backgrounds made up 22% of this sample's normative data, no information was reported that examined the impact of race/ethnicity on total domain scores.

In regard to education and learning, adolescent males were more competitive.

Adolescent females tended to prefer maintaining relationships (Gilligan, 1993). As an instructional strategy, incorporating gender variables in lesson plans has been shown to facilitate transition outcomes (Beach Center on Disability, 2007; Trainor, 2007). Trainor's (2005) research supported this influence of gender and revealed that postsecondary education and employment rates for secondary adolescent males with a specific learning disability eclipsed those for secondary adolescent females with a specific learning disability. According to Shogren and Turnbull (2006), gaining a better understanding of the socio-cultural influence of gender on self-determination during transition planning helped educators better prepare secondary AWD to develop the self-determined behaviors they were likely to need in education and employment settings later in life.

As U.S. classrooms become more and more diverse; the impact of educational and cultural identity on self-determination became increasingly evident in individual transition plan (ITP) participation. Boone & Kling-Berry (2007) suggested that the major principles of IDEA were severely compromised for secondary adolescent minorities, systematically more often, than for secondary adolescents from the White Middle class. According to Boone & Kling-Berry, once identified as having a disability, secondary minority adolescents of color seemed to have less right of entry than their White counterparts to least restrictive environment settings.

Secondary minority adolescents with disabilities (AWD), typically, maintained long-term placements in special education programs.

Gender, race, and disability impacted transition domains (Trainor, 2007). Understanding socio-cultural factors of adolescents with disabilities impacted education and employment outcomes. As educational classrooms became more diverse, incorporating instructional strategies in lesson plans facilitated development of self-determined abilities and attitudes (Test, Fowler, Brewer, Wood, & Eddy, 2005; Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001; Shogren & Turnbull, 2006; Wagner & Davis, 2006).

Barriers to Developing Self-Determination Skills

Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) historically have been denied the opportunity to become self-determined because they were not allowed to participate in life skill choices at home or at school. According to Brown (2000), secondary AWD leave the supportive environment of home and school unable to explain their disability or request necessary accommodations and services due to this systematic denial. For many secondary AWD, who have not been encouraged to participate in transition planning activities, post high school career and education options were compromised.

According to Katiyannis and Zhang (2001), a process-driven approach to transition planning, hindered the ability of secondary AWD to develop appropriate self-determination skills and behaviors. According to these authors, many educators seemed to approach the individual transition planning (ITP) process with the belief that parents and secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) lacked adequate comprehension of the individual education plan (IEP) process or the capacity to make informed choices. Such professionals tended to regard the input of secondary AWD and their parents as unrealistic. They ignored or discredited the input of

parents and secondary AWD in lieu of their own, apparently more expert ideas (Katsiyannis & Zhang, 2001). When this occurred, secondary AWD and their parents became disheartened and felt devalued in the planning process.

Katiyannis and Zhang (2001) related that some educators believed that secondary AWD lacked the motivation and interest to participate in planning their own futures. Often transition planning meetings had the appearance of being heavily weighted toward professionals who approached the paperwork process from the perspective of "this is my job," with little sensitivity for developing specific steps within the individual education plan (IEP) that satisfactorily helped to lead the adolescent into adult life. In process-driven transition planning such as this, secondary AWD were not actively engaged in their career development program.

To promote successful transition to adult roles, secondary personnel must actively involve secondary AWD and their parents into goal-driven individual transition service planning. Secondary AWD who were involved in setting their own goals were more likely to achieve those goals (Katsiyannis & Zhang, 2001). Katsiyannis and Zhang (2001) reported that while other factors that promoted development of self-determination skills should be explored, active parent involvement was one of the best and most consistent predictors of positive postsecondary adjustment of secondary AWD. The parent was often the only consistent IEP team participant from year to year, even into postsecondary settings.

Promoting Development of Self-Determination Skills

Self-determination outcomes for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) improved when educational expectations emphasized curricular interventions, instructional strategies, and delivery setting considerations (i.e. preferential seating, rewording directions, collaborative teaching models, experiential learning models) (Field, Hoffman, & Posch, 1997). These authors observed that typical intervention programs have primarily focused on the development of: (a) self-determination curriculum; (b) modeling or role-play strategies; (c) experiential or transfer of learning techniques; and (d) active student participation during transition planning. Satisfactory transition training programs have used direct instruction and multiple learning environments as a catalyst to empower secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) with self-determination skills.

Research by Test et al. (2005) suggested that as secondary AWD develop emerging self-determination skills, they needed a supportive environment and opportunities to practice what was taught and modeled. They further noted that secondary AWD needed deliberate instruction in self-determination skills. As secondary AWD moved through varied developmental milestones, mastering efficacy in self-determination skills could be facilitated by adult mentors who encouraged and provided positive reinforcement related to skills of self-assessment and self-regulation (Shogren & Turnbull, 2006).

Not much research has been conducted on the outcomes of self-determination interventions (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001). Algozzine and colleagues completed a quantitative study using meta-analysis to review the self-determination interventions that had been implemented, the disability groups that were taught, and the results of the

interventions. Their study concluded that self-determination could be taught and learned and that it could make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

They also concluded that although there was little empirical research devoted to the development of comprehensive self-determination curricula, studies existed in which self-determination interventions/curricula focused on choice-making (mainly with individuals with moderate to severe mental retardation) and self-advocacy (mainly with individuals with mild mental retardation and learning disabilities). While much effort has been made to clarify the essential parameters of self-determination, the literature consistently has documented that single-subject studies tended to use single-skill formats to teach secondary adolescents with severe disabilities, and group studies tended to use multiple-skill formats to teach secondary adolescents with mild disabilities (Algozzine et al., 2001).

Developing Self-Determination Competency

Secondary adolescents with high incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disability, behavior disorder) did not acquire self-determination skills at the same rate as their nondisabled peers, if at all (Ellis et al., 1991; Pierson, Cortez, & Shea, 2005). In order for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) to become self-determined, they needed intentional strategies to address the skills. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 laid the foundation for secondary programs to prepare secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) with the self-determination competencies they were likely to need for chosen educational options, in post high school setting (United States Department of Education, 2007).

As high incidence secondary adolescents with disabilities (like specific learning disabilities and emotional disorders) work toward becoming self-determined, parents and educational practitioners must reflect on their philosophical beliefs. These beliefs sometimes

have tended to create enabling and disabling environments for the secondary adolescent.

Because parents and those in the helping professions have had a tradition of making decisions for students with disabilities, a paradigm shift often has been needed both in the area of teaching individuals with disabilities to become self-determined and in educating practitioners on the importance of accepting or respecting the decisions made by individuals with disabilities (Agran, 2006). To enhance the acquisition of self-determination skills among adolescents with disabilities and to effect more efficient monitoring of educational bias in the process, school systems should determine whether a consistent self-determination philosophy was held by its stakeholders (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001).

Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) have needed encouragement to understand the objectives of satisfactory academic transition planning. In addition, they have needed training on how to utilize collaborative team participation to project their desired goals for their future and achieve suitable outcomes. Secondary AWD needed to know how to assess themselves, evaluate which accommodations work best, use resources and make requests, determine educational and vocational goals, and solve problems when they arose (Krebs, 2002).

Secondary personnel and parents can become more proactive in helping secondary AWD develop self-determination skills by encouraging the students to attend their respective individual education plan (IEP) or individual transition plan (ITP) meetings and to become more active during the IEP and ITP processes. According to Grigal, Test, Beatty & Wood (1997), secondary adolescents' attendance at transition planning meetings was not the norm. In fact, these researchers found that only 54% of adolescents with specific learning disabilities attended transition planning meetings. Sometimes different socio-cultural factors (like race, gender, and even disability) have influenced learning outcomes for secondary adolescents with disabilities.

When these factors were considered, transition planning participation, self-determination strategies, and education outcomes improved (Trainor, 2005).

Strategies Used to Maintain Self-Determination Skills

As schools struggled about how to teach secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) self-determination skills, students found it difficult to obtain these skills without direct instruction (Eisenman and Tascione (2002). Research indicated that an array of interventions were effective for teaching secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) a variety of self-determination skills. Such strategies ranged from teaching of specific skills, improving the adolescent's knowledge-base about their disability and needs, to individual instruction, group instruction or systematic prompting of students to monitor their progress (Konrad, Fowler, Walker Test, & Wood, 2007). To support secondary AWD in becoming self-determined, Eisenman and Tascione (2002) suggested that practitioners embed self-advocacy skills within their daily curriculum using a direct instruction approach with repeated practice and within multiple learning environments. In this case, direct instruction was a teacher intervention embedded within general education curriculum. This training program was delivered over a specified period of time with the intent of promoting greater self-actualization among secondary adolescents with specific learning disabilities.

Eisenman and Tascione (2002) suggested that the second approach was to ensure access to multiple learning environments that provided frequent opportunities for engaging in self-determined behaviors coupled with positive feedback. This instructional strategy permitted the educational practitioner the flexibility of dually integrating academic standards and other relevant skills (such as, self-determination concepts) without sacrificing their school system's state accountability requirements (Konrad et al., 2007; Wehmeyer et al., 2004; Benz, Yovanoff,

& Doren, 1997; Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, & Herman, 1999; Thurlow, 2002). With multiple practices in other environments, it appeared to encourage generalization to new settings.

Summary

The literature review revealed that options for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) were increasing; yet there remained a huge chasm between law mandates, institutional policy, and practical application. While the gap between policy and application existed, continued research to improve transition education, transition planning, and effective implementation of transition services and programs by offering new approaches to the study of transition planning was imperative. These secondary adolescents must be empowered with self-determination skills.

Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) must apply these skills within their daily lives. As positive changes occur, the need to emphasize infusing self-determination strategies into daily lesson plans within multiple learning environments using academic, disability, and socio-cultural variables to facilitate collaborative learning experiences will support secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) in becoming self-determined and improve post high school outcomes (Wagner & Davis, 2006).

As Trainor (2005) reported, with better understanding of the socio-cultural perception of self-determination, training programs more effectively reduced marginalization among gender and race in education. This body of work was aimed at assessing the extent to which the results from the self-determination scale, with a focus on autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization, could offer useful information to the educational practitioner. This literature review noted that socio-cultural factors could be used to identify concepts that

would facilitate acquisition of self-determination skills among secondary male and female adolescents with disabilities.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to utilize the information from a self-determination instrument, the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995), to determine whether differences existed among race/ethnic and gender groups. The self-determination scale results of secondary male and female adolescents with disabilities were used to identify the secondary adolescents' perception of their self-determined behaviors. By using these parameters, practitioners could become more efficient in developing training programs that included socio-culturally compatible intervention strategies which supported secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) in becoming self-determined. This chapter describes the (a) research design employed in this study; (b) sample population; (c) procedures; and (d) system for data analysis.

Research Design

This was a quantitative research study. The researcher collected data from all male and female secondary adolescents with disabilities during their summer school program. As this permitted examination of all study participants during a particular time frame (summer school), it was a cross-sectional between group research design. Data collection consisted of gathering data responses from a self-determination scale administered to secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD). The population for this study was selected from the total specific learning disability (SLD) special education enrollment (ninth through twelfth) at each of three secondary schools from two school districts

The two independent variables were race/ethnic and gender groups. These predictor measures of secondary adolescents with disabilities were analyzed to determine their self-determination proficiency level. The dependent variable was the self-determination total score and each of four domain total scores of the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale*. Through an analysis of the scoring profiles of these secondary AWD, this study identified specific skills for decision-making and addressed how they should be taught.

Research Questions

The present study was guided by the four research questions listed below.

- 1. What were the differences between secondary Black/African American and All Other adolescents with disabilities based on Autonomy? Self-Regulation? Psychological Empowerment? Self-Realization scale scores?
- 2. What were the gender differences in the domain scores on Autonomy? Self-Regulation? Psychological empowerment? Self-Realization scale scores?
- 3. What were the differences between secondary Black/African American and All Other adolescents with disabilities based on overall Self-Determination scale scores?
- 4. What were the differences in Self-Determination scores based on gender?

Hypotheses

In response to the research questions, this study addressed the following null hypotheses:

- There would be no significant differences among secondary Black/African American and All Other adolescents with disabilities on Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization scale scores.
- There would be no significant differences among secondary male and female adolescents with disabilities on Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, Self-Realization scale scores.
- 3. There would be no significant differences among secondary Black/African American and All Other adolescents with disabilities on overall Self-Determination scores.
- 4. There would be no significant difference in Self-Determination scores based on gender.

Sample

Participating School Districts

Research participants were selected from Hickman Mills and Kansas City Missouri School Districts. In this study, the schools were identified as School A – Hickman Mills and Schools B and C – Kansas City, Missouri. School A's enrollment consisted of 860 students, grades 9-12. The racial and ethnic make-up was: Black (African American) 86%, White 11 %, Hispanic (Latina) 3%, Asian <1%, and American Indian (Native American) < 1% (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary 2004-2008, Kansas City, Missouri, School District–1, 2009). Secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) represented 14.4% of this school's student population (Kansas City, Missouri, School District–1: SEAS School Data, 2009). Missouri's state average was 14% (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary, Special

Education Profile for Kansas City, Missouri, School District–1, 2009). The free and reduced lunch eligibility was 74% (state average: 42%) (Missouri Department of Elementary and... Demographic Data ... for Kansas City, Missouri, School District–1, 2009). For Hickman Mill's School District, the graduation rate for AWD for 2007-2008 was 78%, with the state average at 76%. Drop out rates for AWD was 4% and the state average was 5% (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary, Special Education Profile for Kansas City, Missouri, School District–1, 2009).

School B's enrollment was 966 students, grades 9-12 for the 2007-2008 school year. The racial and ethnic composition was: Black (African American) 99%, White 1%, Hispanic (Latina) <1% and Asian 0 % and, American Indian (Native American) 0%. Secondary AWD represented 13.4% of the school's student population (Kansas City, Missouri, School District–2: SEAS School Data, 2009).

School C's enrollment was 563 students, grades 9-12 for the 2007-2008 school year. The racial and ethnic makeup was: Black (African American) 88%, White 7%, Hispanic (Latina) 5%, Asian < 1%, and American Indian (Native American) < 1% (Missouri Department of Elementary and... Demographic Data ... for Kansas City, Missouri, School District–2, 2009. Secondary AWD represented 15% of the school's student population (Kansas City, Missouri, School District–2: SEAS School Data, 2009). Free-reduced lunch for the Kansas City, Missouri School District was 80% (state average: 42%) (Missouri Department of Elementary and... Demographic Data ... for Kansas City, Missouri, School District–1, 2009) (Missouri Department of Elementary and... Demographic Data ... for Kansas City, Missouri, School District–1, 2009). For the Kansas City Missouri School District, the graduation rate for AWD was 55%, with the state average at 76%. The drop out rate for the Kansas City, Missouri School District was 13%

and the state average was 5% (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary, Special Education Profile for Kansas City, Missouri, School 1 District–1, 2009).

To begin implementation of this research project, a letter explaining the focus of this study and requesting permission to carry out the study was sent to the appropriate authorizing agent at each school district's administrative level (Appendix E). The researcher's confidentiality obligation and a statement describing the potential risks and benefits that these secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) would receive for their participation in this study, accompanied each letter. Due to the students' adolescent status, permission to participate was acquired from parents or guardians.

The population for this study was taken from the total specific learning disability (SLD) special education enrollment (ninth through twelfth) at each secondary school designated by their district for participation in this study. The sample population was composed of a group of secondary AWD identified by their special education directors as: (1) having a single diagnosis of SLD; (2) enrollment in assigned schools for summer programs; (3) attending three to eight week summer sessions; and (4) mandated for transition planning participation according to IDEA guidelines. A list of students

(n = 89) were identified as possible participants in this study. The sample was composed of thirty-one secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) from three schools in area Kansas City, Missouri school districts.

Hickman Mills School District (School District–1) and Kansas City Missouri School District (School District–2) submitted a list of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) as potential participants for this study (N = 89). School District–1 assigned a liaison that relayed to the researcher that secondary AWD with a history of disruptive behaviors had been excluded as

participants. School District–1 provided a list of 30 adolescents and they obtained required parent consent forms (Appendix F). School District–2 designated two schools and provided a specific learning disabilities (SLD) list of 59 adolescents. The researcher was responsible for obtaining parent consent. The researcher made phone calls to parents to improve return rates. Parent consent was obtained for 13 students from School District–1 and for 22 students from School District–2. Between the two school districts, a total of 35 parent consent forms were returned. Parental consent was obtained for 35 students at a return rate of 39.3%. Four of the participants dropped out of the summer school program leaving 31 students to continue in the study.

Data were collected from each of these students by this researcher via a self-assessment scale entitled the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* (see Appendix B) and a Demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). The self-determination scale and questionnaire were administered in an area designated for test-taking by district staff for the school of attendance by each secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD). Once the secondary adolescent came to participate, an explanation of the research study was given to help the secondary AWD feel more comfortable. Both instruments were read to adolescent participants who were assessed in groups of four to eight. The self-determination scale items, answer choices, and the demographic questions were read during administration. Each adolescent participant completed the study instruments at their own pace and in regard to prescribed accommodations in their IEP. It took approximately one half hour for each secondary AWD to complete the scale and questionnaire. Secondary AWD were administered the research instruments accordingly: the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* (Appendix B) and the Demographic questionnaire (Appendix A).

Sample Population

The population for this study was generated from the specific learning disabilities (SLD) special education enrollment (Grades 9-12) from three secondary schools. The sample in this investigation could be described as a sample of convenience due to the time restraints and the availability of the sample population. The sample population was composed of a group of secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) identified by special education directors as: (1) having a single diagnosis of severely learning disabled (SLD); (2) enrollment in assigned schools for the summer programs;

(3) attending three to eight week summer sessions; and (4) each was mandated for transition planning participation according to IDEA guidelines.

Instrumentation

Secondary adolescents with disabilities were administered two instruments in this study: the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* and the demographic questionnaire. After secondary AWD entered the test site, introductions and directions were given about what could be expected during the survey experience. Since the researcher believed that secondary AWD would be the most motivated and intrigued at the beginning of the test session, the self-determination scale was administered first and the demographic questionnaire, last. While the demographic questionnaire was important, it was felt completion of the self-determination scale would require more focus from secondary AWD. The researcher did not want to chance that students might find an excuse to discontinue the study before they completed the self-determination scale.

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

This quantitative study involved collection of data in the form of responses from the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale*. The *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* was the self-assessment

scale selected to measure the self-determination of the severely learning disabled (SLD). This scale was selected due to its specific intent, service, and construct. It measured self-determination in adolescent students with learning disabilities.

The *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* was the self-assessment scale selected to measure the self-determination of each secondary AWD in this study. The *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* was a 72 item adolescent self-report instrument for adolescents that: a) measured the secondary adolescent's strengths and weaknesses in self-determination and b) it examined the relationship between self-determination and elements that facilitated or inhibited acquisition of this skill (Beach Center on Disability, 2007). The *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* comprised factors found to significantly contribute to identification of self-determination among learning-disabled adults (Wehmeyer, 1992).

The *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* was divided into four domains of self-determination: (1) Autonomy; (2) Self-Regulation; (3) Psychological Empowerment; and (4) Self-Realization (Beach Center on Disability, 2007; Wehmeyer and Kelchner, 1995). The *Arc's Self-Determination Scale*, although a self-reporting measure was recognized for its sound reliability and validity that stemmed from intensely probed measures carefully selected to distinguish the factors of self-determination in adults recognized as learning disabled (Wehmeyer, 1992). The adolescent version of this scale was founded on research involving data from a sample of 500 adolescents and adults with mild mental retardation and learning disabilities (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995). Through Wehmeyer and Kelchner's (1995) research, norm data was presented as a point of reference regarding the adolescent's perspective of his or her level of self-determination.

Wehmeyer and Kelchner (1995) indicated that reliability for the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* was .90. Validity in all four domains were found to have moderate to strong correlations (r = .25 to .5, p = .0001).

The Autonomy Domain examined secondary adolescent's independence and his/her own personal values or preferences (see Appendix B). The Autonomy Domain was composed of six subdomains: personal care and family oriented functions; interaction with the environment; leisure time; community involvement; post school direction; and personal expression. All questions were multiple choice and consisted of four levels of response. The levels of response for all subdomains of Autonomy were: (0) Never; (1) Sometimes; (2) Most of the time; and (3) Everytime. For each subdomain, when all questions were answered correctly, a total (raw) score could be derived. A raw score was summed to obtain an Autonomy Domain raw score of 96, the highest total score achievable.

The first subdomain, personal care and family oriented functions, asked the secondary AWD six questions about whether they did chores, cared for their own clothes or kept good grooming. The highest possible subdomain total score was 18. The four questions in the next subdomain, with a high achievable total score of 12, measured interaction with the environment. This subdomain asked the secondary AWD questions about whether they used the post office, could deal with sales people or kept appointments. The third subdomain, consisted of six questions, with a high possible total score of 18, addressed the secondary AWD independence in selection of their recreational and leisure time activities such as: management of school related activities, free time, weekend activities, and communications with friends and family. The next subdomain, labeled community involvement and interaction, was composed of five questions and had a high achievable raw score of 15. The variables in this section required the secondary

AWD to respond to questions regarding their preference for volunteer work, going to movies, restaurants, and malls.

Post school endeavors and personal expression comprised the last two Autonomy subdomains. Post school endeavors had six questions with a total attainable score of 18. This subdomain requested the adolescent to indicate their interest regarding school work that improved their career chances or their ability to make long-range career plans, the extent to which they had worked or earned money, or had been in job training classes. The last subdomain contained five questions, with an attainable total score of 15, provided the secondary AWD an opportunity to reflect personal expression. The secondary AWD was asked questions which indicated whether they chose their own clothes, hairstyle, how they spent their money or decorated their own rooms.

The Self-Regulation Domain measured interpersonal cognitive problem-solving and goal-setting. These items examined whether the secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD) effectively advocated for their needs in their solutions to specific dilemmas. Subdomain one asked the adolescent five questions and had an attainable total score of 12. The secondary AWD was asked questions like: how to resolve the issue of taking a course for which he/she had a different preference than his/her parent or how to attain a job at a bookstore. Subdomain two asked four questions with the high total score achievable of 9. This segment asked the adolescent to indicate plans for obtaining work, a place to live, or transportation after high school graduation. The level of response for each variable in this domain was: (0) none; (1) more; and (2) most. The highest raw score achievable on the Self-Regulation Domain was 21.

The third domain, Psychological Empowerment expected the secondary AWD to indicate control of their outcomes and situations in which they were involved. This section consisted of

16 questions with scores ranging from 0-1 point. The levels of response for these variables were: (0) no, when Psychological Empowerment was not reflected; and (1) yes, when Psychological Empowerment was reflected. For example, this domain required the secondary AWD to indicate whether they: did what their friends wanted or told their friends when they did not want to do something; could make good choices or could not make good choices. The highest total score achievable on Psychological Domain was 16.

The Self-Realization Domain focused on the adolescent's understanding of his or her strengths and weaknesses as they related to self-esteem and self-actualization. This domain yielded a total score of 15 and consisted of 15 forced-choice (agree or disagree) questions, scored with 0-1 point. The questions were measured as follows: (0) no; and (1) yes. A score of "0" was given to the answers that did not reflect self-realization and a score of "1" was given to the answers that did reflect self-realization. Students were asked to respond to questions like: "I feel free to be angry at people I care for." "Other people like me." "I feel afraid of doing things wrong." Finally, each domain raw score was summed for a total score and designated as the Self-Determination Total Score. The highest achievable total score for Self-Determination was 148. While the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* was free and available to the public via an Internet website (Beach Center on Disability, 2007; Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995), permission to reprint the test was obtained (Appendix D).

Demographic Questionnaire

The Demographic questionnaire for this research project asked each secondary adolescent to provide the following information: (1) their name to which a respondent code was assigned by this researcher; (2) grade level; (3) current age; (4) gender; (5) career goals; (6) race; (7) primary language; and (8) post high school plans (see Appendix A). Aside from providing identity, race

and gender, the demographic questionnaire granted a lens into whether secondary AWD understood IEP and ITP services.

Secondary AWD revealed the age they felt that they began IEP/ITP participation.

Through provision of age and grade, this likely identified which group participated more widely in IEP/ITP services for each school represented. When secondary AWD were asked to indicate career intentions, it gave the secondary adolescent with disabilities the opportunity to specify their life goal after high school. This question, also, had the potential to indicate whether students connected the intent of IEP participation and transition goals with their future endeavors, post high school. For example, if the secondary AWD related that they did not participate in IEP/ITP planning but indicated that they intended to attend college or vocational training post high school; then, this could indicate that they did not understand the intent of transition services.

Data Collection

Initial contact was made with the special education directors via telephone introduction, followed by a letter describing the study, confidentiality assurance, its relevance to satisfactory academic outcomes (see Appendix E), benefits for the secondary AWD participating in the study, and methodological requirements of the participating schools. The researcher requested the Special Education Directors (from Hickman Mills & Kansas City Missouri School Districts) to generate a list of high school adolescents with a single diagnosis of specific learning disabilities (SLD). There were eighty-nine (N = 89) secondary AWD who were invited as potential participants in this study, of whom thirty-five (N= 35) returned parent consent forms. The researcher also requested that the directors indicate individuals who required accommodation during the administration of the assessment instruments. The surveys were administered in a designated area selected by the

district staff of the schools where the secondary AWD was enrolled. The surveys with answer choices were read to the participants in groups of four to eight. The participant completed each domain scale at his or her own pace in accordance to his or her IEP accommodations.

The parents, of secondary AWD selected to participate in the study, received a letter regarding the intent of the study, statement of confidentiality and their consent to participate. The participant was also informed that their participation was voluntary and optional (Appendix F). Each adolescent who participated in the study received two \$5.00 honorarium gift cards in recognition for their time and commitment to the study. Human subject procedures were followed in accordance with Kansas State University's policies outlined by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix G).

Data Analysis Procedures

This section discussed the procedures that were used to analyze collected data. The analytical strategy for this investigation occurred in five parts. In part one, (1) instruments and measures; (2) sample population analyses using frequency and measures of central tendency; (3) univariate relationships using Levene's Equality of Variance and One-Way ANOVA; (4) summation of hypotheses; and (5) conclusions. The data was screened and examined via frequency and simple descriptive statistics. The responses to each of the four domain raw scores and the self-determination total score were examined for differences. Levene's Equality of Variance and One-way ANOVA were utilized to determine if differences existed in the responses by race/ethnicity and gender. A .05 significance level was set for all analyses.

Data were analyzed among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) as it related to the independent and dependent variables utilized for this study. The independent variables were Race and Gender. These predictor measures of secondary adolescents with disabilities

were analyzed to determine their self-determination proficiency level. The dependent variable consisted of the four domain total scores and the self-determination total score. The domains were designated as, Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization, then Self-Determination Total Score. Through an analysis of the scoring profiles of these secondary AWD, this study identified strengths and weaknesses among specific skills they used in decision-making. All secondary AWD's responses were analyzed to determine if these scores varied by Race and Gender.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to utilize the information from a self-determination instrument and questionnaire to determine whether differences existed in scores when examined by race and gender groups. While Race and Gender were identified as independent variables, the four domain raw scores (Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization), along with the total self-determination score was identified as the dependent variables. The self-determination scale results of secondary male and female adolescents with disabilities were used to identify the secondary adolescents' perception of their self-determined behaviors. This study identified strengths and weaknesses for specific skills utilized by the secondary AWD in decision-making. This research examined specific self-determination features and how their relationship contributed to the concept of self-determination proficiency. Two school districts participated in this study.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

This chapter focused on the findings of the present investigation by examining the relationships postulated to exist between the independent and dependent variables as they related to secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) and their scores on the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* (see Appendix B). In this chapter, these scores were analyzed and the findings were reported. The chapter was divided into five sections which respectively addressed: (1) instruments and measures; (2) sample population analyses using frequency and measures of central tendency; (3) univariate relationships using *t* tests and One-Way ANOVA; (4) summation of hypotheses; and (5) conclusion.

Instruments and Measures

Instruments

The assessment instrument used to gather the data that guided this investigation were the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* and the Demographic questionaire. The self-determination scale was comprised of four domains designated as Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. Each of these domains was scored independently and then summed together to produce an overall score designated as the Self-Determination Total Score. These four independent domain scores and the Self-Determination Total Score served as dependent measures in this investigation (see Figure 4.1).

Demographics Information

The demographic information for this study was collected via a questionnaire (see Appendix A). Of the numerous demographic variables included on the questionnaire, the respondent's Race and Gender, were the most relevant for the study and therefore they were the most addressed. These two demographic variables (See Figure 4.1) operated as independent measures in examining the differences proposed to exist in each of the four domain scores and in the total score, Self-Determination.

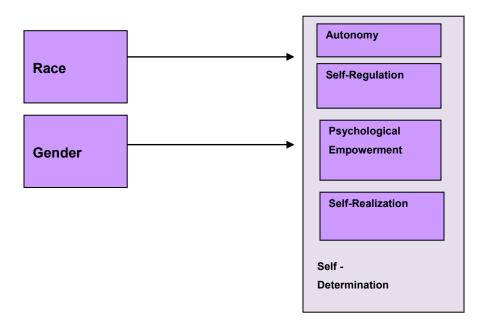


Figure 4-1. RACE and GENDER as Predictors to the Outcome Variables. This figure illustrates the independent (RACE and GENDER) and outcome variables (Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization).

Sample Population Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

The participants in the study were asked via questionnaire, "What is your race?" The responses to the questions were chosen from the following selections: (1) Asian/Pacific Islander, (2) Black, (3) Latina, (4) Native American (5) White; and (6) Other. Some participants chose one race while others chose multiple races. Simple descriptive statistics known as frequency (see Table 4.1) were used to analyze the responses to this question.

Table 4-1

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Demographic Variables

Variable		Coding Scheme	n	f
Race	2	Black	21	67.7
	3	Latina	1	3.2
	5	White	3	9.7
	6	Other	6	19.4
Race1	1	Black	21	67.7
	2	All Others	10	32.3
Grade Level	0	Nine	7	22.6
	1	Ten	10	32.3
	2	Eleven	9	29.0
	3	Twelve	5	16.1
Gender	1	Male	19	61.3
	2	Female	12	38.7
Age	0	14	3	9.7
	1	15	10	32.3
	2	16	6	19.4
	3	17	9	29.0
	4	18	2	6.5
	5	19	1	3.2

Note. (n = 31)

The majority of the participants selected Black (African-American) (n = 21) as their race while other participants chose White (n = 3), Latina (n = 1) or some preferred combination of races such as Black and White. The selection of more than one race was somewhat challenging. Herein lies the problem, the remaining participants wrote in races but only one participant actually selected the option, "Other."

Although, "Other" was one of the options on the questionnaire, only one student selected it as a single option; yet, after circling the word, "Other", he wrote in the blank (beside the word, "Other") the word "Mixed." Thus, the participant indicated that he did not specifically fit any of the presented categories: he identified himself as "Other" and "Mixed". Three other participants selected the options, Black, Native American, and Other. Beside the option, "Other", one of these participants wrote in the word "Mexican" while the other two participants wrote the number "6." Of the two remaining participants who selected multiple races, one participant selected Black and White and the other participant selected Black and Other (with no specific race indication inserted in the blank space). No members of the sample selected Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American as their race. The participants who selected "Other" or a combination of multiple races fell under the umbrella of the "Other" (n = 6) category for they did not identify with only one specific race.

The frequency test revealed that the sample was composed of Black (African-American) students (67%), White (9.7%), Latina (3.2%), and Other (19.4%). Per exploration of the results, the researcher confirmed that over two-thirds of the sample identified themselves as Black (African-American) while the remainder of the sample identified themselves as White, Latina, or multi-racial—having more than one race. Moreover, there was only one participant who identified himself as Latina. Because advanced analyses cannot be successfully conducted using only one participant, the author was compelled to re-code the race variable so as to generate a more representative sample and to carry out more advanced analyses.

Recoding: Race and Gender Variables

The author re-coded the variable Race to Race1 thus transforming race from four categories into two (see Table 4.1). By recoding the Race to Race1, the participants, who

selected Black (African-American) remained in the Black (African-American) category and the remaining participants were re-coded into the All Other category. The races that composed "All Other" were White, Latina and Other. After conducting a frequency test for Race1, the results demonstrated that the sample was composed of Black (African-American) students (67.7%) and All Other students (32.3%).

The variables, Grade Level, Gender, and Age were notable variables selected and analyzed to avail more information about composition of the sample population. The majority of the sample population was male (61.3%). The largest number of the participants were in grades 10^{th} (32.3%) and 11^{th} (29.0%) and ranged in age from 15-17.

Measures of central tendency (see Table 4.2) demonstrated where the majority of the sample scores gathered in regards to each of the variables. Unlike the frequency distribution these measures provided more discrete information about the respondents': (1) Grade, Age, Autonomy Domain raw score, (2) Self-Regulation Domain raw score, (3) Psychological Empowerment Domain raw score, (4) Self-Realization Domain raw score and (5) Self-Determination Total Score.

The results of the measures of central tendency revealed that the respondents in the study were in grades 9 to 12 with an average of the students indicating they were in grade 10 (M = 2, SD = 1.00) with the mean Age a little above 16 (M = 1.39, SD = 1.00). The domain scores for the participants were also examined. The Autonomy Domain scores ranged from a low of 17 to a high of 85. The mean score for Autonomy Domain was M = 63.94, (SD = 16.70). The range of total scores for Self-Regulation Domain was 2 to 18 with the average (M = 10.20, SD = 4.54). The Psychological Empowerment Domain scores ranged from 9 to 16 with the mean (M = 14.48,

<u>Table 4-2</u> Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE	
Grade	2.00	1.00	.18	
(9-12)				
Age	1.39	1.00	.23	
(14-19)				
Autonomy	63.94	16.70	2.99	
Self-				
Regulation	10.20	4.54	.82	
Psychological				
Empowerment	14.48	1.77	.32	
Self-				
Realization	12.52	1.29	.23	
Self-				
Determination	100.96	19.79	3.56	

n=31

SD = 1.77). The raw scores for Self-Realization Domain (see Appendix C) ranged from 10 to 15 (M = 12.52, SD = 1.29); and those for (5) Self-Determination Total Score ranged from 42 through 132 (M = 100.96, SD = 19.79).

In the Autonomy Domain, 96 points (raw score) were possible; higher scores represented higher levels of autonomy and a low score represented lower levels of autonomy (Wehmeyer, 1992). The mean raw score for Autonomy suggested the majority of the participants were not functioning at the highest autonomy levels. The raw scores for Self-Regulation, Psychological

Empowerment, and Self-Realization exhibited very low levels of error thus substantiating that many students selected comparable answers to the questions contained in these domains thereby obtaining similar scores on these domains.

The highest possible domain raw score for Self-Regulation was 21. A score of 21 indicated that the participant displayed high levels of self-regulation. The mean score for Self-Regulation demonstrated that the majority of the participants in the study were not performing at the highest self-regulation levels. The highest domain raw score for Psychological Empowerment was 16. The mean score for Psychological Empowerment showed that many of the participants displayed high levels of Psychological Empower- ment. The highest domain raw score for Self-Realization was 15. The mean score for Self-Realization implied that a large number of participants scored a few points lower than the highest possible score thus suggesting that the majority of the participants did not have the highest levels of self-realization but they were functioning at a moderately high level. The highest Self-Determination Total Score possible was 148. The mean total score for Self-Determination demonstrated that numerous participants in the study fell far below the highest possible score. These AWD performed lower across the board on the Autonomy Domain and the Self-Determination Total Score.

Gender, Race, and Scores

The examination of the scores using Gender and Race1 presented an opportunity to compare males with their female counterpart and to compare Black (African-American) students to All Other students to find if the sex or race of a person made a difference in his or her scores (see Table 4.3). Male scores were found to be higher than their female counterparts on the

Table 4-3

Descriptive Statistics for Males and Females

		MEN (n=19)			WOMEN (n=12)		
Variable	M	SD	SE	M	SD	SE	
Autonomy	65.47	15.20	3.49	61.50	19.28	5.57	
Self Regulation	10.00	4.22	.97	10.50	5.21	1.51	
Davohalagiaal							
Psychological Empowerment	14.63	1.50	.34	14.25	2.18	.63	
Self-							
Realization	12.37	1.16	.27	12.75	1.48	.43	
Calf							
Self- Determination	102.47	16.35	3.75	98.58	24.92	7.19	

n = 31

domain raw scores of Autonomy, Psychological Empowerment, and on the total score, Self-Determination. These scores suggested that males were somewhat more autonomous, psychologically empowered and they demonstrated a higher level of self-determination than females. Yet, the females scored higher than their male counterparts on Self-Regulation and Self-Realization. Although the scores for males and females differed they were close. To find if the differences in the scores between males and females were substantial, more advanced analyses were conducted.

The four domain raw scores and the Self-Determination Total score were examined using Race1 (see Figure 4.2). The mean scores for Black (African-American) students and All Other

students in the areas of Self-Regulation (Self-Reg), Psychological Empowerment (Psy Empower) and Self-Realization (Self-Real) were very close as shown in Figure 4.2. However, more disparity occurred in the Autonomy Domain and the Self-Determination Total Score among All Other student scores. The Autonomy Domain raw scores were as follows: Black (African American) students (M = 58.71, SD = 17.14) and All Other students (M = 74.90, SD = 8.91). The Self-Determination Total scores were: Black (African American) students (M = 95.00, SD = 20.94) and All Other students (M = 113.50 SD = 9.58). In examining the mean, All Other students scored higher than did their Black (African American) student counterparts on Autonomy and Self-Determination thus suggesting that All Other students were performing at higher levels in these areas than were Black (African American) students. While, again, these scores were different, when more complex statistical analyses were conducted, significant differences were noted and will be discussed.

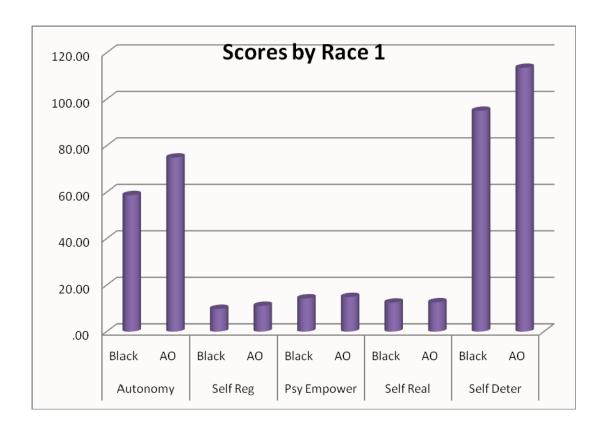


Figure 4-2. Scores by Race1. This figure illustrates domain and self-determination total scores by Race1.

Statistics and Data Analysis

Univariate Relationships

Introduction

The Levene's Test and One-Way ANOVA were conducted to assess score variation and substantiate differences in four domain raw scores, Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, Self-Realization, and in the total score of Self-Determination, as determined by Gender and Race1.

Levene's Test

The Levene's Test for equality of variances determined whether or not the scores varied significantly by Gender and by Race1. The findings revealed that when Gender was used as the dependent variable in determining domain score variance, no significant variance was found to exist between males and females on any of the four domain scores or on the overall Self-Determination Total Score. Gender was shown to have no effect on any of the scores p > 05. The Levene's test established that the scores on each of the four domains and on the overall Self-Determination for males and females (total scores) were similar and did not fluctuate very much.

Incidentally, findings revealed that when Race1 was used as a determining factor, only Autonomy and Self-Determination Total Scores varied significantly. In examining the Autonomy Domain raw score, the results, F(1, 29) = 4.705, $p \le .05$, illustrated a substantial difference existed between Black (African American) students and All Other students. Moreover, the overall Self-Determination Total Score F(1, 29) = 6.363, $p \le .05$ varied significantly as well between Black (African-American) students and All Other students. These findings demonstrated the Levene's Test was significant $p \le .5$ and that race played a major role in the scores of Autonomy Domain and Self-Determination Total Score.

One-Way ANOVA

One-Way between subjects ANOVA was used to determine if differences were present in total scores (raw scores) when Gender and Race1 were used as determining factors. Gender was found to have no significant effect on Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, Self-Realization Domains or Self-Determination Total Score. No significant differences were

revealed between males and females on the domain raw scores or on the overall, Self-Determination Total Score.

Race1, the determining factor, was found to have a significant difference on Autonomy F(1, 29) = 7.806 p = .009 and Self-Determination F(1, 29) = 7.806 p = .012. All Other students were found to score higher than Black (African American) students in the areas of Autonomy and on the overall Self-Determination score. These scores suggested that All Other students were functioning at a higher level in the area of autonomy than were their Black (African American) student counterparts. Moreover, the total scores indicated that All Other students scored higher than did Black (African American) students on the overall Self-Determination score thus suggesting that All Other students have higher Self-Determination than do Black (African American) students.

Summation of Research Questions

Results and Research Questions

In this study, four research questions were presented. To adequately address the relationships proposed, the research questions were once more reviewed. In the next section, Research Question 1 and Research Question 3 will be discussed concurrently since both presented a relationship among Race1 for domain total scores and the overall Self-Determination Score. Then, Research Question 2 and Research Question 4 will be discussed together as both addressed scores by Gender.

Research Question 1 and Research Question 3: What were the differences between secondary Black (African American) and All Other adolescents with disabilities based on Autonomy? Self-Regulation? Psychological Empowerment? Self-Realization scale scores? Self-Determination Total Score?

The results revealed significant differences between Black (African American) and All Other secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) on the Autonomy Domain (the ability to express personal preferences or beliefs) and on the Self-Determination Total Score. All of the scores were examined using Race1 via a One-Way ANOVA. The results revealed that race had no significant effect on the Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization Domain raw scores. Both All Other students and Black (African American) students had similar total (raw) scores in each of these domains. The hypotheses were supported on Race1 for all domain scores except, Autonomy and the Self-Determination Total score.

The Self-Regulation Domain raw scores showed that both All Other students and Black (African American) students were not fully capable of interpersonal problem solving. Moreover, the results also established that All Other students and Black (African American) students had high Psychological Empowerment Domain raw scores thus suggesting that both All Other students and Black (African American) students believed they were pretty much in control of themselves—psychologically empowered. Additionally, the Self-Realization Domain raw score demonstrated that both All Other students and Black (African American) students were equally alert to knowing their strengths and limitations.

The Autonomy Domain and Self-Determination Total Score revealed a difference by race. The All Other students outscored their Black (African American) adolescent counterparts substantially; thus, indicating they were more capable of taking care of themselves. Regarding Self-Determination Total Score, both groups fell below the highest raw score of 148. Although both groups did not achieve the highest Self-Determination Total Score, the scores showed that All Other students had more self-determined behaviors than did Black (African American) students.

The Self-Determination Total Score was based on summation of all four domain total (raw) scores. With a significant difference appearing only in the Autonomy Domain raw score, it was evident the Self-Determination Total score was basically driven by the Autonomy Domain score. The total number of questions for each domain was as follows: Autonomy Domain 32, Self-Regulation 9, Psychological Empowerment 16, and Self-Realization 15. With six domains and 32 questions, the Autonomy Domain most probably impacted the Self-Determination Total score. Next, Research Question 2 and Research Question 4 will be discussed at the same time because both addressed scores by Gender.

Research Question 2 and Research Question 4: What were the gender differences in the domain scores on Autonomy? Self-Regulation? Psychological Empowerment? Self-Realization scale scores? Self-Determination Total Score?

Using the One-Way ANOVA and examining each of the domain total scores and the Self-Determination Total Score, no significant difference was demonstrated in any of the scores when measured according to Gender. The hypotheses were supported on gender for all domain and Self-Determination total scores. Both males and females had comparable scores on each of the domain and the overall Self-Determination score. The scores revealed that both males and females scored much lower than the highest possible score thus suggesting both groups were not functioning at their highest autonomy level. Both males and females were not fully capable of directing and caring for themselves.

The mean scores for Self-Regulation revealed that both males and females in this study scored almost 10 points below the highest score thus suggesting they were operating at half the level of an individual with high self-regulation. The scores further demonstrated that both males

and females in this study were not fully capable of making decisions on how to manage themselves at all times.

Psychological Empowerment Domain raw scores for males and females were also similar. The scores confirmed that both males and females believed they could control their outcomes and the situations in which they were involved. The domain total (raw) scores for Self-Realization for both males and females verify that they were acquainted with their strengths and limitations; they knew themselves and their abilities fairly well most of the time. According to their scores, they were not functioning at the highest levels of Self-Realization.

Autonomy scores revealed that both males and females in this study were functioning at a rate 30 points lower than the highest possible score. Their scores showed that males and females in the study were not fully autonomous; they were not fully independent and capable of self-direction. The overall total score, Self-Determination was comparable for both males and females. The Self-Determination Total Score established that neither males nor females in the study scored at the highest level. Their similarity in scoring on the Self-Determination ascertained they were not fully capable of autonomy, self-regulation or self-realization.

Summary

The focus of the current chapter was to determine whether Race1 or Gender would affect the way secondary adolescents with disabilities scored on the four domains and the overall, Self-Determination total scores on the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale*. These data were analyzed to determine if a difference existed in the scores between males and females and in the scores between All Other and Black (African American) students as proposed by the research questions and hypotheses. A series of simple descriptive analyses such as frequency and measures of central tendency along with more advanced analysis such as the Levene's Test and

ANOVA uncovered findings and sustained that Gender did not affect Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, Self-Realization and overall, Self-Determination scores. However, the hypotheses were not sustained when Race1 was a determining factor. The scores for the Autonomy Domain and Self-Determination Total Score differed according to Race1. Since the Autonomy Domain was the only raw score that significantly differed, it was deemed a driving force behind the difference in the Self-Determination Total Score.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, SUMMARY

This chapter provides a summary of the study, important conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter Four, discussion of research findings and hypotheses, limitations of the study, importance of the findings, and recommendations for future research. This study used the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995) to examine the self-determination proficiency level among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) by race and by gender. From this self-determination scale, data were analyzed across each of four domain scores (Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization) and Self-Determination Total Score. The results of this research indicated that secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) exhibited: (1) significant differences among race/ethnic groups on the Autonomy Domain (the ability to express personal preferences or beliefs); (2) significant differences among race/ethnic groups on Self-Determination Total Score; and (3) no significant difference for gender within any of the domain areas or Self-Determination Total Scores.

CONCLUSIONS

During individual education plan and transition plan meetings, secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) were expected to demonstrate self-determined behaviors such as: an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their disability, the ability to identify accommodations, services, or resources that supported their disability, knowledge of disability law, and general communication etiquette (Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). For this study, the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale* provided a skill baseline in each of four domain areas and it provided a total score of self-determination. Each domain score and total score was analyzed to determine specific strengths and weaknesses for each secondary AWD. The results will be

discussed and the hypotheses will be either sustained or negated. Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 will be discussed simultaneously since both proposed a relationship between Race1, domain total (raw) scores and Self-Determination Total score.

Hypothesis 1 in combination with Hypothesis 3 proposed there would be no significant difference on the four domain raw scores or on the Self-Determination Total Score according to Race1. For Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization, no significant differences were noted. The null hypotheses were supported. Secondary Black (African American) adolescents with disabilities, who comprised the largest majority of study participants, underperformed other race/ethnic participants in this study on the Autonomy Domain and Self-Determination Total Score. Therefore, on the Autonomy Domain and Self-Determination Total Score for Race1, the null hypotheses were not supported.

All Other adolescents with disabilities scored higher than Black (African American) students on Autonomy and Self-Determination Total Score. These research findings revealed that race significantly impacted development of self-determination for Autonomy and Self-Determination Total Score. A closer analysis revealed some interesting considerations, which may have influenced the outcome of these research findings.

The secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWDs) must have been able to reflect a level of experience or competence with each type of question asked for each subdomain. How well the secondary AWD comprehended or interpreted words or questions may have impacted the scores between the two groups, Black (African American) and All Other adolescents with disabilities. The vocabulary level and the semantics of certain words and questions may have influenced score differences, as well. During test administration for the Autonomy Domain, some secondary AWD asked what some of the statements meant.

Regarding the Autonomy subdomain five, which addressed transition planning (or post school endeavors), for those secondary AWD who had been exposed to transition planning, more positive scores for this segment among Black (African American) and All Other students could be expected. If, as educators, we encourage AWD to participate in transition planning, we should expect them to be more positive and self-assured about the prospect of offering their opinions about their educational futures. The literature review supported this position.

As it related to hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 4, which proposed, there would be no significant difference among secondary male and female adolescents with disabilities on Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, Self-Realization, and Self-Determination scale scores, the null hypotheses were supported. Both males and females had comparable scores on each of the domains and the Self-Determination Total Score. Male scores were found to be higher than their female counterparts on the domain total scores of Autonomy (represented own beliefs), Psychological Empowerment (expressed control for personal outcome), and Self-Determination Total Score. On the other hand, females scored higher than males on Self-Regulation (interpersonal problem solving) and Self-Realization (self-esteem and recognition of strengths and weaknesses). Notably, in a prior study by Wehmeyer (1995), females scored higher than males on autonomy and psychological empowerment domains.

Scores from this research study suggested that males were somewhat more autonomous, psychologically empowered and that they demonstrated a higher level of self-determination than females. Competency within the Autonomy Domain meant that these students had been prepared to express personal preferences and beliefs as it related to, for example, grooming and selection of friends and activities. Secondary AWD, who were psychologically empowered, could choose to follow their friend's wishes or not. Psychologically empowered, secondary

AWD could select their own alternative or opinion without permitting others to skew their preference.

Self-Regulation, one of the domains for which females performed better than males, asked questions like: how to resolve the issue of taking a course for which he/she had a different preference than his/her parent or how to indicate plans for obtaining work, a place to live, or transportation after high school graduation. On self-realization, students were asked to respond to questions like: "I feel free to be angry at people I care for." "Other people like me." "I feel afraid of doing things wrong."

A review of the literature suggested that the disparity of these scores between male and female participants could be attributed to gender-based roles learned through the dominant culture of our society (Gilligan, 1993). The patriarchal values of American culture have influenced women's development to maintain relationship, to be nurturing, to be non-confrontational, and to respond with concordance (common ground). Traditionally, males have thrived in settings that were rule-based, logical, and competitive (Gilligan, 1993; Belenky et al., 1986).

Interpersonal problem-solving (self-regulation) and using self-esteem skills (self-realization) required the participant to resolve these issues in a non-confrontational manner. They were paper pencil tasks, not real-life, and non-threatening. These two tasks (Self-Regulation and Self-Realization) were more ideal for females than males. Males thrived in competitive environments. In reviewing, self-regulation, in particular, even if this task had been completed in real-life, it was more collaborative in nature and it appeared more harmonious with female norms for problem-solving.

As a society, we have given males an understood position of status and power that females do not inherit (Geis, 1993). We favor males in roles of authority and women in subordinate roles (Geis, 1993). To counter the imbalance of status and power inherited by males, we should minimize use of competitive models (Belenky et al., 1986).

Unanticipated Outcome

The literature review indicated there were gender-based differences between males and females. When the current study showed *no significant* difference among male and female test-takers on domain and overall self-determination scores, this outcome was unanticipated. Perhaps, the sample size was too small to permit a statistical difference to be detected. For race/ethnicity, the statistical evidence was definitive in identifying self-determination needs in the areas of Autonomy and Self-Determination Total Scores.

Limitations

While this study focused on examining whether a difference existed in self-determination proficiency among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD), it had some inherent limitations. For example sample size inhibited this studies' capacity to generalize findings to secondary AWD in high school settings. The sample was not random, but a sample of convenience, collected during the summer of 2008.

Secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD) were expected to enroll for summer school during the spring semester and enrollment was permitted during each summer school term.

Summer school sessions varied between three and eight weeks. Expected enrollment was not consistent with actual enrollment. Given the anticipated enrollment, data was expected to be collected from a much larger sample frame than the subset that actually participated (sampling error). Parent consent forms for students' participating in this research were given to enrollees

who attended the first days of summer session. These potential secondary AWD participants may have not returned for the rest of the session. In other cases, secondary AWD were listed on school rosters and expected to attend summer school, but they did not attend at all. Attendance of summer school programs was an on-going concern for secondary adolescents with and without disabilities.

Many secondary AWD may have returned parent consent forms; however, by the time the survey was given or by the date the survey was scheduled for their school, these students had dropped out of their summer school session. Secondary AWD assigned to enroll in a summer school site may not have been attendees during the regular academic year. During fall semesters, they may have been regular enrollees in charter, private, other public schools, or home-schooled. Because these secondary AWD were not regular attendees during the district's normal academic year, time constraints and availability of the target population did not permit returning to recoup these secondary AWD who may have returned consent forms late or may have been absent on the date the research assessment was taken. Another problem in trying to recoup data was that by fall term each school district implemented transition programs. The availability of the target population and time constraints of the summer school sessions was an on-going issue throughout the study (coverage error).

Importance of Findings

Theoretical Implications

By using the familiar standard of establishing baseline skills through a formal test, this study broadened our understanding for the dynamic of using race and gender to facilitate development of self-determination skills; thereby, improving transition domain outcomes. While no significant differences could be found among gender, this study reinforced that gender

disparity in scores could be attributed to gender-based roles perhaps learned through the dominant culture (Gilligan, 1993). Slightly higher scores were noted for males than females on Autonomy, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Determination; while females scored higher than males on Self-Regulation and Self-Realization. Regarding female participants, their outcomes on these domains seemed in keeping with female norms to resolve issues in a non-confrontational and collaborative manner. Males, who scored higher than females on the domains listed, demonstrated better self-efficacy in their ability to express personal preferences and beliefs.

Practical Implications

Implications for the Educational Practitioner

Educational practitioners may not be fully aware of the importance of implementing self-determination instruction and encouraging the adolescent's active participation during transition meetings. According to Janiga and Costenbader (2002), educational practitioners did not understand how significantly advocacy laws were altered as students left high school. Teachers expressed that they did not know how to teach secondary AWD self-determination skills (Mason, Field, & Sawilowsky, 2004). In addition, many of them were unaware of published programs on the subject (Thomas, Nathenson, Baker, & Tamura, 2002).

As teachers probe how proficient students are with certain features of self-determination, they may choose not to use a formal test instrument, like the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale*, they may prefer to isolate self-determination strengths and weaknesses, by utilizing other formal or informal tests. It has not been atypical for teachers to probe for what students know, what they need to know, and what they should learn.

These test probes should focus on the following self-determination skills that have been shown to benefit secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD), who transition to postsecondary options: understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their disability, identifying accommodations, services, or resources that support their disability, knowledge of disability law, and general communication etiquette (Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). From these authentic or informal assessments, self-determination strategies can be considered for lesson planning.

While not endorsing any particular program, embedding self-determination skills within daily lessons with repeated practice and within multiple learning environments has been shown to improve self-determined attitudes and abilities (Eisenman and Tascione, 2002). Regardless of whether educators choose to use direct instruction, role play, or to teach the specific concept, the goal should be to help adolescents to become proficient in self-determination and to take charge of their lives.

This research emphasized the need for educators to take charge in facilitating adolescents with disabilities in becoming self-determined. The following positive recommendations highlight the importance of shaping self-determination levels and concomitant strategies that improve secondary school outcomes.

• While for gender, there was *no significant* difference noted for domain or self-determination scores, slightly higher score differences were noted between male (Autonomy, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Determination) and female (Self-Regulation and Self-Realization) test takers. Therefore, intervention training programs (i.e. bi-annual computer-based training) could include an emphasis on cutting-edge changes in transition services, and on the specific self-determination needs and ways of learning of the secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD). For example, populations

at risk for bullying, sexual assault, harassment, etc. can expect a different reality with improved autonomy or self-determined behaviors.

Self-Regulation was one of the domains in which females scored well. Some researchers, like Gilligan (1982), characterized Kohlberg's studies on moral development as biased against women. Self-regulatory behaviors have been shown to improve or decline based on environmental influence. The adolescent's judgment of their capability increased efficacy expectation, while judgment of failures decreased efficacy expectations (Bandura's Social Learning Theory, 2010). Actual performance of the activity led to increased efficacy. Secondary AWD who were encouraged to set their own goals were more likely to achieve those goals (Katsiyannis & Zhang, 2001). As ways are found to create successful opportunities for the AWD to participate in ITP meetings, these students can be expected to develop an improved sense of what they believe they can achieve. The more opportunities for repeated successes, the more likely the behavior is to be generalized to new situations (Bandura's Social Learning Theory, 2010). This outcome can be a particularly beneficial occurrence for female AWDs.

• Because self-determination correlated with positive transition outcomes, secondary adolescents with disabilities must be induced towards participatory involvement and generalizing self-determination skills to daily life situations. To support such an effort, educational practitioners should consider having secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD) run their IEP or ITP meetings. Or, another option, have the secondary adolescent with disabilities role-play various scenarios. These scenarios could focus on how informed the adolescent with disabilities were regarding disability laws, their strengths

and weaknesses, and communication etiquette in requesting accommodations or resources.

This would facilitate accountability among secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD). These secondary AWD could no longer just ride on the bus, but by their active participation, they would be driving the bus. Since self-determination has been linked to positive transition outcomes, educators and researchers must maintain a proactive role in isolating differential strategies that lead to eliminating inequities among gender and race/ethnicity among secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) in the transition domains.

- The findings indicated differences in scores based on race/ethnicity with Black

 (African American) adolescents with disabilities who performed more poorly than All

 Other AWD on Autonomy and Self-Determination Total Score. Some strategies could be
 embedded into an educational practitioner's daily lesson plan which complements the
 cultural identity of secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD). Self-determination

 (self-advocacy) strategies linked to cultural holidays or ethnic celebrations of music,
 family, or religion might encourage the adolescent with disabilities to learn selfdetermined behaviors and to connect them to practices which were meaningful to them.
- Individual transition services should begin early in the lives of children with disabilities because this can be key to their educational success. As Harris and Robertson (2001) reported, secondary AWD should have the necessary self-determination skills (self-advocacy skills) for postsecondary options in place by at least their junior year. Within this study, tenth and eleventh graders, who were mandated transition participants, comprised the largest majority of secondary AWD participants. According to

Wehmeyer and Kelchner (1995), statistically significant competence was most notable for AWD between the ages of 15 and 17 on all four domains. To support this group of mandated transition participants, using a transition planning timeline (see Appendix H) can serve as a resource for all individual education plan (IEP) or individual transition plan (ITP) team members.

A timeline can be an aid to the adolescent, his/her parents, or educational practitioners in supporting development of objectives for secondary AWD at different ages and grades (Questar III Special Education - Transition Training, 2007). As students move through their transition plan, their aptitudes and interests should be continuously probed and analyzed to inform their educational intent and outcome. This continual update of information would be necessary because changes often occur as the secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD) continues his or her educational endeavors.

While such a timeline would be invaluable in assisting parents, a booklet or brochure should be developed for parents of AWD, as well. This booklet might include the rationale and the goal of transition services. It would review applicable laws and outline the IEP/ITP team process. Parents would be informed about how the laws change as the AWD transition from secondary to postsecondary settings. A parents' most frequently asked questions would be included, along with their observations and expectations. As parents are the only consistent link for the AWD, from one transition setting to another, this booklet could go a long way in bridging the gap between the educator (expert) and the parent (child advocate).

• The research suggested there was no "best self-determination model" or "gold" standard for teaching self-determination to secondary adolescent with disabilities

(AWD); therefore, this researcher recommends action research by each educational practitioner. Action research could be an on-going source that adds to the body of empirical data that influence the delivery of more efficient transition planning intervention strategies. This could facilitate educational empowerment among teachers to use authentic assessment to drive instruction and learning outcomes for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD).

There was minimal empirical research that examined the impact of socio-cultural factors on the development of self-determination for secondary AWD (Trainor, 2007; Wehmeyer and Kelchner, 1995). Since federal regulations has mandated the educational practitioner as the responsible agent for implementing transition planning activities (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006), they should be challenged to think critically about the content presented to secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD), the specific needs of the particular groups they teach, and generalizability of skills. Training strategies designed around these skills can lead to improved self-determined behaviors among secondary AWD.

Implications: State and Local Level

In my opinion, one of the most important questions to be asked is: What can be done at the state level, at the local level, and schools to facilitate secondary AWD in utilizing self-determined behaviors across the transition domains? Due to economic struggles, legislators have made significant cuts in mental health services. Ultimately, indequate state funding to mental health services cost the state immeasurably in loss productivity, hospitalizations, incarcerations, domestic violence, and institutionalization of children (Mental Health America,

2010). The question becomes: When the cost-to-benefit-ratio was considered, was this an advisable expenditure to delete?

A seminal point that facilitated acquisition of transition domains was federal legislation that mandated educational practitioners to implement transition planning services/activities for secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD) by age 16 or sooner if deemed appropriate by the IEP team (United States Department of Education: Federal Register, 2006). Federal law has required or obligated educators as the responsible party for executing transition services. Educators are answerable to their school administrator.

When adolescents cannot effectively communicate their disability needs or knowledge of disability laws, whether they have learned to advocate for their transition needs, should be questioned. Therefore, school administrators (i.e. principals, special education directors, and state education auditors) should be held liable when secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) do not demonstrate adequate self-determined behaviors during transition service planning. When school administrators do not comply with state or federal mandates, while child complaints can be filed, state auditors must cite them. Such harsh steps might encourage local agencies to begin to exhibit positive proactive procedures towards changing their practices to those that encourage participatory transition services for secondary AWD. Special education administrators should no longer be permitted to abdicate their function as overseer of secondary policy and procedures. When this has been tolerated, the future livelihood of secondary AWD has been harmed.

Implications: Districts Experiencing Dramatic Change

Since the collection of data, the school districts in this study have changed dramatically due to a confluence of economic and structural issues which has resulted in difficult decisions by

these districts to close some of their schools and reduce their staff. Within one school district, a new superintendent was hired and within both school districts, school closings resulted in redrawing district boundaries. With new school boundaries, students were grouped together with rival school teams.

While each school district has experienced major re-organization of its schools, staffs, and students, school districts faced with such shortfalls must still deal with federal mandates.

Based on my findings, here is what I would recommend for districts going through these kinds of economic and structural changes:

- Establish common expectations/norms for how staff will conduct transition service needs for adolescents with disabilities like:
 - Sophomores and juniors should be required to meet with their special education case managers to be introduced to essential transition mandates and services. These students should receive a pass/fail score (preferably computer-based) from a checklist of agreed upon required objectives.
 - Sophomores and juniors should be required to meet with their special education case managers to develop an action plan for career goals.
- Establish a process for internal audits. While the state conducts triennial audits of district's special education programs and services, districts should begin to conduct annual and periodic in-house audits of its own programs and services. Audits might consist of randomly pulling files from schools for review and random selection of schools to evaluate

participatory input of AWD during ITP meetings. This process should improve staff accountability, expectations, programs, and services for AWD.

Overall Summary of Implications

As transition service participants in secondary settings understand the socio-cultural influence of a specific learning disability, and more specifically, ethnicity and gender on self-determination during transition planning, education and employment opportunities could be expected to improve for secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD), post high school. As intervention strategies or training programs are implemented, it should include an on-going component that asks: How well can the secondary AWD utilize the abilities and attitudes that have been targeted? Can they use these skills in different settings?

As was clearly noted by Trainor (2007), when intentional self-determination strategies were put into practice, there was a positive effect between the intervention training program and the acquisition of self-determined behaviors. This result challenged the educational practitioner and the researcher to be accountable for delivering ongoing evidence that secondary adolescents with disabilities (AWD) were transitioning from high school to postsecondary settings with viable self-determination skills.

In summary, the overall research conclusions that can be drawn from the data in this study included the following: first, a self-determination assessment instrument may be used to isolate deficit areas that facilitate curriculum development among race/ethnicity and gender among secondary AWD. Second, secondary Black (African American) adolescents with disabilities, who comprised the largest majority of study participants, underperformed other race/ethnic group participants in this study on the Autonomy and Self-Determination Total

Score. Finally, since self-determination deficits could be isolated uniquely for each secondary AWD, and because research supported the relationship between practice and memory; then self-determination intervention practices should be initiated that emphasize these features, particularly for sophomore and junior adolescents with disabilities.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study should be replicated with a research design that employs an open-ended question (or fill in the blank) and role-play format with secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD). For example, the secondary adolescent with disabilities might be asked these open-ended questions: What would improve your participation in transition planning? What could be done so that you feel more connected to the transition planning process? Describe your disability? How does it impact your learning? What accommodation(s) do you currently have?

The role-play format could require each of two groups to observe and rate a scene of a peer requesting an accommodation from an adult. Using a yes/no scale, each in its group, would observe and rate whether the following occurred during the exchange in a role-play: a greeting, disclosure of disability, a request for accommodation, sharing the impact/effect of the disability on learning, and a closing. One group would receive a thirty minute training session, and the other would not. This researcher believes this would have added a richer component to the current study. In addition, this would go a long way in understanding, from the secondary adolescent with disabilities' prospective, transition outcomes that would create more positive trajectories for them.

Sometimes labels have been used rather indiscriminately with adolescents with disabilities; this becomes particularly noteworthy for those students who may have multiple diagnoses. These students may be characterized by their perceived disability. Trained observers

might monitor the educator's (i.e. teachers) behaviors (i.e. verbal and non-verbal language use) with these students in various school settings to examine the impact of race, gender, and disability. One inquiry might be, does their perceived disability match their categorical diagnosis? Consideration should be given to replicating this study with a different disability cohort or a disability group with a more challenging diagnosis than specific learning disability, such as autism or asperger.

To improve the development of self-efficacy outcomes, individual transition plan meetings could be observed by a neutral party. The neutral party would provide feedback regarding various dynamics of the meeting with particular focus on how well the IEP team created successful and repeated positive opportunities for the AWD to participate during the meeting. They would call attention to how inclusionary team members were towards AWD. They would offer opinions regarding behaviors that they observed from each team member during the IEP meeting. They could provide comments about how the meeting was conducted and meeting etiquette. Observations from a neutral party could be invaluable in creating positive repeat experiences for the AWD, which could support them in generalizing self-efficacy behaviors into new situations.

In summary, it is critical to maintain collaborative participation among high school staff, postsecondary education service providers, parents, the secondary adolescent with disabilities (AWD), and researchers regarding improving the individual transition plan process. When self-determined behaviors and skills became integrated in transition planning activities of secondary adolescents with disabilities, it positively impacted their future educational options (Eisenman & Tascione, 2002; Harris & Robertson, 2001). Secondary adolescents with disabilities must be compelled to apply self-determined skills within their daily routines.

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Appendix A P-Garrett Transition Planning Participation Survey- Demographics Questionnaire

P-Garrett Transition Planning Participation Survey- Demographics
Directions: Please complete each statement below.
Number: Date:
1. Grade Level (2007-2008):
2. What is your age year.
3. What is your gender? (circle) M F
4. I have participated in preparing career goals since: (circle a grade) 9 10 11 12
Other
5. What is your race? (circle) Asian/Pacific Islander Black Latino
Native American White Other
6. What is your primary language? English Other
7. What are your plans after high school graduation?
2 year College
4 year College
Vocational Training
Full-time Work
Other (Please list)

Appendix B Arc's Self-Determination Scale

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

Adolescent Version

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Adolescent Version) is a student self-report measure of self-determination designed for use by adolescents with cognitive disabilities. The scale has two primary purposes:

- To provide students with cognitive disabilities and educators a tool that assists them in identifying student strengths and limitations in the area of self-determination; and
- To provide a research tool to examine the relationship between self-determination and factors that promote/inhibit this important outcome.

The scale has 72 items and is divided into four sections. Each section examines a different essential characteristic of self-determination: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment and Self-Realization. Each section has unique directions that should be read before completing the relevant items. Scoring the scale (see Procedural Guidelines for scoring directions) results in a total self-determination score and subdomain scores in each of the four essential characteristics of self-determination. A comprehensive discussion and exploration of self-determination as an educational outcome is provided in The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines, as well as detailed scoring procedures and a discussion about the use of self-report measures in general. The scale should not be used until the administrator is thoroughly familiar with these issues.

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Adolescent Version) was developed by The Arc National Headquarters with funding from the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Cooperative Agreement #H023J20012. Questions used in Section One (Autonomy) were adapted, with permission from the authors, from the Autonomous Functioning Checklist. Questions used in Section 4 (Self-Realization) were adapted, with permission from the author, from the Short form of the Personal Orientation Inventory. Appropriate citations for both instruments are available in The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines. The Arc gratefully acknowledges the generosity of these researchers.

By Michael Wehmeyer, Ph.D.,
Kathy Kelchner, M.Ed.,
Proceedings of the Account of

Principal Investigator Project Director

Self-Determination Assessment Project

Student's name	
Date	
School	
Teacher's name	



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Directions:

Check the answer on each question that BEST tells how you act in that situation. There are no right or wrong answers. Check only one answer for each question. (If your disability limits you from actually performing the activity, but you have control over the activity (such as a personal care attendant), answer like you performed the activity.)

A. Independence: Routine per	sonal care and family oriente	d functions	1A	. Subtotal
I make my own meals or snacks.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I care for my own clothes.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I do chores in my home.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I keep my own personal items together.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I do simple first aid or medical care for myself.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I keep good personal care and grooming.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
3. Independence: Interaction	with the environment	Tomate I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I	1B.	Subtotal
I make friends with other kids my age.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I use the post office.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I keep my appointments and meetings.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
C. Acting on the basis of pre	ferences, beliefs, interests a	and abilities: Recreational ar	nd leisure time 1C.	Subtotal
I do free time activities based on my interests.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I plan weekend activities that I like to do.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I am involved in school-related activities.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
My friends and I choose activities that we want to do.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
I write letters, notes or talk on the phone to friends and family.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance

טו	Community involvement and	erences, beliefs, interests and a interaction	abilities:	1D.	Subtotal
17.	I volunteer in things that I am interested in.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
18.	I go to restaurants that I like.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
19.	I go to movies, concerts, and dances.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
20.	I go shopping or spend time at shopping centers or malls.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
21.	I take part in youth groups (like 4-H, scouting, church groups)	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
1E.	Acting on the basis of prefe	erences, beliefs, interests and a	bilities: Post-school dire	ctions 1E.	Subtotal
22.	I do school and free time activities based on my career interests.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
23.	I work on school work that will improve my career chances.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
24.	I make long-range career plans.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
25.	I work or have worked to earn money.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
26.	I am in or have been in career or job classes or training.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
27.	I have looked into job interests by visiting work sites or talking to people in that job.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
1F.	Acting on the basis of prefe	erences, beliefs, interests and a	bilities: Personal express	sion 1F.	Subtotal
28.	I choose my clothes and the personal items I use every day.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
29.	I choose my own hair style.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
30.	I choose gifts to give to family and friends.	I do not even if I have the chance	I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
31.	I decorate my own room.		I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance
32.	I choose how to spend my personal money.		I do sometimes when I have the chance	I do most of the time I have the chance	I do every time I have the chance



Directions:

Each of the following questions tell the beginning of a story and how the story ends. Your job is to tell what happened in the middle of the story, to connect the beginning and the end. Read the beginning and ending for each question, then fill in the BEST answer for the middle of the story. There are no right or wrong answers.

Remember, fill in the one answer that you think BEST completes the story.

2A.	Interpersonal	cognitive	problem-so	olvina

33.	Beginning: You are sitting in a planning meeting with your parents and teachers. You want to take a class where you can learn to work as a cashier in a store. Your parents want you to take the Family and Child Care class. You can only take one of the classes. Middle:	35.	Beginning: Your friends are acting like they are mad at you. You are upset about this. Middle:
	Ending: The story ends with you taking a vocational class where you will learn to be a cashier. Story Score	-	Ending: The story ends with you and your friends getting along just fine. Story Score
34.	Beginning: You hear a friend talking about a new job opening at the local book store. You love books and want a job. You decide you would like to work at the bookstore. Middle:	36.	Beginning: You go to your English class one morning and discover your English book is not in your backpack. You are upset because you need that book to do your homework. Middle:
	Ending: The story ends with you working at the bookstore. Story Score		Ending: The story ends with you using your English book for homework. Story Score

37. Beginning: You are in a club at school. The club advis announces that the club members will need to elect nev the next meeting. You want to be the president of the cl. Middle:	Directions: The next three questions ask about your plans for the future. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. For each question, tell if you have made plans for that outcome and, if so, what those plans are and how to meet them. 39. Where do you want to live after you graduate? I have not planned for that yet. I want to live
Ending: The story ends with you being elected as the club president. Story Score 38. Beginning: You are at a new school and you don't know You want to have friends. Middle:	40. Where do you want to work after you graduate? I have not planned for that yet. I want to work I want to work
	41. What type of transportation do you plan to use after graduation? I have not planned for that yet. I plan to use List four things you should do to meet this goal:

Section Three Psychological Empowerment	Directions: Check the answer that BEST describes you. Choose only one answer for each	49. It is no use to keep trying because that won't change things or I keep trying even after I get something wrong. 50. I have the ability to do the job I want or
42. I usually do what my friend	question. There are no right or wrong answers. s want or	I cannot do what it takes to do the job I want. 51. I don't know how to make friends or I know how to make friends.
I tell my friends if they are want to do. 43. I tell others when I have no or opinions or		52. I am able to work with others or
I usually agree with other p	peoples' opinions or ideas.	53. I do not make good choices or I can make good choices.
something or I tell people when I think I tell me I can't. I tell people when they hav	can do something that they e hurt my feelings or	54. If I have the ability, I will be able to get the job I want or I probably will not get the job I want even if I have the ability.
I am afraid to tell people w my feelings. 46. I can make my own decision		I will be able to make friends in new situations.
Other people make decision Trying hard at school does	HALLANIA CONSIST	I will be able to work with others if I need to or I will not be able to work with others if I need to.
Trying hard at school will h	elp me get a good job.	57. My choices will not be honored or I will be able to make choices that are important
48. I can get what I want by wo		Section 3 Subtotal

Section Fo	or not.	ell whether you t	hink each of these statements describes nt or wrong answers. Choose only the ar		
58. I do not feel ashamed of any of my emotions.	Agree	Don't agree	66. I don't accept my own limitations.	Agree	Don't agree
59. I feel free to be angry at people I care for.	Agree	Don't agree	67. I feel I cannot do many things.	Agree	Don't agree
60. I can show my feelings when people might see		Don't agree	68. I like myself.	Agree	Don't agree
61. I can like people even if I don't agree with them.		Don't agree	69. I am not an important person.	Agree	Don't agree
62. I am afraid of doing things wrong.	Agree	Don't agree	70. I know how to make up for my limitations.	Agree	Don't agree
63. It is better to be yoursel than to be popular.	Agree	Don't agree	71. Other people like me.	Agree	Don't agree
64. I am loved because I give love.	Agree	Don't agree	72. I am confident in my abilities.	Agree	Don't agree
65. I know what I do best.	Agree	Don't agree	Section 4 S	ubtotal	

Scoring Step 1:	Scoring Step 3:	Scoring Step 4:								Scoring Step 5:												
Record the raw scores from each section:	Using the conversion tables in Appendix A, convert raw scores into percentile scores for comparison with the sample	sam	Fill in the graph for the percentile scores from the norming sample. From the appropriate percentile down, darken the complete bar graph (See example in Scoring Manual):								Fill in the graph for the percentile scores indicating the percent positive responses.											
1A = 1B = 1C =	norms (Norm Sample) and the percentage of positive responses (Positive Scores): Norm Positive	One A	One B	One C	One D	One E	One F	One	Two A	Two B	Two	Three	Four	Total	<u>%</u> 100				•	Four	Total	2
1D =	Sample Scores Autonomy																					
E =	1A =				_	_	_		-	-	_	-			- 90	1 -	+	+	\dashv	\dashv	\vdash	_ 9
F =	1B =																					
	1C =														- 80		+	+	+	\dashv	\dashv	- 8
Domain Total:	1D =															357						
Self-Regulation	1E =														- 70		+	\dagger	+	\dashv	\dashv	- 7
A =	1F =																					
B =	Domain Total:														- 60		1	1	T			- 6
Domain Total:	Self-Regulation				_	_	-	_	-	-	_	-			- 50		+	+	\dashv	-	\dashv	- 5
sychological	2A =															Н						
mpowerment	2B =Domain Total:														- 40		\dagger	\top				- 4
=	Domain Total.																					2
Oomain Total:	Psychological Empowerment														- 30		1	T	T		\Box	- 3
Self-Realization	3 =														- 20							- 2
=	Domain Total:														20		T					- 2
Domain Total:	Self-Realization	-								_					- 10		+	+	\dashv	\dashv	\dashv	- 1
Scoring Step 2: Sum each Domain Total or a Total Score:	4 = Domain Total:	Indep: Self-Care	Indep: Community	hoice:	hoice: nunity	hoice: chool	hoice:	Autonomy	SelfReg: ProbSolve	IfReg:	Self-	Psych	Self- zation	Self- termination		Autonomy	Calf.	Regulation	sych	Self-	Self- ation	
Self-Determination	Self-Determination Total Score =	Sell	Comm	03	Comm	PostS	Perc	Auto	Prob	800	Regu	Emi	Reall	Determin		Autor	Auto	Regu	Emp	Realiz	Self- Determination	

Appendix C Sample Conversion Table: Self-Realization

Sample Conversion Table: Self-Realization

Table 12

Self-Realization Domain Score												
Percen	tile Scores	}	Percei	ntile Score	S	F	Percentile Scores					
Raw	Norm	Positive	Raw	Norm	Positive	Raw	Norm	Positive				
Score	Sample	Scores	Score	Sample	Scores	Score	Sample	Scores				
1	0	7	6	5	40	11	55	73				
2	0	13	7	8	47	12	73	80				
3	0	20	8	14	53	13	88	87				
4	1	27	9	24	60	14	96	93				
5	3	33	10	37	67	15	100	100				
						1						

Appendix D Permission to Reprint the Arc's Self-Determination Scale from Dr. Susan Palmer

RE: The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

From: **Palmer**, **Susan** (spalmer@ku.edu)

Sent: Tue 2/10/09 12:56 PM

To: Barbara Garrett (bgarrett999@hotmail.com)

Sorry...if you want to actually include various questions as examples, that would also be fine.

Susan

From: Barbara Garrett [mailto:bgarrett999@hotmail.com]

Sent: Sat 2/7/2009 1:53 PM

To: Palmer, Susan

Subject: The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

Hello,

How are you and Happy New Year? I hope things are going well for you. Well, I am preparing for my dissertation defense scheduled for the second week of March. I have been reviewing my document (the appendix section). How do I cite or place the scale that I used during my study. I would like to do as I saw in another manuscript. Instead of placing the scale within her document, this author had an appendix page; then, she related the following statements on the page after:

Copyrighted materials in this document have not been included as they are available at the following website:

http://www.beachcenter.org/resource_library/search_beach_resources.aspx?JScript=1

Please let me know what you think of doing this. Enjoy your week and thanks for your interest in helping me through this process.

Sincerely,

Barbara

Appendix E Invitation Letter to School District Representative of the Superintendent

Dear District Administrator,

Thank you for your participation in my dissertation study on self-advocacy. The purpose of the research is to compare gender and race perceptions of self-determination skills among secondary adolescents with disabilities who participate in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Adolescents with disabilities may be required to be invited to attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Transition Plan (ITP) meetings by federal stature; however, this does not correspond to proficient development of participatory career setting skills.

To gain information for this study, high school adolescents with disabilities will be administered the Arc's Self-Determination Scale and a Transition Planning Participation Survey which should take about 30 minutes to one hour to complete. Information gathered from this study will be beneficial in helping secondary personnel to better understand the socio-cultural influence of gender and race on self-determination and to consider infusing differential strategies to improve active participation during the ITP process. Transition training programs may consider socio-cultural training strategies to maximize gender input at transition meetings.

If you as a school system agree to participate, I, Barbra Garrett, will make every effort to be unobtrusive in the school's daily routine. The population for this study will consist of ninth through twelfth grade adolescents who have been classified as specific learning disabled (single diagnosis). Completion of the scale and survey will be required of all participants. There will be no recrimination for students who choose not to participate.

All information obtained from the scale and survey will be kept confidential. Precautionary measures will be taken throughout the study to ensure student and staff confidentiality. Your name will not be identified, nor will your schools or the student participant. When the scales and surveys are returned, your name, student participants, and the school will be coded so that other people will not be able to identify this information. The information will be disclosed in the form of a completed research study.

All students who return their parent notice will receive a \$5.00 gift card and who *complete* the two surveys will earn a \$5.00 gift card. The student is not required to participate and the student will not be penalized if they do not participate.

If you have any questions, they may be directed to Dr. John Hortin at 785-532-3931.

The contact information is listed at the bottom of this letter.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Garrett Graduate Student, Kansas State University

Additional contacts if needed Dr. John Hortin, Bluemont Hall 227, Department of Secondary Education Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3931 (Faculty Advisor for this study) jhortin@ksu.edu

Appendix F Invitation Letter to Parents and Student Participants



July 11, 2008

PARENT/STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are writing about a new study being done in your child's school about career planning and goal setting. The title of the project is "Self-Determination and Transition Planning Participation Perception of Secondary Adolescents with Specific Learning Disabilities".

Purpose of the Study

Adequate self-advocacy skill development among adolescents is an important life skill. This project will acquire information that will help your child to set goals more effectively during their career planning or transition planning meeting. This study will provide information to teachers about how to help adolescents to set and monitor career goals based on their individual needs.

Explanation of Procedures

Your child is being invited to participate in a study focused on their skill to participate in developing career goals during their Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Your child will be asked to complete the P-Garrett Transition Planning Participation Survey and the Arc's Self-determination Scale, which will provide information on the student's self-advocacy skills. These items should take 30 minutes to one hour to complete. Your child will complete these surveys in an area designated by school personnel.

Benefits

By understanding the specific learning needs of males and females, intervention strategies can be implemented to maximize student input at transition meetings and decrease inequities in the areas of education and employment. Youth with competent self-determination skills usually do better during school and after school is completed. When adolescents learn adequate self-advocacy skills, they are better able to pursue needed accommodation services for education or employment, monitor the usefulness of those accommodations, and request changes when needed.

Risks and Confidentiality

All information obtained from the project will be kept <u>confidential</u>, only group data will be reported. Your child's name and school will be assigned a number to ensure privacy. No risk factors are anticipated by your child responding to a survey. Only *Barbara Garrett* or *Dr*. *Hortin* will have access to your identity or information that can be associated with your name.

Payment to Participants

All students who participate in this study will earn **two** \$5.00 gift cards. A gift card will be received when the **signed** consent form is returned and another gift card will be given to the student upon completion of the two surveys.

Terms of Participation

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled. I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

To Participate in this Project

If you want your child to participate in this study, please **sign** the consent form and have your child return it to school. **The signed consent form must be returned by <u>July 18, 2008</u>.**

Questions

If you have **questions** about this project, please contact Barbara Garrett at **(816) 456-7861**, or Dr. John Hortin at (785) 532-3931 or email the University Research Compliance Office at <u>comply@ksu.edu</u> or call Adrain Self at (785) 532-3224.

Thank you very much,

Barbara A. Garrett Graduate Student, Kansas State University

Parent Consent	
I agree that my child can participa	te in the study.
Please check one:	
YES	NO
Date Signature (p (With my signature I affirm that I least 18 years of age.)	have received a copy of the consent form to keep and I am at
Student Assent	
I will participate in this project by Please check one:	completing the two surveys required.
YES	NO
Date	Student
Keep this copy for your records Return this copy to school	at home!

(Note: Two copies will be made of this form: one for school and one kept by the parent.)

Appendix G IRB Letter



University Research Compliance Of 203 Fairchild Hall e Office Lower Mezzanine Manhattan, KS 66506-1103 785-532-3224 Fax: 785-532-3278 http://www.ksu

Proposal Number: 4717

TO: John Hortin

Secondary Education

227 Bluemont

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: July 11, 2008

RE:

Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Gender and Race Comparison of Self-Determination and Transition Planning Participation Perception of Secondary Adolescents with Specific

Learning Disabilities."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."

APPROVAL DATE:

EXPIRATION DATE:

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "continuing review" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects. There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Appendix H Transition Planning Timeline

Timeline: This transition planning timeline can be used as an assessment tool to support IEP/ITP team members in determining developmentally appropriate postsecondary goals for adolescents with disabilities at different ages and grade

